



Coronavirus (COVID-19).



Attendance at Burials and Cremations

The question concerning the number of mourners allowed to attend a cremation or burial is high on the agenda of many service providers. In considering this matter it is important that the central role of the funeral ritual to the grieving process for many families is not overlooked. Attendance at a service, 'saying goodbye', provides many people with comfort and any proposal to limit this important religious, and non-religious, occasion must be carefully considered.

However, during these extremely challenging times the transmission of the coronavirus at funeral gatherings to the elderly, frail, those in vulnerable groups along with funeral directors and crematorium staff cannot be overlooked. Nor can the fact that many elderly people will be concerned about attending funerals but will feel compelled to go out of a sense of duty.

The current advice from the FBCA/ICCM has been to adopt a risk-based approach and apply government advice. Further advice by government has now been given, the guidance reads:

Last week, the Government ordered certain businesses - including pubs, cinemas and theatres - to close.

The Government is now extending this requirement to a further set of businesses and other venues, including:

places of worship, except for funerals attended by immediate families.

In addition, the Government is stopping social events, including weddings, baptisms and other religious ceremonies. This will exclude funerals, which can be attended by immediate family.

They will initially last for the three weeks from 23 March, at which point the Government will look at them again and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Therefore, in view of the advice already being given by government and various faith and no faith groups the FBCA/ICCM have updated their advice to Burial and Cremation Authorities.

Service Attendance Advice

In the ongoing delivery of services to the bereaved Burial and Cremation Authorities adopt a risk-based approach taking into account government advice, vulnerable groups and the importance of protecting the key workers outlined in recent government advice.

In considering reducing the transmission of the coronavirus through gatherings at funeral services in chapels they must consider limiting attendees to the immediate family:

Spouse/Partner
Parents/carers
Brothers/Sisters
Children (and partners)

Updating the guidance in this manner provides a proportionate response to the changing situation, with Burial and Cremation Authorities, funeral directors and the bereaved receiving greater clarity.

In this fast moving situation it may be necessary to update this advice in the coming days. As soon as the Government issues further advice we will inform members of any new requirements.

FBCA/ICCM