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**Coronavirus (COVID-19):  
what you need to do**

### Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

[Hide message](#)

[Home](#) > [COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#)



Public Health  
England

Guidance

# COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic

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## Contents

[Main principles](#)

[What you need to know](#)

[Background](#)

[Management of the venue](#)

[Social distancing for mourners](#)

[Who should attend?](#)

[Mourners who are symptomatic](#)

[Mourners who are self-isolating due to a possible case of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in their household](#)

[Mourners who are extremely clinically vulnerable](#)

[Personal care of deceased people](#)

[Experiencing grief or bereavement](#)

## Main principles

This advice is designed to assist people who are involved in managing or organising a funeral related to a death from any cause during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This guidance has been developed to ensure that:

- bereaved people are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect
- mourners and workers involved in the management of funerals are protected from infection

[Guidance for workers who care for the deceased](#) is available.

This guidance remains under review and may be updated in line with the changing situation.

## What you need to know

The grieving process and related formal and informal rituals, through which the bereaved mourn the passing of loved ones, are important for the health and wellbeing of the bereaved. The following guidance aims to balance the needs of the bereaved to mourn appropriately, whilst minimising the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. It details where exceptions can be made to the stay at home guidance currently in place. These exceptions only apply to the circumstances relating to the death of a member of the same household, a close family member or a friend.

Communities, organisations and individuals are strongly advised to take action to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) infection among mourners who are gathered to pay their respects, with a particular focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable and more likely to develop severe illness. These actions include:

- restricting the number of mourners to be as low as possible to ensure a safe distance of at least 2 metres (6 ft) can be maintained between individuals
- alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff only the following should attend:
  - members of the person's household
  - close family members
  - or if the above are unable to attend, close friends
  - attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this

For the position of what is lawful, you should refer specifically to the [Regulations](#) (see at the end of this guidance for details).

- mourners should also follow the advice on social distancing when travelling to and from the funeral gathering
- mourners who are self-isolating for 14 days due to someone in their household being unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) but are not symptomatic themselves should be facilitated to attend the funeral in person should they wish to do so, with processes put in place to minimise the risk of transmission
- mourners who are clinically vulnerable or in a shielded group should also be facilitated to attend, with processes put in place to minimise the risk of transmission
- any mourner who is showing coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms (a new continuous cough or a high temperature) should not attend the funeral as they pose a risk to others; remote participation should be considered

## Background

There is an increased risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) where families and communities come together following the death of a loved one, from any cause. Whilst recognising the importance of these rituals and gatherings, it is strongly advised that the actions detailed in this guidance are taken to reduce the spread of infection, particularly to clinically vulnerable people who are at risk of severe illness.

For deaths that are suspected or confirmed as being due to coronavirus (COVID-19) it is recognised that household members of the deceased person may have already been exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the course of the preceding illness. However, steps should be taken to minimise any new exposure, especially where individuals who are not part of the household and those at risk of severe illness may come into contact with the virus.

The government has advised that funeral services should continue and has requested that Local Authorities consider how they can facilitate this.

Funerals with physical attendance of mourners should continue as long as those attending adhere to this guidance, which details how the risk of transmission can be reduced. (This guidance does not however apply to issues of transportation to funerals).

To ensure that organisations managing funerals are able to cope with the increased number of deaths **it is important that funerals are not delayed**. We understand how difficult this will be for the families and friends of lost loved ones, however the current guidance will be in place **for the foreseeable future for the safety of the public**

## Management of the venue

Those organising a funeral should adhere to the following advice:

- restrict the number of mourners who attend so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres (6 ft) can be maintained between individuals
- the size and circumstance of the venue will determine the maximum number that can be accommodated whilst also facilitating social distancing, but numbers should be minimised as far as possible. Venue managers may set caps on numbers in order to ensure this
- only the following should attend, alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff:
  - members of the person's household
  - close family members
  - or if the above are unable to attend, close friends
  - attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this
- mourners who attend should be signposted to the advice on social distancing and that they should not attend the funeral if they are unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- venue managers should ensure that handwashing facilities with soap and hot water and hand sanitiser are available and clearly signposted
- venue managers should ensure that processes are in place to allow a suitable time to clean and disinfect the area in which the service has taken place both before and after each service, paying attention to frequently touched objects and surfaces, using regular cleaning products
- venue managers should consider how to manage the flow of groups in and out of their venues to minimise overlap between different groups and allow for adequate cleaning
- venue managers should maximise ventilation rates of the premises by opening windows and doors where possible

Local Authorities should ensure funeral arrangements and numbers of attenders are consistent with this guidance.

## Social distancing for mourners

Social distancing measures are actions to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) including:

- ensuring that you are at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from others
- following the guidance on hand hygiene and preventing the spread of infection:
  - wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas
  - when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or the crook of your sleeved arm (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately. Then wash your hands or use hand sanitiser

Mourners should also follow the advice on social distancing when travelling to and from the funeral.

## Who should attend?

The grieving process and related formal and informal rituals, through which we mourn the passing of loved ones, are important for the health and wellbeing of the bereaved. Interruption of this process is linked with negative impacts on both the physical and mental health of the bereaved.

- to minimise the risk of transmission only the following should attend, alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff:
  - members of the person's household

- close family members
- or if the above are unable to attend, close friends
- attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this

## Mourners who are symptomatic

Anyone who is showing symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) (a new continuous cough or a high temperature) should not attend the funeral due to the risk that they pose to others; remote participation should be considered, for example live streaming.

## Mourners who are self-isolating due to a possible case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their household

Key mourners of the deceased person may include those who are **self-isolating due to another member of the household being unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)**. Where the funeral is scheduled before the period of household isolation has been completed (14 days from the first person in that household showing symptoms) mourners who are self-isolating should be facilitated to attend.

Mourners who are from a household that is self-isolating should:

- not attend if they have any symptoms of any kind, even if these are very mild
- maintain a distance of at least 2 metres between themselves and others
- advise the other mourners that they are otherwise self-isolating at home, and ensure that they do not attend at the same time as another mourner who may be **extremely clinically vulnerable**
- practise careful hand and respiratory hygiene:
  - wash their hands more often - with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitiser.
  - avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth
  - covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin

Mourners who are from a household that is self-isolating are advised to use their own transport where possible.

## Mourners who are extremely clinically vulnerable

Mourners who are in an extremely clinically vulnerable group should be facilitated to attend, should they wish to do so.

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable should have received a letter telling them they are in this group or been told by their GP. Mourners who are in an extremely clinically vulnerable group have been advised that they should minimise their contact with others for their personal protection. However, they may decide to attend a funeral despite the additional risk this poses to them and should be facilitated to do so.

They are not advised to attend a funeral if there are others attending who are self-isolating due to another member of the household being unwell with symptoms of coronavirus, as they could be incubating disease. Mourners who are extremely clinically vulnerable should follow the general social distancing advice for the clinically vulnerable mourners and should maintain a distance of 2 metres away from others as a minimum.

Actions to reduce their risk of infection could include:

- advising other attendees that there is an extremely clinically vulnerable person attending and reiterating the need to stay at home if they are unwell, and to be respectful of the vulnerable person's need to avoid close contact at any point
- advising the mourner to travel to the venue via the safest route possible, preferably in a car by themselves, or with someone from their household
- considering the additional risk involved if attending the funeral requires travelling by public transport
- ensuring that mourners who are in a clinically vulnerable group do not attend the same ceremony as mourners who are in household isolation

Mourners who are [clinically vulnerable](#) or [extremely clinically vulnerable](#) should adhere to rigorous hand and respiratory hygiene at all times but particularly whilst out of the home environment. Hand sanitiser or sanitising wipes should be used regularly whilst outside of the home.

## Personal care of deceased people

Mourners are advised not to take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the deceased. Where

there are aspects of faith which include close contact with the deceased, that contact should be restricted to those who are wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) under the supervision of someone who is trained in appropriate use of PPE. Detailed guidance on [care of the deceased is available](#) and should be followed, regardless of the setting in which personal care of the deceased is provided.

Given the very significant risk for vulnerable and extremely vulnerable people who come into contact with coronavirus (COVID-19), it is strongly advised that they have no contact with the body of the deceased. This includes washing, preparing or dressing the body.

### Additional measures

Additional measures that allow participation in the funeral service without attendance should be considered, such as:

- allowing additional mourners to participate remotely alongside those physically present where possible, for example by live streaming the service. Priority should be given to mourners who are extremely clinically vulnerable who may wish to access the service remotely if this service has limited capacity
- after the funeral, a deferred celebration or memorial service, which could be considered and held after the social restrictions are lifted and at a time when attendance and shared mourning can safely take place

## Experiencing grief or bereavement

Whenever the loss of a friend or loved one happens, it can be an extremely difficult and challenging time. This is likely to be even more so for those experiencing bereavement and grief during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Bereaved people may struggle with the shock, not just of the bereavement but that the social distancing measures mean that they cannot say goodbye in the way that they would have wanted. This could be particularly hard for those isolating alone, and it may be harder to connect with usual support networks.

Those who are bereaved are likely to feel waves of intense emotions as they come to terms with loss. These can include sadness, guilt, shock and anger. All are common and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Grief affects everyone in different ways but the important thing is to grieve and to have the right support to do this.

Learn more about grief and support available through: [the NHS](#); [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) (offers advice and support on dealing with bereavement and grief during the coronavirus outbreak); [ataloss.org](#) (provides signposting and services across the UK). If you are supporting a bereaved child or young person the [Childhood Bereavement Network](#) has information and links to national and local organisations.

### The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020

This document is guidance. The law is contained in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 (referred to as 'the Regulations' in this document). The Regulations, permit you to leave your home if you have a reasonable excuse to do so. By way of an indication of what is a reasonable excuse in the case of funerals, the regulations set out the following may attend: members of the person's household, close family members, or, if no-one in these categories attends then a friend. It is likely that someone of similar importance to the deceased as a close family member will have a reasonable excuse to attend a funeral. Where the deceased has no close family or household members to attend, it is important in order to stay safe that only a modest number of friends attend. For the position of what is lawful, you should refer specifically to the Regulations.

The Regulations [can be found here](#).

Regulation 6, which specifically relates to leaving the place where a person is living [can be found here](#).

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## Coronavirus (COVID-19)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)

## Transition period

[Transition period: check how to get ready](#)

## Services and information

[Benefits](#)

[Births, deaths, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

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[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

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[How government works](#)

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[Worldwide](#)

[Services](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[News and communications](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency and freedom of information releases](#)

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