

# Government sets out plans to ensure bereaved families can attend funerals during pandemic

- Councils asked to introduce safe and innovative approaches so that bereaved families can attend funerals
- The government is clear that close family must be allowed to attend funerals in person
- [Guidance published](#) on contingency measures needed by local authorities in managing funerals

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke today (17 April 2020) wrote to all councils in England to ensure that family members can attend the funerals of their loved ones and that the wishes of the deceased are respected during this pandemic.

The government has consistently been clear that it is important that funerals are not delayed and take place in line with social distancing guidelines – to protect both those attending and staff.

In a letter to councils Local Government Minister Simon Clarke MP asked all local authorities to work with faith groups and funeral directors to develop safe, sensitive and innovative ways for funerals to take place. He praised the majority of councils who are already working hard to ensure that family members can attend the funerals of their loved ones and that the wishes of the deceased are respected during this pandemic.

Many councils across the country have already introduced innovative approaches to support the wishes of the bereaved and create the closest experience to a normal cremation or burial as possible whilst keeping crematoria staff and those attending funerals of loved ones safe.

Secretary of State Robert Jenrick MP said:

It is only right that families have a final opportunity to pay their last respects to those they love at this incredibly difficult time.

Close family must be able to attend funerals in person during this pandemic and can safely do so by following in line with social distancing guidelines. We will continue to work closely with councils to ensure that safe and sensitive measures are put in

place all across the country.

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke MP said:

Nobody wants to have to consider funeral plans for a loved one at this difficult time – but it's important that funerals are not delayed.

Many councils have already put in place innovative arrangements so funerals can take place in a safe and sensitive fashion. I want all councils to consider how best to facilitate funerals so close family can attend and mourn their loved ones in an appropriate way. This will help to ensure that people can be laid to rest with dignity, and that their final wishes and beliefs are respected while we protect the public from the spread of coronavirus.

The government has also published new guidance for councils which outlines contingency measures as set out in Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act. These powers allow councils to issue direction if required on whether to bury or cremate someone, to direct crematoria to operate longer hours and to direct funeral directors to have shorter services. The government has always been clear that these will only be triggered in exceptional circumstances if there is a public health risk.

The government has worked closely with faith groups to ensure religious requirements and wishes are considered when making funeral arrangements, including the need for burial or cremation.

Read the [letter from Minister Clarke](#) in full.

The government has not yet designated any emergency powers to a local authority. When any designation is made a notice will be published on [GOV.UK](#).

In this notice, the reasons behind any designation will be clear.

If an area is designated they may be able to direct crematoria to operate longer hours; businesses to use their vehicles to transport bodies or resources; funeral directors to hold shorter services; shorter times for body storage.

View the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#).