

## GUIDANCE:

### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated 29 November 2021

We recognise that through this pandemic and in the absence of some social norms, the loss of a loved one has been an especially lonely and distressing experience.

We have managed to continue offering most of our funeral service throughout the Pandemic and are now operating with only limited restrictions. However, our main priority is safety, therefore we continue to remain vigilant and every member of our team is tested twice a week in order to protect those that we serve.

- ❖ We can make funeral arrangements by face to face meetings in our offices or by phone or video call – it is your choice. Please call and we will make an appointment.
- ❖ Live streaming webcasting of the service from most crematoria chapels is available as an alternative to attending in person - we still do not recommend anyone attends a funeral service who may be in a vulnerable group.
- ❖ There are currently no limits to the number of mourners permitted at funerals.
- ❖ AB Walker in partnership with Wesley Chapel in central Reading can offer a large capacity funeral service venue with private parking, live streaming options and longer service times as an alternative to the smaller chapels available at the local crematoria – please ask for details.
- ❖ During the period of greatest restrictions, the limits to funeral numbers meant that often it was anticipated that a later event at which to gather in unrestricted numbers would be planned – please ask how we can help.
- ❖ Our Bereavement Care service, including The Link Course is fully open. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings through grief, then please contact Melissa Walker through any of our branches. Melissa will contact you back and plan how best to help you.

The Walker family and our hard-working team remain here to serve you - please telephone any of our offices for immediate help. Nearly all of us have been 'triple jabbed' and we conduct twice weekly testing to ensure we remain a COVID secure service remaining available to serve your family when needed.

We understand that you may have questions regarding the impact to your funeral arrangements and the services we provide. Below, we provide guidance to **Frequently Asked Questions** which we hope will be helpful to you at this time.

We will work to comply with all government guidance whilst remaining committed to doing everything we possibly can to support you.



Please call your local A. B. Walker branch for help and advice. Our telephone service is available 24 hours, 7 days a week. We are here to help.

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## Arranging a Funeral

### **Can funerals still take place?**

Yes. Funerals broadly take place with only occasional local restrictions.

### **How should I get in touch with you if I need your services?**

It is essential that you call us, so that we can provide you with the most appropriate guidance regarding next steps. All offices operate Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 5.00pm but we have a 24 hours telephone service should you call out of hours.

### **Are funeral homes open or are they required to close?**

All of our branches remain open and operational but we are asking visitors to wear a mask when moving about the building. Masks can be removed when viewing a deceased or discussing funeral arrangements.

### **Are you still able to come to my home to carry out funeral arrangements?**

Yes, we can come to your home to discuss funeral arrangements.

### **How do I arrange a funeral if I am self-isolating or social distancing?**

We will support you in arranging the funeral as much as possible by carrying out the arrangement over the telephone, online and via the post.

**Can I arrange an appointment to come visit your premises?** All of our branches are open. Please call and we will guide you.

### **Will you still be offering limousines?**

Yes – we can offer limousine hire but this is limited to six people per vehicle. We have quipped all limousines with screens between you and the driver and we ask everyone to wear a mask.

### **Are there other considerations around transport to/from the funeral I need to be aware of?**

Yes – there remain various restrictions to travel into and out of the UK and we are mindful that you will need to be familiar with your specific situation and quarantine requirements.

### **Are there any delays relating to carrying out funerals?**

There are no delays caused by the pandemic – it is usual to plan a typical funeral for 7-12 days after the death subject to the availability of the venue and officiant (priest etc).

**Will donation facilities be available at the funeral home?**

We are not offering cash collections or collection boxes. We use our online donation facility called **Memory Giving**. The Memory Giving service offers clients and mourners a way to leave messages and donations online for any nominated charity.

The donation page can be set up by any of our Funeral Arrangers and the online link can be shared with family and friends. Donations are sent directly to the nominated charity and Gift Aid is recovered on their behalf.

**Can I still have an obituary and publish details about the funeral?**

Print obituaries are still available.

Our website will display a page of information for each funeral: details of the time and date of the service alongside a map for those attending, information about donations and where a live stream webcast has been arranged, it will show the access instructions and a PDF of the order of service.

The live stream webcasting of a cremation service can be set up by any of our Funeral Arrangers. The online link can be shared with unlimited numbers of family and friends. For a small additional fee, we can arrange for the service to be recorded.

## Attending a Funeral

**Are there restrictions on people attending funerals at this time?**

The government is clear that funerals must be allowed to continue. Numbers are not limited and masks are not compulsory – we would recommend masks whilst the local infection rate remain high.

Anyone showing symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend any funeral service. These mourners can still participate in the service through remote viewing.

**Can I view funeral services remotely if I am unable to attend the funeral itself?**

Families will be offered a Live Stream Webcast of services held at all local crematoria and at our partner service chapel in Reading. Families will be offered the opportunity to share a recording of this service.

**Are there any considerations relating to burial services and cremations?**

Both burial services and cremations are available at this time. Places of worship, cemeteries, crematoriums and other funeral venues may be imposing local restrictions but in general, restrictions have been lifted. Service length is tightly controlled to allow for cleaning between services.

**How do I maintain social distance at a funeral?**

We understand that many people will be nervous to enter a service with lots of people. We will try and help you retain some distance inside the venue on the day by politely guiding on the day.

## Caring for and visiting the deceased

**Can I still view my loved one?**

We offer viewing, including dressing of the deceased including the viewing of COVID infected deceased.

## Payment for our services

**Are there any considerations relating to payment for your services?**

We recognise that this may be a very difficult time when it comes to financial circumstances. For transparency, we have published our full price list on our website and we offer various low cost options whilst not compromising on the dignity of the deceased. We are able to advise of government support that may be available for funeral services. Payments can be made by card on our website and by telephone, through BACS and by cheque. We do not accept cash payments.

## Prepaid funeral plans

**Can I still purchase prepaid funeral plans at this time?**

Yes. A.B. Walker offer fully bespoke funeral plans through Golden Charter, the UK's largest independent funeral plan company, we can fully explain and tailor all options and deliver a financially secure and flexible solution according to your needs. Our plans allow you to amend the plan or transfer your plan to another funeral director should you move. Any of our branches can help with this.

**If there are restrictions on funeral services, how does this impact my funeral plan?**

To reassure you, your funeral plan and the funds to pay for the funeral remain secure. Where an element of your plan cannot be delivered because of existing restrictions, you will be refunded. As the restrictions should be temporary, there is no reason to amend your plan at this time.



If any restrictions impact a current funeral arrangement using a pre-paid funeral plan, we will discuss this at the time of the arrangement.

### Expert advice

A.B. Walker is closely following the guidance from the UK government and health agencies. In addition, A.B. Walker is a member of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF). Representatives of both liaise directly with government authorities and report in order to maintain a coordinated response to the risks associated with the pandemic. We have committed ourselves and our business to continue to serve our community taking sensible precautions and adapting procedures as events permit.

### 24-hour telephone support

We recognise that this remains an unprecedented time and we continue to remain available to support you at any time with any questions or queries you may have. Please call any of our branches at any time for help and advice if you require immediate help following a death. Our office hours are 9.00am to 5.00pm for general assistance.