

COVID-19

PROTOCOL FOR CARE HOMES AND FUNERAL DIRECTORS DURING COVID-19

In May, the NAFD published a protocol 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 endorsed by the Care Provider Alliance and the Deceased Management

Advisory Group which, collectively, bring together 16 organisations from across the care and funeral sectors. The NAFD would also like to thank Co-op Funeralcare for its support in developing the protocol.

The protocol is designed for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland collectively unless there are specific differences, which are highlighted below.

THE PROTOCOL

Public Health England published *Guidance for the care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)* on 15 May 2020. This guidance has been developed to ensure that:-

- the bodies of those who have died as a result of the coronavirus are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect; and
- people who work to care for the deceased are protected from the infection.

This guidance is in place because it is believed there is a continuing risk of infection from the virus after death from body fluids and tissues.

The guidance also includes advice for individuals working in residential care homes and hospices where a death is suspected to have occurred from COVID-19.

The impact on other people living in the residential facility has also been considered by all involved.

COMMUNICATION WITH FUNERAL DIRECTORS

When a resident dies, contact will be made with the funeral director to arrange collection of the deceased. It is important that the funeral director is provided with full information about the cause of death (if known) and the presence of COVID-19 in the care setting (if known) by the care provider to ensure that the staff responsible for collecting the deceased can prepare appropriately, specifically ensuring they have the appropriate level of PPE to protect themselves and the care home residents and staff.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14.



TYPICAL QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED ARE:-

- Was the deceased tested and found positive as having COVID-19?
- Was the deceased diagnosed as having a respiratory infection or pneumonia?
- Have there been any confirmed (tested positive) or suspected (not yet tested) cases of COVID-19 in the care home in the last 14 days?
- Has death been verified by a suitably competent person? Please check the *COVID-19 - Verifying death in times of emergency* guidance.
- Is a doctor able to issue a death certificate? (Details of doctor required to ensure swift emailing of MCCD to registrar)?
- Did the person and/or have the family decided on burial or cremation?
- Did the person have a faith/religion/belief/non-belief position that the funeral director should be aware of?

Best practice is that these questions should be posed by the funeral director to the care home as part of the communication process when contact is first made. Equally, the care home provider should also be able to share this information to the funeral director when contact is first made.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN DEATH AND COLLECTION

Funeral directors will seek to arrange the collection of the deceased at the earliest opportunity. The estimated time of arrival will be communicated, with the names of the team attending. Care homes will need to refer to the *Guidance for the care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus*, specifically the section on guidance for residential care settings including care homes and hospices.

This is as follows:-

- ensure that all residents maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) or are in another room to the deceased person (noting the possible visual impact of the level of PPE worn by those collecting the body as well as the risk);
- avoid all non-essential staff contact with the deceased person to minimise risk of exposure. If a member of staff does need to provide care for the deceased person, this should be kept to a minimum and correct PPE used as set out in the guidance on *How to Work Safely in Care Homes*;
- you should follow the usual processes for dealing with a death in your setting, ensuring that infection prevention and control measures are implemented as set out in the guidance on *How to Work Safely in Care Homes*.

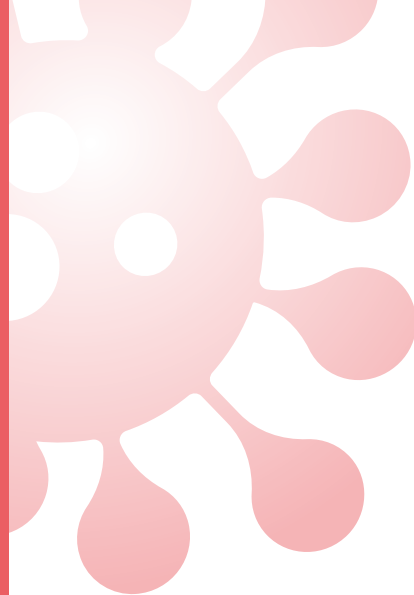
COLLECTION OF THE DECEASED

A time for collection of the deceased will be agreed between the funeral director and the care home provider. Care should be taken to identify the best possible time for the funeral director to gain access to the care home and the room where the deceased lies. Particular consideration should be paid to:-

- minimising the likelihood of the funeral director encountering residents or staff moving around the home;
- minimising the likelihood of residents witnessing the collection and movement of the deceased to the funeral director's vehicle;
- ensuring that the type of vehicle and equipment used is appropriate.

The guidance regarding infection control during the period prior to collection of the deceased (see above) should also inform the agreed process for collection of the deceased. Care home staff should prepare for the arrival of the funeral director and advise them on arrival of the route to be followed whilst on the premises to ensure infection control protocols are respected.

The care home should seek to identify the best possible location for the funeral director's vehicle to be parked during the collection process. Whilst the nearest location is desirable, consideration should also be paid to ensuring the privacy and dignity of the deceased, so any public areas viewable from outside of the care home should be avoided.



USE OF PPE BY FUNERAL DIRECTORS

The use of appropriate PPE is important to protect vulnerable residents in care homes, and staff, from the possibility of infection from outside of the home. It is also important that funeral directors are not exposed to infection, or the risk of infection, when entering care homes to collect the deceased.

For this reason, all funeral directors will use the Public Health England (PHE) recommended PPE when entering care

homes, *irrespective of whether there is any evidence to suggest that COVID-19 is present* in the home or has been at any point in the previous 14 days. This is especially important now that PHE has declared that the whole of the UK is in a state of sustained transmission of COVID-19.

No comment or judgement will be made by the funeral directors on the level of PPE being worn by care staff unless a risk is clear, and this will be reported back after collection.

Reference to the appropriate PHE guidance is contained in *Guidance for the care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus*.

PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND GUIDANCE ON PPE REQUIREMENTS, AS OF MAY 2020

Activity	Disposable gloves (single use)	Disposable plastic apron	Disposable gown	Fluid resistant surgical mask (FRSM)	Eye protection**
Death verification	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Risk assess
Moving the deceased	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Risk assess
Washing the deceased	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Risk assess
Preparing for transportation, for example shrouding, placing in a body bag/coffin	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Risk assess
Transporting the deceased in a body bag/coffin/cloth wrapping	No	No	No	No	No
Travelling to a funeral	No	No	No	No	No

*the outside of the body bag/coffin may be wiped down with a combined detergent disinfectant solution as normally used within mortuary practice. Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, combination, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants.

**Eye and face protection is recommended only if there is an anticipated/likely risk of contamination with splashes, droplets or blood or body fluids.

MANAGEMENT OF FUNERALS AND ALTERNATIVES TO FUNERAL ATTENDANCE

The full protocol document also covers key advice on organising a funeral within the Government's COVID-19 social distancing regulations and alternative options, such as livestreaming, for those mourners unable to attend.

REVIEW

The protocol is scheduled to be reviewed and updated on 14 July 2020.

To review the full protocol document, as well as all 'Frequently Asked Questions' about funerals during the pandemic, members are urged to visit nafdcovid19.org.uk.