



Dear Colleagues,

ICCM Response to Covid-19 and ongoing support to members

We are in an unprecedented and fast-changing situation, with advice from Government appearing daily. We will continue to provide updates via our website and e-newsletters as soon as possible after receiving such advice.

We would also like to reiterate that we are here to support you with both technical and emotional guidance – these are tough times for all of us and I’m sure we are all worried about our families and friends, as well as ourselves, whilst wishing to continue providing the best service we can to bereaved families.

Government Guidance on Maintaining Educational Provision

The Government has published **Guidance for schools, colleges and local authorities on maintaining educational provision**. In it they state:

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision:

Key public services

*This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, **those responsible for the management of the deceased**, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.*

This means that if you work in cemeteries and/or crematoria and have children, their school should continue to accept them so that you can continue in work.

A full copy of the Guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision?fbclid=IwAR02j2BAYWKUzUiM4MzbCF94wi8ZbV0uWAoTLGy8P8BJkhjbMxPmto4SLes>

Coronavirus Bill

A bill to enable Government to introduce temporary measures during the Coronavirus outbreak was presented to Parliament by the Government on Thursday 19 March 2020. A second reading of the Bill is due on Monday 23rd March. The purpose of the bill is to ‘make provision in connection with coronavirus; and for connected purposes.’ The bill will allow the Government to switch on various powers for a temporary period as and when they may be needed. The bill includes several sections that will impact on burial and cremation – see in particular Section 56 and Schedule 27 - https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/cbill_2019-20210122_en_1.htm

Some of the key provisions relevant to our work are:

- Enable any registered medical practitioner to issue a medical certificate of cause of death without having attended the deceased, provided they are sufficiently able from the available information to ascertain the cause of death.
- Extend from 14 to 28 days the period which an attending medical practitioner must have seen the deceased prior to death.
- Remove the requirement for the death to be reported to the coroner, when the certifying medical practitioner did not attend the deceased, in cases where another medical practitioner had seen the deceased within 28 days prior to death or has seen the body after death.
- Remove the requirement for a death or still-birth informant to attend and provide details in person and the requirement for them to sign the register.
- Extend the list of qualified informants to include a funeral director (where they are acting on behalf of the family).
- Allow the electronic transfer of documents relating to the certification and registration process (e.g. transfer of the MCCD from the medical practitioner to the registrar and the form for burial or cremation (the Green), from the registrar to the relevant authority).
- Permit cremations to proceed on the basis of one medical certificate (Cremation Form 4), without the requirement to also complete a confirmatory medical certificate (Cremation form 5).
- While a notifiable death, it should be noted that COVID-19 is not a reason on its own to refer a death to a coroner under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and the Bill ensures there is no requirement for jury inquests into deaths which are suspected to have been caused by Covid-19. Though Coroners will retain the discretion to hold a jury inquest where they consider this appropriate.
- Provide powers for Government to direct local authorities where there is insufficient capacity to deal with dead bodies

We will continue to monitor the progress of the Bill through Parliament and keep you appraised.

Guidance from Royal College of Pathologists and Association of Anatomical Pathology Technicians

Guidance has been issued to those working in mortuaries - Guidance for care of deceased during COVID-19 pandemic - <https://www.rcpath.org/uploads/assets/0b7d77fa-b385-4c60-b47dde930477494b/G200-TBPs-Guidance-for-care-of-deceased-during-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

There is no suggestion that deceased persons present a greater risk of infection than, for example, those dying of flu. There is no restriction on viewing or embalming, subject to the correct use of the PPE described in the Guidance. There is no suggestion that pacemakers or other implants can't be removed prior to cremation, again subject to the correct use of the recommended PPE.

Guidance on Muslim Burials

The Eternal Gardens at Kemnal Park Cemetery and Ceremonial Gardens have created a web page to collate the latest information in relation to the Covid-19. It contains some useful guidance relating to Muslim burials, and can be accessed here <https://eternalgardens.org.uk/coronavirus-resource-hub/>.

ATI Cremators User Group

There is concern about those crematoria that have installed ATI cremators following the news of the liquidation of ATI (Environment) UK. In view of this Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) has offered to support operators to develop a User Group in order to share best practice, solutions, experience and ideas. If you should wish to be involved in an ATI User Group please forward your details to the Secretary of the FBCA, Brendan Day, at secretary@fbca.org.uk.

Please continue to follow Government guidance and stay safe.