

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive of Public Health England.
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Rd
London SE1 8UG

Copied to:

Michael Gove, Minister for the Cabinet Office
Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health

27 March 2020

Dear Mr Selbie

We, the undersigned, represent the entire funeral, cremation and burial sector and yesterday we completed our third conference call with the Cabinet Office to discuss the deceased management sector's role in the response to COVID-19.

Having consistently reiterated our concerns at the lack of industry-specific guidance for those working with deceased people, both during these meetings and in writing, and having contributed to draft guidance some weeks ago that is still to be published, we are horrified to have been informed, yet again, that the guidance on the correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by those caring for deceased people is still 'coming soon'. We were led to expect that updated PHE guidance would have been published by now.

We understand that scientific understanding of the disease is still developing but, in the absence of specific guidance, we are left having to interpret advice meant for those in a healthcare setting, which leaves so many questions unanswered about what PPE is really needed. The fact of having to work without clear guidance is causing extreme anxiety among funeral workers, particularly given the desperate shortage of PPE available.

The Government has designated all those involved in deceased management as key workers in the fight against COVID-19. We believe it is simply not acceptable for these frontline staff to have to continue operating in a vacuum and would like to ask you to act, today, to provide clarity.

In addition to caring for those who are confirmed to have died from COVID-19, funeral directors, cremation and burial staff inform us that there are significant additional numbers of other people dying, compared to a normal March, who may well also have died from the disease, but were undiagnosed at the time of death.

For funeral workers, not knowing if they are using the correct PPE for all of these cases too is adding to the growing concerns.



FBCA
Federation of Burial
& Cremation Authorities



ICCM
Institute of Cemetery and
Crematorium Management



The Cremation Society

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Please could we ask you to respond urgently to confirm when you will publish the guidance that is so desperately needed? As soon as we have it, we will disseminate it across all organisations in the deceased management sector.

Yours sincerely,

The Death Management Advisory Group (DMAG)

- Richard Baradell, Chief Executive - Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC)
- Brendan Day, Secretary, Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA)
- Alun Tucker, Chief Executive - Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers' Association (FFMA)
- Julie Dunk, Chief Executive - Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)
- Jon Levett, Chief Executive - National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
- Terry Tennens, Chief Executive - National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF)
- Miriam Deacon, Chief Executive - The Cremation Society



FBCA
Federation of Burial
& Cremation Authorities



ICCM
Institute of Cemetery and
Crematorium Management



The Cremation Society