

Media Release

Date: 3 April 2020

Changes to funerals to help slow the spread of COVID-19

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the States of Guernsey has issued specific guidance to funeral directors regarding the procedures for how funerals are to be held.

A guidance document for members of the public has been produced and is available at www.gov.gg/coronavirus.

The new guidance states that only immediate family members or, if none, a close friend(s) of the deceased will be allowed to attend. Immediate family is defined as spouse or partner, children, parents and grandchildren. A strict limit on the number of immediate family members who can attend within the definition will not be applied, but will be subject to the discretion and agreement of both the Funeral Director and person leading the ceremony.

The new guidance is designed to follow current Public Health advice. Mourners must maintain social distancing, with advice being that no kissing, hugging or hand-holding should take place, hand hygiene must be followed and those considered to be at higher risk of infection are encouraged not to attend.

Any bereaved family who may require further advice or information should contact their chosen Funeral Director who will be best-placed to provide any assistance required. .

As part of wider preparations to deal with the pandemic, a temporary mortuary facility has been established to allow a separate, safe and secure location for those who have sadly died and are known or suspected to have been suffering from COVID-19.

Deputy Gavin St Pier, Chair of the Civil Contingencies Authority, said:

“Under normal circumstances, how people choose to mourn the loss of their loved one would, of course, be a matter for them alone. But it is a sad and inescapable reality that we must reduce the amount of contact we have with those not in our household and consideration has had to be given for how we can ensure funerals continue to be held as safely as possible. Limiting funerals to immediate family only for the time being is an unpleasant but necessary interference at one of the toughest times in people’s lives as they mourn their loss. We hope those who are grieving in

this period understand that this is in the best interests of the community as a whole as we seek to reduce the spread of COVID-19.”

This guidance will be reviewed regularly and updated whenever the position changes.

Ends

Notes to Media

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