

Coronavirus and funerals: latest information and advice.

The Government has updated the guidance for managing a funeral service during the coronavirus pandemic and Milton Keynes Council policy regarding attendance at funerals is stated below.

Attendance at funerals

Cremations

After careful consideration the number of seats in our crematorium chapels has changed from Monday 12th October 2020.

To enable the Bereavement Services to follow the most recent Government guidance and to ensure we can effectively socially distance at all services, we will be restricting the maximum number of mourners allowed to attend services to 30 in the Oak chapel and 16 in the Willow chapel.

These are the maximum individual capacities and are based on chairs being set out into individual households.

Our challenge is to adhere to the Government's Covid-19 guidance and allow sufficient space for social distancing for each household/bubble, when we do not know the number of households attending a given service.

Curtains will be closed in the chapels at the end of each service. Flowers will not be permitted to be placed on the coffins once the service has commenced but can be left in front of the catafalque.

If requested, family may carry in the coffin but will be required to wear a face covering and gloves.

Burials

We allow 30 mourners to full burials, witness scatterings and burials of cremated remains in our cemeteries. However no more than **10** persons will be permitted around the immediate graveside or urn plot area. This is to ensure there is a 2 metre safe distance between all those attending these services. The remaining 20 mourners must stand further back from the grave and follow the instructions of the Milton Keynes Council Cemetery Manager who will be in attendance, who will advise them based upon the ground conditions and position of the grave.

The Funeral Director, their bearers, the Minister/Celebrant and the cemetery staff are not included in the 10 individuals that are allowed to gather around the grave/urn space.

We must be advised 48 hours prior to the burial if there is more than one Minister/Celebrant.

After the service has taken place and the coffin/ashes has been placed into the grave space, the 10 mourners around the immediate graveside or urn plot must move away to allow another 10 mourners to come closer and pay their respects. In other words, there must always be a maximum of 10 mourners at the graveside or urn plot at any time.

The Cemetery Manager will hold off the back-filling of the grave until every mourner has had a chance to pay their respects around the grave side.

The Milton Keynes Council Cemetery Manager reserves the right to stop any funeral service if these rules are not complied with.

General guidance

All those attending must follow the Government [guidance on staying alert and safe](#)

If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell) you must not attend a funeral.

By arrangement with your funeral director we offer webcasting at both our chapels which would allow those who are unable to attend to follow the funeral service.

Those who are self-isolating or clinically vulnerable

Mourners who are self-isolating or who are clinically, extremely vulnerable (shielding) are now able to attend a funeral, but please make your funeral director aware of this. Your funeral director will liaise with the crematorium so that we can assist with your requirements.

Toilets

Our toilets are open as normal and have hot water for hand washing, as well as sanitiser stations and hygiene wipes.

Waiting rooms

The waiting rooms at the Oak and Willow Chapels are open whilst services are taking place in each chapel.

Face coverings

Crematoria chapels are now a place in which you need to wear a face covering by law.

It is acknowledged that there are exemptions, which includes children under the age of 11; a relevant official acting in the course of their employment or their duties (Celebrants/Funeral Directors/Crematoria staff); whilst a person is carrying out a reading at a service; people who cannot put on, or wear a face covering because of a physical or mental impairment and where a face covering will cause severe distress; or if speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate.

Members of the public attending a service in one of our chapels should ensure they bring an appropriate face covering with them.

Music

Unfortunately, in accordance with the latest guidance we can no longer permit singing, chanting that requires raised voices or the playing of instruments that are blown into whilst in the chapels, (e.g., bagpipes and trumpets), as these activities pose an additional risk of infection, especially in enclosed spaces.

Test and Trace

We keep records of those who arrange a funeral service and will provide this information to the NHS test and trace service, if requested to do so. If your information is passed to the test and trace service, then you will probably be asked to provide details of attendees at the funeral in order to assist with contact tracing. You should keep a list of the people who attend to help with this process.

Crematorium office

Our offices are closed for the public but you can telephone us on 01908 568112 or email crownhill@milton-keynes.gov.uk and we will do our best to help and advise you.

Crematorium Cemetery grounds and chapel of remembrance

Our garden of remembrance memorial areas and cemeteries are open as normal however social distancing guidelines will still need to be followed when you are with anyone not in your household or support bubble.

At the present time our Book of Remembrance Chapel is closed but the book is displayed through the remembrance window. Flowers may be left in the vases outside and these will be transferred into the Book of Remembrance Chapel at the end of each day. Flower cards, pens and card holders are available outside the Remembrance chapel.

Hand sanitisation and extra cleaning

The following measures are being taken to help reduce the risk to our staff and those attending funerals: -

- Sanitisation dispensers are situated in our public areas and near the entrance to the chapels.
- Regular additional cleaning is being carried out of the chapels between services and high contact areas including doors, face plates, door handles, taps, toilet flush handles, reception counters, desk and table tops.

Apologies for the disruption

We will continue to follow the Government's guidance on Covid-19, as we have done throughout the pandemic and firmly believe that we are doing everything that we can to

balance the needs of the bereaved to mourn appropriately whilst minimising the spread of Covid-19 infection.

Future changes

If or when there is any change to this advice; it will be updated as soon as it happens.

This advice was last updated 12th October 2020.