

3rd April 2020

Sikh Assembly Guidance and Advice for those Arranging Funeral Services During the COVID-19 Crisis

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

As heart-breaking as it is, it is ultimately a Seva, every bit as necessary as sharing positive thoughts and news, for Sikh Assembly to issue advice and updates to our community for funeral arrangements that must be made during this Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

The [Government](#) and [Public Health England](#) have issued advice to Funeral Service Providers for procedures to follow during the current crisis. Sikh Assembly has developed this guidance based on this advice and consulting with [Harmony Funeral Directors](#). This will help the community understand the new changes, minimise further risk to health and avoid exacerbating unnecessary trauma. Please take care when making funeral arrangements to understand the official position of the UK authorities. Do not follow incomplete advice offered by uninformed parties. This may cause unnecessary confusion and additional distress for grieving families.

Advice for Families

- **Do not arrange a funeral in person.** Funerals should only be arranged by telephone or via other electronic means. It is vital that we continue to do all we can to reduce the potential spread of the virus and that funeral service employees (who are key workers) can remain healthy and able to continue supporting bereaved families.
- All funeral services will now be a ‘**Direct to Crematorium**’ service, which means that caskets of those who have passed will be taken directly to the crematorium and **NOT to homes or other venues, including Gurdwaras**, for any services.
- **The coffin must remain closed throughout the funeral**, and **Darshan** (viewing) of the deceased **cannot take place** prior to the funeral.
- The family of the deceased will be asked to **remain in isolation for a minimum of 14 days**.
 - If the funeral service take place before 14 days, **no family member will be permitted attendance at the funeral**.
 - If the funeral service take place after a 14-day isolation period expires, **only the immediate family of the deceased who have fully recovered** would be permitted to attend the service.
- The number of mourners allowed to attend currently varies from 5 to 25, dependent on the crematorium and should be checked per regional area. **In the coming days and weeks this is extremely likely to decrease.**
- Each crematorium is governed differently and will determine their own policies accordingly, therefore it is incumbent on families to confirm the policies and procedures with Funeral Service Providers clearly for compliance and avoid confusion

- Currently Funeral Service Providers use their own discretion when determining how long they can keep the deceased, either at the hospital mortuary or their own facility. However, in the coming weeks there will be increasing pressure to expedite this process. Sikh Assembly advises all families to consult with their Funeral Service Provider to confirm any storage time limits at the outset of any planned services.
- Gurdwaras are currently only allowing the Giani ji to attend the crematorium and will only allow the immediate family back to the Gurdwara. Sikh Assembly strongly advise clarifying what provisions are supported by each Gurdwara at the time of arranging the service, as some may have facilities to offer a live streamed service.
- [Harmony Funeral Directors](#) offer a webcasting system for all funeral services, **even if the crematorium does not have the facility**. This allows the wider family to participate in the service remotely. Details are available from them on enquiry. This facility may also be offered by other service providers.

Advice to Funeral Service Providers

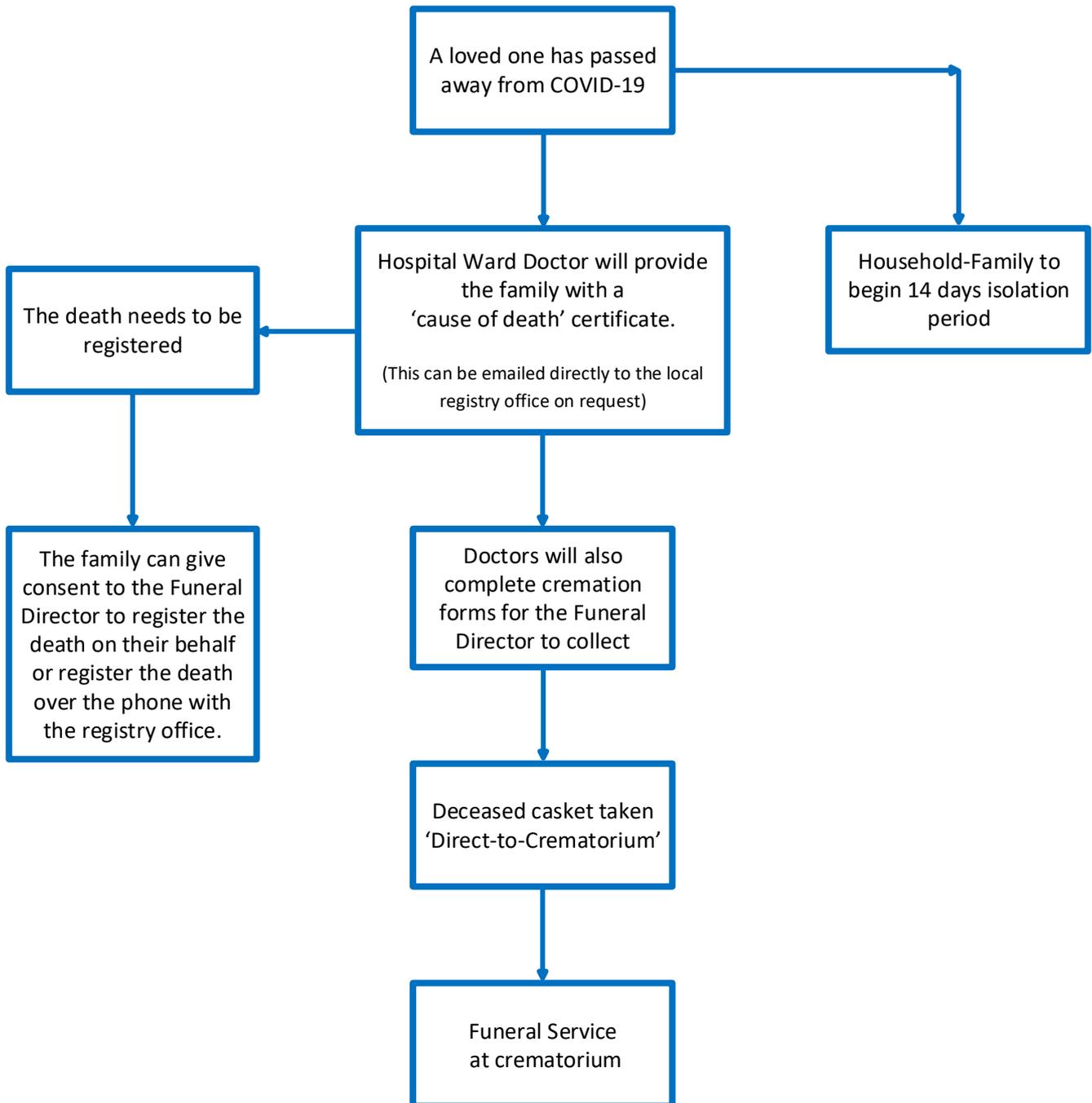
- Sikh Assembly recommend that funeral services limit attendees to members of the immediate family who are not in any of the high-risk categories and are not self-isolating.
- The immediate family include: spouse, partner, parents, carers, siblings, children (and their spouses/partners).
- Should a grandparent pass, attendance by any grandchildren should also be considered appropriate.
- It is advised that when limiting attendees, all tact and sensitivity should be employed, considering individual circumstances. For example, if the deceased person has little or no immediate family, close friends who wish to attend the service, should be received sympathetically.
- All those attending the funeral should always maintain the safe 2m social distance and avoid face-to-face or physical contact, unless they are from the same household.

We conclude this guidance note with a heavy heart and wish the Sikh community of the UK the utmost Chardi Kala. Our collective Ardas is for us all to endure the current crisis with fortitude and the Guru's Beant Kirpa and Bakshish.

Please find attached an easy to follow flow chart, summarising the steps to be followed in the event of suffering a family bereavement during the current COVID-19 crisis.

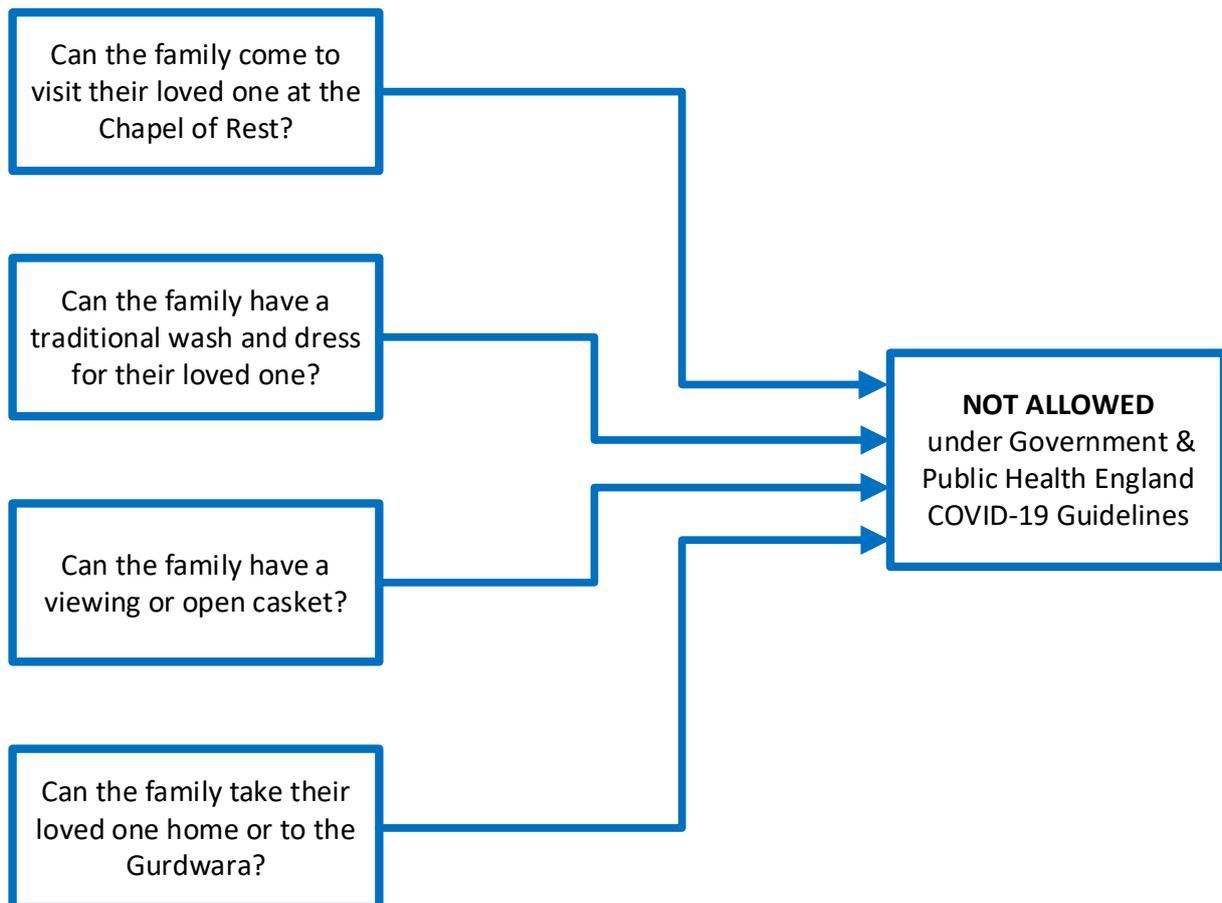
Community Resource Team
Sikh Assembly

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN THE EVENT OF A LOVED ONE PASSING



Created by Harmony Funeral Directors for Sikh Assembly

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 FUNERAL GUIDELINES



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