

Dear Friends



## Funerals in Leeds – UPDATE 5th November 2020

Leeds City Council is grateful for the brilliant contributions of faith organisations, community groups and communities in a collective response to the challenges presented by Covid-19 over the past 6 months. I think we can justifiably be proud of how the city and all its communities have come together to reduce the impact of the virus and support our most vulnerable.

We now find ourselves facing further challenges as the number of cases rises significantly in the city and as we enter a **second period of lockdown** in England. We need your help to tackle a serious and urgent need to address the number of people who attend funerals in Leeds.

**This number is regularly exceeding the government's restrictions of 30 mourners at a funeral and if it continues, the council will have no option but to introduce a firmer, more enforcement-led approach, to protect our staff.**

So, when anyone is thinking of attending a funeral, please would you -

1. Consider that families may have already invited up to 30 mourners and re-consider your attendance so that the numbers do not exceed 30.
2. Consider the health and wellbeing of council staff and funeral directors who throughout coronavirus have continued to work extremely hard and with great commitment to ensure burials can go ahead.

For other 'lifecycle events' such as grave stone settings or the strewing of ashes the number of attendees must not exceed **15** (this number excludes the person who performs the religious service or ceremony, known as an officiant). A link to the latest government guidance on funerals is as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november#weddings-civil-partnerships-religious-services-and-funerals>

I have also attached a guidance note for your congregations and networks with some more detail on funerals and other 'lifecycle events' which I would appreciate you circulating as widely as possible.

**Shaid Mahmood**  
Chief Officer Communities, Leeds City Council

For more information or support please email [leedsfaith@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:leedsfaith@leeds.gov.uk) or [equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk)



## **Religion or Belief Communities Briefing Note on Weddings, Funerals, Receptions and other Life Commemorative Events for Leeds – November 2020**

### **Can you attend services and access places of worship?**

Our Religion or Belief communities in the city have been working hard to make their buildings Covid secure. However following the recent government announcement of a lockdown for England from the 5<sup>th</sup> of November to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December **Places of Worship will be closed**, unless they are being used for:

- Funerals
- To broadcast acts of worship
- Individual prayer
- Formal childcare or where part of a school
- Essential voluntary and public services, such as blood donation or food banks
- Other exempted activities such as some support groups

If you do have to access a place of worship for any of the reasons above you should:

- keep 2 metres apart from other people
- wear a face covering (unless exempt)
- use hand sanitiser
- follow any one way systems that may have been installed in the venue
- provide contact details (from at least one person in any household or support bubble group) to the venue or use the official NHS COVID-19 app for this purpose.

Weddings, civil partnership ceremonies, receptions, funerals and commemorative events following a person's death have their own restrictions (see below). People living outside of the Leeds area can travel to Leeds to attend a religious service, wedding, civil partnership ceremony or funeral, but they must not meet with another household .

### **How are weddings affected by the latest government restrictions?**

Weddings, civil partnership ceremonies will not be permitted to take place except where one of the parties is seriously ill and not expected to recover. A maximum of 6 people will be allowed to attend.

### **The current situation re funerals in Leeds**

As of Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November, in line with the new restrictions

Funerals (including ceremonies at crematoria) are limited to **30 people**. 30 mourners will be allowed at a graveside for a burial, but please note that social distancing still applies.

Commemorative events following a death to celebrate the life of a person who has died are able to proceed – for example, a stone setting ceremony or strewing of ashes. Please however note that:

- the gathering is limited to **no more than 15 persons (i.e. a smaller number than at any associated funeral)**;
- this must not take place in a private dwelling; and
- the gathering organiser must (1) undertake a risk assessment and (2) take all reasonable measures to limit coronavirus transmission – both taking into account the risk assessment and government guidance relevant to the gathering .

When inside our crematoria or burial chapels you must wear a face covering at all times and mourner numbers are restricted as follows:

- Rawdon Crematorium – 18 mourners inside
- Cottingley and Lawnswood Crematorium – 14 mourners inside each
- Armley and Hunslet burial chapels – 20 mourners inside each

Additional attendees up to the maximum number of 30 in total **including those inside** can listen to the service from outside the building.

Leeds City Council continues to be one of the busiest burial authorities outside of London and this demand is sadly currently rising due to the Covid-19 pandemic; recently we have seen a pattern where the number of mourners attending burials and in some instances cremations are exceeding the government's restrictions of 30 mourners.

It is only natural that families and friends will want to come closer together to be able to console one another during their time of grief and pay their respects to a loved one.

Whilst recognising how incredibly difficult the loss of a loved one is we all have a responsibility to ensure that our communities remain safe and well by complying with the law and doing everything in our power to stop the spread of coronavirus.

We are asking therefore that people, when thinking of attending a funeral, please consider that families may have already invited up to 30 mourners to attend the funeral of their loved ones.

We also ask that you keep in mind the health and wellbeing of council staff and funeral directors who, throughout the pandemic, have continued to work extremely hard and with great commitment to ensure burials proceed.

We want to work with communities to ensure that we can keep numbers at funerals within the government regulations and your support to help us achieve this remains absolutely vital. However if we continue to see large numbers of funerals where the limit on attendees is being exceeded we will have to consider taking further steps to ensure the regulations are being followed. Both the Council and police have legal obligations and powers to take further action if necessary in such situations.

More information on the current regulations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november#weddings-civil-partnerships-religious-services-and-funerals>