

General Principles

The objective of the COVID-19 immunisation programme is to protect individuals at highest risk from serious illness or death. The objective of occupational immunisation of frontline health and social care staff is to protect workers at high risk of exposure who provide care to vulnerable individuals.

When defining “*Laboratory and Pathology Staff*”, the JCVI prioritised frontline funeral operatives and mortuary technicians/embalmers as being *both at risk of exposure and likely to spend a considerable amount of time in care homes and hospital settings where they may also expose multiple patients.*

On the basis of clinical advice, the important principle is therefore that those within the funeral sector who come in contact with the deceased and who spend time in care homes and/or hospital settings should be prioritised for vaccination. The list below has been developed to assist in defining who in the funeral sector should be taken into account for vaccination.

- Funeral director staff who handle, assist in the removal of, or have direct contact with the deceased’s remains or personal effects;
- Funeral director staff who may routinely have close contact with the deceased within the funeral home setting;
- Funeral director staff who routinely clean those areas of their premises which come into direct contact with the deceased (e.g. surfaces where the deceased have been stored or otherwise handled), or private ambulances or similar vehicles used to transport the deceased prior to being coffined;
- Mortuary technicians and embalmers.

The proper use of non-pharmaceutical interventions remains crucial in reducing the spread of COVID-19. The following measures are recommended to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to protect people at increased risk of severe illness.

- Follow the **physical distancing** advice.
- Follow the guidance to **self-isolate** if you or a household member has symptoms of COVID-19 or have a COVID-19 diagnosis
- Follow **Test and Protect** advice.
- Follow **hand hygiene** and **respiratory hygiene** advice.
- Proper use of **PPE** where necessary
- Regular **cleaning** of environmental surfaces (e.g. coffins) and public spaces

It is important to note that at the time of providing this advice it is not known if the vaccines that are currently available for COVID-19 stop transmission. Even if an individual has been vaccinated, this will not negate the requirement for self-isolation should they be identified as a close contact. COVID-19 vaccination should not be a consideration when planning staffing levels or business continuity arrangements.