

Deceased Management Advisory Group

To: Local Resilience Forums

14th April 2020

DMAG Guidance to Local Resilience Forums on emergency excess death planning.

The Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) wishes to support your endeavours in emergency planning during the COVID-19 pandemic via the Local Resilience Forums in England and Wales.

DMAG is represented by the national trade bodies for funeral services, cremation and burial as well as funeral supplier associations (Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries; Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities; Funeral and Furnishers Manufacturers Association; Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management; National Association of Funeral Directors; National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors; and The Cremation Society).

The UK's funeral directors have a key role to play at national and regional level in the management of excess fatalities caused by Covid-19.

Members of the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) and the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) together have immense local knowledge and expertise and are trained to handle large volumes of deaths with dignity, professionalism and respect.

As such, it is absolutely essential to bereaved families that caring for people who have died is not unnecessarily sacrificed in the name of tackling an emergency. Particularly in parts of the country where the volume of deaths remains more or less in line with typical excess winter flu fatalities.

It is also incredibly important that local authorities and other members of the emergency response process involve a wide range of funeral directors in a transparent and collaborative way, so as to ensure the best possible resources are brought into play at the right time.

Whilst the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020, upon triggering by the Secretary of State, give local authorities the power to direct the deceased management process, there should still be some basic principles by which we move forward to ensure a high standard of care and dignity. We feel that these are:

- The NAFD and SAIF are best placed to advise on local funeral director provision and have the ability to identify and bring together resources in the most effective way to benefit their respective communities



FBCA
Federation of Burial
& Cremation Authorities



ICCM
Institute of Cemetery and
Crematorium Management



The Cremation Society

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- That any emergency procurement process for the transportation and storage of the deceased is accomplished by a public and transparent tender process.
- The dignity of the deceased should be paramount at all times and existing mortuary provision should be considered first and foremost before procuring and repurposing industrial storage equipment that would almost certainly be unacceptable to bereaved families at any other time
- Removal of deceased persons from a range of settings should be carried out only by professionals who know how to ensure correct care is provided, complying with infection risk protocols, health and safety, and dignity requirements
- The absence of a requirement for a tender process in engaging the services of funeral directors should not remove the need to engage a range of stakeholders to ensure best practice and value
- A deceased person's last will and testament should be considered and conversations entered into with families to ensure compliance. There is only one chance to get this right
- A preferred funeral director should not be prevented from supporting a family in any circumstances and the process of storing a deceased person in an emergency mortuary should not result in additional costs for families
- Families who have invested in prepaid funeral plans should be made aware of refund options in the event that it is not possible to deliver pre-agreed elements of a funeral.
- Any data collected on storage capacity, PPE supplies and staff resilience numbers require the need to maintain strict confidentiality and not shared with the commercial competitors.

We trust that the above guidelines, which are intended to ensure the management of deaths in our communities do not become a cold and uncaring process, are helpful and provide a way forward with this very sensitive aspect of the Covid-19 crisis.

Should you wish to discuss further any of the above, please contact info@saif.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

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