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Guidance

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for funerals and commemorative events during the coronavirus pandemic

Updated 30 July 2021

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

## Summary of changes from 19 July

There are no legal limits on the number of people who can attend funerals or commemorative events. Those attending, arranging or managing such events should consider that it may be harder to manage the risk of spreading COVID-19 if spaces are crowded, and venue operators may choose to set their own limits. Those involved in arranging or managing such events should see the working safely guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>).

From 19 July, you will not need to stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with, and venues are not required to follow social distancing rules. However, keeping your distance and limiting close contact can help reduce the risk of catching or passing on COVID-19. People who are self-isolating or who are in quarantine following international travel may be present at a funeral where a legal exemption applies. Keeping a distance of 2 metres is strongly advised for those attending a funeral during their self-isolation or quarantine period following international travel.

COVID-secure rules, including table service requirements and restrictions on singing, chanting and dancing, will no longer apply. However, there are steps everyone should continue to consider to reduce the risk of transmission, which are explained in this guidance. All businesses should follow the principles set out in the working safely guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>).

Face coverings will no longer be required by law in any setting. However the government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas.

## Introduction

This guidance is for:

- members of the public who may be attending a funeral or commemorative event
- members of the public who may be involved in arranging a funeral or commemorative event
- professionals who may be involved in arranging or managing a funeral or commemorative event

For the purposes of this guidance, the phrase 'commemorative event' includes events and rituals such as stone setting ceremonies, the scattering of ashes, and wakes. Such events may take place before or following the funeral.

There are no legal limits on the number of people who can attend funerals or commemorative events. Those attending, arranging or managing such events should consider that it may be harder to manage the risk of spreading COVID-19 if spaces are crowded, and venue operators may set their own limits. Those involved in arranging or managing such events should see the working safely guidance.

Although most restrictions have been removed at Step 4, it is still possible to catch and spread COVID-19 even if you are fully vaccinated. It is therefore important to take steps to protect yourselves and others from COVID-19. This is particularly true for funerals, where the risk of COVID-19 may be higher due to the attendance of people who are legally exempted from self-isolation or quarantine, who either have or are at higher risk of having COVID-19. For further information on this exemption, see the section on attending a funeral if you are exempt from self isolation, or quarantine following international travel (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/19-july-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funerals-and-commemorative-events-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic#exempt>).

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell), must not attend a funeral (unless an exemption applies). You must immediately self-isolate, follow the stay at home guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>), and request a test online (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>), or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.

For further information and the actions to take to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19, refer to the guidance on How to stay safe and help prevent the spread (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread>).

## Key actions for those attending, arranging or managing a funeral or commemorative event

While cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. There is government guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe>) that advises:

- washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser throughout the day
- where possible, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. If you do need to touch your face (for example to put on or take off your face covering), wash or sanitise your hands before and after
- covering your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze
- if you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand
- dispose of tissues into a rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands
- getting tested twice a week even if you don't have symptoms and using the NHS Covid Pass
- letting fresh air in. You may want to consider if you can have the funeral or commemorative event outdoors. Follow the guidance on ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus/ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19>)
- using the NHS COVID-19 App
- wearing a face coverings in crowded areas. Government expects and recommends that people do this

There may be additional risks to consider when attending a funeral. The guidance below outlines actions to take when attending, arranging or managing a funeral, or commemorative event.

## Stay at home if you have COVID-19 symptoms, are self-isolating, or are in quarantine

While there are some exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/19-july-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funerals-and-commemorative-events-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic#exempt>), due to the risk you may pose to others, you should not attend if any of the below apply:

- you have COVID-19 symptoms
- you are self-isolating due to a positive test result

- you have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- you are in quarantine after recently arriving into England from an amber list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#amber-list>). This does not apply if you have been fully vaccinated with an NHS administered vaccine in the UK more than 14 days ago
- you are in a managed quarantine hotel after arriving into England from a red list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#red-list>)

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate immediately, follow the stay at home guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>), and get a PCR test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/>), even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you book the test and wait for the results. You are legally required to self-isolate if you test positive.

Some individuals may have a legal exemption to leave self-isolation, or quarantine following recent international travel, in order to attend a funeral (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/19-july-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funerals-and-commemorative-events-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic#exempt>). These do not apply to attending a commemorative event.

## Consider limiting close contact

From 19 July, social distancing measures will no longer apply and you do not need to stay 2 metres apart (or 1 metre plus mitigations) at a funeral or commemorative event. However, limiting close contact reduces the risk of catching or passing on COVID-19.

Given the exemption for some people to leave self-isolation or quarantine to attend funerals, you may choose to limit the close contact you have with people you do not live with. You may also choose to take a free lateral flow test to help manage the risk of close contact.

It is important to consider that others may wish to take a more cautious approach as we open up. We should all be considerate of this, and provide the opportunity and space for others to reduce close contacts if they wish.

Although not required to do so by law, the government expects and recommends that face coverings are worn in crowded areas. You should respect other attendees and those working at events who may wish to adopt a more cautious approach.

## People who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else. However, if you're clinically extremely vulnerable, you may wish to think carefully about the particular risks associated with attending a funeral, and consider taking the precautions described in the guidance on protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19>).

For those arranging or managing a funeral or commemorative event, if you become aware that someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable will be attending, you should:

- follow the guidance on protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable
- try and enable them to participate remotely where this is possible (for example by live-streaming), and should they wish to do so
- consider reminding other attendees that there are individuals who may choose or need to maintain distancing. It is important that you don't identify anyone, single anyone out, or release personal or confidential information

## **Religious or other belief-based practices that may involve close contact with the deceased**

Where it is not possible to determine if COVID-19 was suspected or confirmed at the time of death, you are not advised to take part in rituals or practices that bring you in close contact with the deceased. There is likely to be a continuing risk of infection from body fluids and tissues where COVID-19 infection is suspected or confirmed.

If aspects of faith or beliefs include close contact with the deceased, you should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) under the supervision of someone who is trained in the appropriate use of PPE and follow the guidance on care of the deceased (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>).

Because of the increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness, it is not advisable for people who may be clinically extremely vulnerable to have any contact at all with the body of the deceased, regardless of whether PPE is worn.

## **Venue considerations if you are arranging or managing a funeral or commemorative event**

From 19 July, social distancing measures will no longer apply. This means that you do not need to implement social distancing (2 metres or 1 metre plus with mitigations) at a funeral or a commemorative event. You may wish to consider how to facilitate attendees who wish to keep a safe distance, with particular consideration of people attending from self-isolation or quarantine.

All businesses and venues should follow the principles set out in the working safely guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>).

Employers will still have a legal duty to manage risks. They should do this by undertaking a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of COVID-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate these risks.

If you are informed that someone is leaving self-isolation or quarantine to attend a funeral, this must be factored into the risk assessment. Those attending a funeral from self-isolation or quarantine should maintain at least 2 metres distance from all other attendees at all times. You should follow the section on attending a funeral if you are exempt from self-isolation or from quarantine following international travel to see additional mitigations that should be taken.

The working safely guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>) sets out a range of mitigations that should be considered, including:

- cleaning surfaces that people touch regularly

- identifying poorly ventilated areas in the venue and taking steps to improve air flow (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>). It is always worth considering whether you can have the funeral or commemorative event outdoors
- ensuring that staff and customers who are unwell do not attend the workplace or venue
- communicating to staff and customers the measures you have put in place

## Collection of Contact Details

From 19 July, you are no longer required by law to collect contact details, or keep a record of your staff and visitors.

However, you are encouraged to continue to display an NHS QR code for anyone wishing to check in using the app, as this will help to reduce the spread of the virus and protect your visitors and staff. You do not have to ask visitors to check in, or turn them away if they refuse.

If you display an NHS QR code, you should also have a system to collect (and securely store) names and contact details for those who ask to check-in but do not have access to a smartphone or prefer not to use the app.

Please see the guidance on maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>).

## Attending a funeral if you are exempt from self-isolation, or from quarantine following international travel

While there are some exemptions, if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you should self isolate immediately, follow the stay at home guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>), and get a PCR test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/>), even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you book the test and wait for the results.

You are legally required to self-isolate if you test positive, and must not attend any commemorative events.

You are also required to self-isolate if you have been notified by NHS Test and Trace that you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

You are required to quarantine for 10 full days after recently arriving into England from an amber list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#amber-list>). This does not apply if you have been fully vaccinated with an NHS administered vaccine in the UK more than 14 days ago, or if you are participating in the test to release scheme. You are also required to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel for 10 full days if you have been in a red list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#red-list>).

This is because there is a higher risk that you may spread COVID-19 to others, even if you feel well and have no symptoms at all. It is therefore crucial that you follow the guidance and complete the full period of self-isolation.

Some people have a limited legal exemption to leave self-isolation or quarantine following international travel to England, in order to attend a funeral. This exemption does not apply to attending a commemorative event.

These legal exemptions allow you to:

- leave self-isolation for the purpose of attending the funeral of a close family member (for example a partner, parent, sibling, child or grandparent)
- leave home quarantine after international arrival from an amber list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#amber-list>) for the purpose of attending the funeral of a close family member (as defined above) or a household member, or a friend (if neither a close family member nor household member can attend). See information for people arriving from red, amber or green list countries (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england>)
- request permission to leave managed quarantine after international arrival from a red list country (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#red-list>) for the purpose of attending the funeral of a close family member (as defined above) or a household member only. This will include agreeing a specific time with the hotel for returning to your room. There is more information about this exemption in the managed quarantine hotels guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/booking-and-staying-in-a-quarantine-hotel-when-you-arrive-in-england#quarantining-in-a-managed-quarantine-hotel>)

The legal exemptions only apply for the purpose of attending a funeral. You must not break your isolation or quarantine to attend a commemorative events under any circumstances. This would be a legal offence and you may be fined. You must otherwise continue to self-isolate unless there are other circumstances present that legally allow you not to.

Even if a legal exemption from self-isolation or quarantine applies to you for the purpose of attending a funeral, you are strongly advised to consider arrangements to participate remotely, for example through video link, in order to avoid attending in person. This will help reduce the risk to others present at the funeral and will play a direct role in stopping the spread of the virus.

If after very careful consideration of the risk, you choose to attend a funeral in person, it is essential that you take all of the following precautions, and that those involved in arranging or managing the funeral facilitate people to take these precautions as far as possible.

Advise the funeral venue manager, organisers and other attendees in advance that you are in your self-isolation or quarantine period. Other people need to be aware of this prior to attending. Informing the venue manager will help ensure they have factored this into their risk assessment. Event organisers must factor this into their risk assessment.

Maintain a distance of at least 2 metres at all times between yourself and other people, including when travelling to and from the funeral. Some people attending the funeral may be clinically extremely vulnerable. Event organisers must factor this into their risk assessment.

Wear a properly fitting surgical-grade fluid repellent (Type IIR) face mask, If a respirator mask is used (for example N95), this should be non-valved. These masks are widely available from pharmacies, supermarkets and online retailers. You are advised to bring your own face mask. Event organisers and

those organising the funeral may also want to ensure they have some in stock.

Avoid singing or raising your voice, as this generates more particles containing COVID-19. The risk is greatest where these activities take place indoors.

Wash your hands more often than usual with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue that is thrown away after coughing or sneezing, or use the crook of your elbow (not hands) to cough or sneeze into.

Avoid using public transport and avoid sharing transport, if possible.

Taking all of these actions will help you to protect others from COVID-19.

Event organisers should support those attending a funeral from self-isolation or quarantine to follow the steps outlined above.

## Experiencing grief or bereavement

The loss of a friend or loved one can be an extremely difficult and challenging time. This may be even more difficult if you have experienced bereavement and grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grief affects everyone in different ways, the important thing is to allow yourself to grieve, and to have the right support to help with this.

There is a range of support available, including through the NHS, Cruse Bereavement Care (<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>), and Ataloss (<https://www.ataloss.org/>), which provides signposting and services across the UK.

If you are supporting a bereaved child or young person, the Childhood Bereavement Network (<https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>) has information and links to national and local organisations.

## Related Guidance and Regulations

This guidance applies in England only. Guidance on funerals and commemorative events is also available for Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funeral-services/>), Wales (<https://gov.wales/guidance-funerals-covid-19>) and Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you#toc-16>).

There is guidance on care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>).

## The Health Protection Regulations

This document is guidance. The law is contained in the following Health Protection Regulations for England in 2020:

- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1045/made>)
- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) (England) Regulations 2021 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/582/contents>)

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