

COVID-19

IS YOUR WORKPLACE COVID SECURE?

The majority of funeral homes have remained open throughout the pandemic and will already have in place clear guidance for staff relating to social distancing, safe ways of working, hygiene and infection control - based on Public Health guidance relevant to the part of the UK in which the funeral home is based.

The return to a more normal level of funerals and the new COVID-secure requirement for businesses, should give all member firms the impetus to review these procedures and check how COVID-secure their business environment is for the longer term.

For the funeral sector, the concept of the workplace will also transcend the walls of the business premises for many members of staff. Funeral directors are required to work in various locations, many of which will be outside of the control of the member firm. Nevertheless, this does not prevent employers from conducting risk assessments and seeking to mitigate risks by ensuring staff are properly trained and equipped, and that there is a clear plan for how they will carry out any tasks.

1. CARRY OUT A COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

Businesses should carry out (or repeat) a risk assessment in line with the latest Government guidance.

As with many workplaces, for funeral businesses the relevant guidance will depend on how you operate and where your funeral homes are based.

The key documents that NAFD members need include the following:-

England and Wales

- *Guidance for care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)*
- *Managing a funeral during the Coronavirus pandemic*
- *Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) – Shops and branches*
- *Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) – Offices and contact centres*

Scotland

- *Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for funeral services*
- *Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for funeral directors*
- *Business and physical distancing guidance*
- *Coronavirus Retail Sector guidance*

Northern Ireland

- *COVID-19 Guidance surrounding death*
- *COVID-19 Guidance about funeral arrangements*
- *Public Health NI guidance for employers and businesses*

There is also guidance on working safely in other people's homes, which will be relevant if you do choose to visit a client during the arrangement of a funeral. However, this is not recommended at



the current time and arranging over the telephone remains the preferred option to minimise the risk of infection wherever possible.

Make sure you consult with your staff on working practices, anything they may be concerned about or ideas they may have - and also with any trade unions that represent them. Share the results of the risk assessment with your workforce and you could also share them on your website to give potential clients confidence in the steps you are taking to keep everyone safe.

Other documents that you may find helpful

Care Home Protocol: The *Care Home Protocol* has been developed to ensure that funeral directors and providers of care in a residential setting are fully aware of the risks posed when an individual dies in a residential care setting, and is either confirmed to have had COVID-19, or is suspected to have had it. The protocol is for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland collectively unless there are specific differences, which are highlighted where necessary.

You can download a copy from the NAFD's COVID-19 website.

NAFD Risk Assessment Framework: The *NAFD Risk Assessment Framework*, also downloadable from the NAFD's COVID-19 website, outlines all of the aspects relating to the arrangement and management of funerals during COVID-19, including considerations surrounding working at cemeteries and crematoria.

2. ESTABLISH AND CHECK ROBUST CLEANING, HANDWASHING AND HYGIENE PROCEDURES

You should increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning by:-

- encouraging people to follow the guidance on hand washing and hygiene;
- providing hand sanitiser around the workplace, in addition to washrooms;
- frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly;
- enhancing cleaning for busy areas;
- setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets;
- providing hand drying facilities - either paper towels or electrical dryers.

3. HELP STAFF WHO CAN WORK FROM HOME TO CONTINUE TO DO SO

The Government's overriding objective is that everyone should work from home, unless they cannot do so. You should take all reasonable steps to help staff who can work from home to do so by:-



- discussing home working arrangements;
- ensuring they have the right equipment, for example remote access to work systems;
- including them in all necessary communications;
- looking after their physical and mental wellbeing.

4. MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING, WHERE POSSIBLE

This is particularly difficult for members of the funeral profession and, for certain circumstances, necessitates the use of PPE for many day-to-day activities.

In terms of normal office activities, where possible you should enable staff to maintain two metres distance by:-

- putting up signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidance;
- avoiding sharing workstations;
- using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance;
- arranging one-way traffic through the workplace, if possible;
- switching to seeing visitors by appointment only, if possible.

In terms of gatherings at funeral ceremonies and dealings with mourners, you should do all you can to ensure people from separate households can maintain a two-metre distance from each other and your staff at all times. It is recommended that you conduct a risk assessment for each funeral, in accordance with the NAFD's assessment framework, which can be accessed via the NAFD's COVID-19 website.

Although, once again, it is likely that most NAFD members will already have established practice in this respect, please see the Public Health guidance documents listed above for activities where PPE is required and the section below for information on how to manage transmission risk where social distancing is not possible.

“ MAKE SURE YOU CONSULT WITH YOUR STAFF ON WORKING PRACTICES, ANYTHING THEY MAY BE CONCERNED ABOUT OR IDEAS THEY MAY HAVE - AND ALSO WITH ANY TRADE UNIONS THAT REPRESENT THEM. SHARE THE RESULTS OF THE RISK ASSESSMENT WITH YOUR WORKFORCE AND YOU COULD ALSO SHARE THEM ON YOUR WEBSITE TO GIVE POTENTIAL CLIENTS CONFIDENCE IN THE STEPS YOU ARE TAKING TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE. ”

5. WHERE SOCIAL DISTANCING IS NOT POSSIBLE, MANAGE TRANSMISSION RISK

Where it's not possible for staff to remain two metres apart, you should do everything practical to manage the transmission risk by:-

- considering whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate;
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible;
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other;
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working whenever possible;
- staggering arrival and departure times;
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering';
- encouraging the wearing of masks.

We are aware that there are many funeral homes where fixed teams/partnering is now a well-established practice and is working well. However, where your workforce is not large enough for this to be possible, follow the guidance as far as is practicable.

MONITORING COVID-SECURE PRACTICES

Local authorities are establishing monitoring services to ensure that businesses are following COVID-secure guidance. In May, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) confirmed that it would undertake spot inspections of businesses to check the procedures they have put in place and that businesses that don't follow the rules could face legal action.

CARRYING OUT TEMPERATURE CHECKS IN THE WORK PLACE

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, the legal position concerning taking employees' temperatures in connection with the coronavirus is similar to the medical testing of employees for other reasons.

The easiest way for employers to take employees' temperatures, or conduct medical tests, is to seek the employees' consent. The contractual terms agreed in the employment contract or accompanying policies may be of assistance to employers who want to check employees' temperatures at work.

WHAT IMPACT COULD THE NHS 'TEST AND TRACE' HAVE ON FUNERAL WORKFORCES?

Given the frequency with which funeral employees come into contact with people that have tested positive for COVID-19, the new 'test and trace' system ('test and detect in Scotland') has the potential to be problematic, with large parts of the workforce potentially having to self-isolate. The NAFD has raised this with the Cabinet Office and, at the time of going to publication, was waiting on an urgent reply - which will be emailed to members when received.

For a general overview of how the system should work, visit the *Advice for Funeral Directors* section of the NAFD's COVID-19 website.

Please regularly check the NAFD's COVID-19 website for updates: nafdcovid19.org.uk

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