



Funeral activities as a part of 'Frontline Healthcare' to be prioritised for vaccination in line with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)

Advice on the clarification of the meaning of 'Funeral operatives', as stated in Chapter 14a of Public Health England's (PHE's) Green Book, was provided to ministers in January. The recommendations in that advice were agreed.

This explanatory note reflects that agreement and outlines those activities performed by funeral staff which expose workers undertaking them to risk of not only acquiring COVID-19 infection but also of transmitting that infection.

The following functions involve exposure to risk of COVID-19 infection and of transmission through contact with multiple patients particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, within a care home or hospital setting:

1. The driving of private ambulances
2. Funeral direction
3. Preparing the deceased and embalming in a hospital-based mortuary

1. The **driving of private ambulances** involves transporting the deceased from their home or healthcare setting to the mortuary. NHS Ambulance staff are considered 'frontline healthcare' workers due to frequent contact with patients entering a hospital setting and are at a high risk of acquiring infection. The same risk of exposure and onward transmissions to the vulnerable applies to this activity within the funeral sector.
2. **Directing a funeral** may include activities such as entering a hospital to transport the deceased or entering a healthcare environment to support the deceased's family. There is a heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19 when hosting funeral ceremonies due to the legal exemption to break self-isolation to attend a funeral of a close family member. There is a risk of onward transmission by those carrying out this work through frequently entering healthcare settings.
3. **Preparing the deceased and embalming in a hospital-based setting** - Guidance published by PHE for care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 states there is a continuing risk of infection from body fluid and tissue. Preparing the deceased and the embalming process usually takes place within a mortuary. These activities, when carried out within a hospital or hospital-based mortuary, carry a risk of transmitting infection to multiple patients vulnerable to COVID-19.