

SAIF's Coronavirus (Covid-19) update 16.07.21



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In the text below, links to further information on third-party websites are underlined and in light blue.

England

Changes affecting funerals from Monday

As of Monday, 19th July restrictions affecting funeral services in England will no longer apply. Instead, funeral directors and those attending funerals are advised to follow new guidance, which was issued yesterday evening. The key points are:

- There are no legal limits on the number of people who can attend funerals or commemorative events, however, those attending, arranging or managing such events should consider that it may be harder to manage the risk of spreading Covid-19 if spaces are crowded, and **venue operators may choose to set their own limits**
- There will be no requirement to stay two metres apart from people you do not live with, and venues are not required to follow social distancing rules
- People who are self-isolating or who are in quarantine following international travel may be present at a funeral where a legal exemption applies
- Covid-secure rules, including table service requirements and restrictions on singing, chanting and dancing, have been lifted
- Face coverings will no longer be required by law in any setting. However the government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas.

The full guidance, which includes key infection control actions for those attending funerals, can be read [here](#). Please note that this guidance does not change advice for care of the deceased, which can be found [here](#). Additionally, SAIF makes the following recommendations to members in relation to the new circumstances:

Self isolation requirements

After 16th August people who have been fully vaccinated (i.e. both doses of a vaccine) or those aged under 18 will not have to self-isolate after coming into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. Instead Covid contacts will be required to get a PCR test as soon as possible. To be clear, people who test positive still have to self-isolate regardless of vaccination status. SAIF recommends that members keep health protection measures in place, particularly as infections continue to increase. The risk of temporary business closures due to staff having to self-isolate remains high. SAIF and the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) are petitioning the UK Government for the self-isolation exemption period to be brought forward from 16th August for funeral staff to help minimise impacts on small businesses.

Temporary dividers and screens for vehicles

As there is no specific Government guidance on limousine screens, it is up to each business to decide whether they wish to remove dividers from 19th July. However, SAIF members may wish to consult clients on this issue, particularly as a third wave is underway and is expected to last until September with a possible fourth wave expected from November. Some clients may feel safer with a screen in place.

Staff wearing face masks

Funeral directors may wish to consult staff on company policy for face masks, as they will no longer be mandatory from 19th July. Please bear in mind that infections are increasing, so it may be sensible to continue with masks for tasks such as community removals. Additionally, as an employer you have a legal duty to protect your staff and we have attached a [health and safety risk assessment](#) to assist you in this. SAIF recommends that you use this alongside the Government's [working safely guidance](#) and the Health & Safety Executive's [risk assessment](#).

Collection of contact details

Funeral directors may find variations in how service venue operators participate in NHS Test and Trace from 19th July. Some may still require contact details of mourners until at least 16th August, and possibly beyond, whilst others will expect people attending funerals to scan a venue QR code with their smartphones. SAIF encourages members to stay up-to-date with this information and communicate requirements to clients accordingly.

Funerals or wakes in a private garden or residence

These types of event will be permitted from 19th July, however, SAIF advises that a Covid-19 [risk assessment](#) should be carried out if funeral business employees are in attendance. Organisers of indoor events should be mindful of guidance on ventilation which can be found [here](#).

Open coffin viewings, and viewings in private residential settings

Open coffin viewings and viewings in private domestic dwellings can commence but businesses should consider safety measures, particularly for Covid deaths. Viewings of Covid-19 deceased should take place under the guidance of a trained professional. For viewings on funeral directors' premises, businesses may wish to require face coverings, limited mourner numbers in chapels and transparent plastic lids for Covid-19 deceased persons.

Performance of religious rituals

If religious or cultural practices involve close contact with the deceased, when it is not possible to determine whether the person died of Covid-19, PPE should be worn and the activity supervised by a trained professional. Clinically vulnerable people should avoid contact with the body of a deceased person even if PPE is worn.

Booster vaccinations

SAIF is awaiting details from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) about a vaccine booster campaign in the autumn which is likely to be delivered in two phases. The first phase will provide booster doses to the most vulnerable and frontline health and social care workers. SAIF will petition for funeral workers to be included in priority groups.

Scotland

Funeral service mourner numbers to increase

From Monday 19th July, Scotland will move to a [modified Protection Level 0](#), resulting in the following changes for funeral services:

- Up to 200 people will be able to attend funeral services and post-funeral gatherings, with physical distancing
- General physical distancing requirements in public spaces, including regulated venues (e.g. crematoriums) will be reduced from two metres to one metre, both indoors and outdoors

- General gatherings limits on outdoor gatherings in a public space will be 15 people from 15 households. Additionally, there are no requirements to physically distance outside within a social grouping of up to 15 people, but one metre distancing should be maintained from all others outside
- Limits on outdoor gatherings at a private dwelling (private gathering) will be 15 people from 15 households. No physical distancing is required at private dwellings
- Limits on indoor gatherings at a private dwelling will be eight people from four households. No physical distancing is required in a private dwelling
- Test and Protect remains an important measure in responding to the pandemic, and requirements to wear face coverings indoors will remain in place.

Wales

Further restrictions eased this week

Wales will move from alert level two to one on Saturday, 17th July, with [the following measures](#) taking force:

- Up to six people can meet indoors in private homes and holiday accommodation
- A specific requirement for employers to provide comprehensive information on the risks and mitigations identified in the Covid risk assessment with their employees
- Organised indoor events can take place for up to 1,000 people seated and up to 200 standing
- Limits on the numbers of people who can meet outdoors, as well as the legal requirement to social distance, will be scrapped.

Additional easements are set to take place on 7th August when Wales moves to alert level zero, permitting:

- There will be no legal limits on the number of people who can meet others
- Face coverings will continue to be required by law in most indoor public places and on public transport, with the exception of hospitality settings
- Indoors social distancing measures will be replaced with a requirement for firms and venues to assess the Covid risk.

SAIF awaits further guidance with regard to the final point on indoors social distancing measures and what they mean for funeral services and wakes, which are currently subject to a risk assessment to determine mourner numbers.

Northern Ireland

News awaited on possible easements

Officials in Northern Ireland are due to meet on 12th August to decide next steps and the current coronavirus restrictions can be found [here](#). SAIF will advise members as soon as an update becomes available.