

SAIF's Coronavirus (Covid-19) update 27.07.21



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

England

Reasonable excuse for leaving self-isolation applies to funeral directors

Following lengthy discussions between the Cabinet Office and the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG), of which SAIF is a member, the Government has agreed to include funeral directors amongst critical services professions that may be eligible to leave self-isolation to attend work, if a certain threshold has been passed. That is, their non-attendance at work is likely to lead to an immediate threat of disruption that would cause harm to public welfare - and they have had their second dose of a Covid vaccine more than 14 days ago.

Unfortunately, this is not an automatic exemption. To be considered for permission to leave self-isolation to attend work, funeral directors must use [this spreadsheet](#), completing the necessary fields on the tab marked 'APPLICATION', and email it to funeral.sector.requests@cabinetoffice.gov.uk and copy in ccs.control@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. Funeral directors are required to consider other steps before applying for a member of staff to be granted permission to leave self-isolation, including:

- Providing cover with other existing staff or temporary staff;
- Deferring non-urgent tasks; and

- Making reasonable alternative provision.

Please note that these measures are in place until 16th August, after which anyone who has been fully vaccinated with both doses of a Covid vaccine will not be required to self-isolate when coming into contact with someone who has tested positive.

Anyone who has been granted permission to leave self-isolation to attend work must continue to self-isolate when off-duty.

Where it is agreed that the threshold is met, the following conditions will apply:

- The individual would have to self-isolate until a negative PCR test result. It may be reasonable if strictly necessary to go to work before receiving the results of the PCR test, but only if they have taken an LFD test just before doing so and received a negative result
- The individual would take daily LFD tests, report the results daily to the line manager and self-isolate immediately if they test positive
- The individual would have to self-isolate if they show any Covid-19 symptoms, no matter how mild and get a new PCR test. They would then need to self-isolate and could only go to work if the new PCR test was negative
- The individual would only leave self-isolation to attend - and travel to and from – work for specific, named purposes
- The individual could, if strictly necessary, travel on public transport or with others to and from work but would have to wear a face covering at all times
- Social distancing should be optimised and, wherever possible, maintained at all times in the workplace. Face coverings should be worn at all times
- Individuals would be advised to avoid breaks/meals with other staff and other social contact in enclosed spaces with other staff
- Measures need to be taken to ensure affected workplaces are Covid secure.

For further information, please see [this letter](#) from the Cabinet Office to the funeral profession.

Protocols produced by funeral directors following restrictions easing

We are grateful to two SAIF members, George Locke, of R. Locke & Son in Warwickshire, and Lucy Porter, of H. Porter & Sons from Stourbridge, West Midlands, for allowing us to share their protocols on infection control measures following the Step 4 easing of coronavirus restrictions in England on 19th July. H. Porter & Sons document can be

downloaded [here](#), and R. Locke & Son [here](#).

Scotland

SAIF Scotland works with Government on self-isolation levels

SAIF Scotland is assisting the Scottish Government Burial and Cremation Team in researching the level of staff self-isolating. We await further guidance from the Burial and Cremation Team for funeral directors.

Cremation and ashes legislation changes

As of 22nd July, the provisions of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 relating to cremation applications and handling of ashes that had been suspended due to the UK Coronavirus Act 2020 are now back in force.

Applications for cremation

With regard to applications for cremation, when an applicant makes a declaration that they have the legal entitlement to apply for the cremation that declaration will have to be correct and where section 65 or section 66 of the 2016 Act is applicable the relevant hierarchy applied.

The cremation application form should be completed by the applicant. While it is understood that there will be a few occasions where an applicant will be unable to complete the form themselves, funeral directors should not routinely complete the form. Only where the applicant is unable to do so should the funeral director act as a scribe for the applicant and complete the answers to the questions on the form.

It is not permitted for a funeral director to sign a cremation application form on behalf of an applicant. If an applicant cannot sign a cremation application due to adherence to restrictions or NHS advice on staying at home, physical distancing or shielding, a [supplementary form](#) has been produced for use by funeral directors and cremation authorities to ensure arrangements can continue and an audit trail of this action is captured, to ensure the cremation can proceed.

Ashes retention

Normal duties are resumed for the retention of ashes and funeral directors in possession of ashes must take reasonable steps to ascertain applicants' wishes.

Further details about the changes can be found [here](#).

Wales

SAIF assists Senedd ahead of possible self-isolation exemptions

SAIF has been assisting the Senedd as the Welsh Government prepares for risk assessment methods and legal frameworks. We hope to learn more about self-isolation exemptions for funeral directors soon.

Workplace risk assessment published

The Welsh Government has published a new risk assessment document for public premises and workplaces to help businesses minimise infection risks. The document can be downloaded [here](#).