

Message from the Ministry of Justice

As you will know, the Government has advised that, in order to contain, the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), people should – among other things – limit social contact and avoid non-essential travel where possible. We wanted to let you know about the changes that the MoJ casework team is making to our business practices in light of this advice. We would be grateful if you could cascade this note to your members so they are aware.

- First – we will be prioritising any exhumation applications which are required to facilitate new burials (as opposed to facilitating only the disturbance of existing remains). Where this is the case, we would be grateful if burial authorities could indicate it clearly on the application form.
- More generally, although we will continue to accept and process postal applications for exhumation licences, this will unavoidably take longer than our standard turnaround time while the revised working practices are in place.
- We would therefore be grateful if, wherever possible, applications could be submitted electronically to coroners@justice.gov.uk. If applicants have difficulty scanning completed applications (for electronic transmission), we will also accept photos uploaded into, or attached to, an email, provided that all the details in the application form are legible.
- As paper licences are not required in order for an exhumation to proceed, we will not be issuing these for the duration of the revised procedures. Instead, all licences will be issued electronically to the relevant burial authority. We will also send an electronic copy to the bereaved family (where they are the applicant) and we would therefore be grateful if burial authorities could ask families to include an email address on the application form for this purpose. If no email address is provided, we will send the licence to the burial authority only and will indicate that it has not been possible to copy it to the applicant.
- We believe that these measures will enable us to continue to deliver our services as effectively as possible in the circumstances resulting from the pandemic, and we are very grateful for your patience and co-operation during this exceptional period. We will continue to keep the situation under review and will let you know as quickly as possible if further changes become necessary.
- Please cascade this to your members and if there are any queries please direct them to coroners@justice.gov.uk