

GUIDANCE FOR BURIAL & FUNERALS DURING THE CORONA PANDEMIC (BBSIG-03)

***This is a public service message by the
British Board of Scholars and Imams (BBSI)***

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Significance of Funerary Rites
3. Counsel and Consolation to the Bereaved
4. Counsel to Health Care Professionals
 - a. Keeping self and family safe physically
 - b. Keeping mentally and spiritually well
 - c. Actions to perform around/for a dying Muslim, especially if family unable to be present
5. Safe and Dignified Interment
 - a. Principles of precaution with the deceased's body and infection control
 - b. Storing, collecting and transporting the body
 - c. Washing
 - d. Funeral prayer
 - e. Burial options
6. Final counsel
7. Appendices

Executive Summary

1. The current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic will require a collective response from the Muslim community, working with health services and local authorities, to manage the volume of deaths.
2. There are certain mandatory funerary rites afforded to the Muslim deceased.
3. In such circumstances, the Divine law permits certain relaxations of these rites.
4. Families should be comforted that their loved ones receive the deaths of martyrs, and that any short-comings in normal funerary rites will not affect this.
5. NHS and emergency workers (including funeral workers) should not forget their own physical and mental health, nor that of their families, in caring for others.
6. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 from a deceased body is low and should not be feared, provided adequate precautions are taken.
7. All such precautions **must** be taken by those handling the deceased's body, whilst ensuring dignity is maintained. The needs of the living take priority over the needs of the deceased.
8. There are several options for ritual cleansing from: full *ghusl*, minimal *ghusl*, *tayammum*, wiping over the body bag. Each should be considered in sequence, but if none can be done, burial without *ghusl* is permissible.
9. The body bag may be considered to fulfil the role of the burial shroud (*kafan*).

10. Funeral (*janaza*) prayers should be performed by a minimum of people; alternatives include the absentee funeral prayer (*salat al-gha'ib*).
11. A number of options for burial can be considered, including shared graves, transferral to other sites, and delay in burial. Preparations should be made in advance, especially in areas with a large Muslim population. Cremation must be avoided at all costs.
12. The BBSI emphatically exhorts community organisations, mosques, and charities to mobilise the community so that they might get trained in funerary rites. Local communities are advised to take decisions on the basis of this guidance whilst factoring in local circumstances.
13. We are all returning to our Lord, and should pray for those who have passed away collectively and individually, remembering always the life to come.

Please note: the official version for this advice is at

<http://www.bbsi.org.uk/covid-funeralguidance>, and that website should always take precedence in terms establishing updates or corrections .

1.Introduction

The BBSI is an apolitical national assembly of imams, traditional scholars and Islamically literate Muslim academics formed to facilitate scholarly intra-Muslim research and dialogue. Our aim is to provide authoritative ethico-theological guidance and leadership on matters relevant to Muslims, whilst promoting wider community welfare. It primarily seeks to do this by developing theological leadership that can authentically represent the rich scholarly inheritance of Islam, whilst responding flexibly to the context of modern times. Its ultimate aim is to both serve and represent the Muslim community in an ethical, inclusive, professional and scholar-led way. The BBSI especially takes seriously the responsibility to provide theologically grounded, practically focussed, holistic and - above all - cool-headed and far-sighted guidance to the community in times of generalised anxiety and panic.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, in consultation with community organisations, health and medical experts, the BBSI has been providing ethico-religious guidance to the community. With an increase in death rates inevitable due to COVID-19, Muslim communities in the UK are advised to work with their local authorities in assembling a volunteer group of individuals. These individuals must be (i) aware of Islamic burial rites, (ii) properly trained in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and (iii) suitable to safely carry out the burial procedures.

This document provides guidance on the burial procedures: storing, collecting, transporting, washing (*ghusl*), prayer (*salat al-janaza*), and interring the body (*dafan*) to ensure that they accord with both Islamic and Public Health England (PHE) guidelines, taking into account the latitude of approaches in Islamic law and the principles of standard infection control precautions (SICPs) and transmission-based precautions (TBPs).

As with all BBSI guidance, it is directed primarily at imams, scholars and funeral workers, to help guide their decision-making processes, but equally is produced for the benefit of the general public. It should not be considered a religious verdict (*fatwa*), but rather comprises a comprehensive guidance that draws on the classical traditions of Islam to provide an overview

of options available. We encourage those who read it to consult with their local scholars and utilise it to help their decision-making processes. We pray that it will be of benefit and consolation during this extremely difficult time for the British and international community.

2. The Significance of Funerary Rights

For Muslims, death is a transition between one stage of life and another. The act of burial marks this passage and carries profound meaning for the dead as well as the living. Burying the dead is a communal obligation upon Muslims and it is a means through which dignity and respect are afforded to our fellow humans who have departed onto the next stage of their existence.

- **Dignity** – God has bestowed a special status upon all humans, granting them dignity of the highest form in their bodies and honoring them amongst the rest of creation. Muslims believe that their bodies are a gift (*amana*) from God and will be returned to God. They take care to treat their bodies with respect during their lives, and to respect the bodies of those who have died. The funerary rites are designed to respect and maintain the dignity of the human form.
- **Desecration, harm, mutilation, disfiguring** – Muslims are prohibited from causing or allowing any harm or mutilation to the human body both during life or after death. The funerary rites, such as washing, shrouding and praying are performed in order to honour the deceased, and burial acts to protect them from future harm.
- **Body and soul as a composite** - for Muslims, the soul and body are inextricably connected from the womb of the mother to the womb of the grave and beyond. The human is understood as being a composite of body and soul, even after their physical separation at death. Hence Muslims do not distinguish between the bodies of the living or the dead, in that both are afforded the highest levels of respect and care. There is a deep metaphysical commitment that the soul is still aware of and able to experience what the physical body undergoes after death. Prophetic traditions further state that the dead can hear the greetings of those who visit them at their graves. Muslims are thus obliged to treat the dead with gentleness and care.
- **Rights of the dead** - One of the rights that Muslims have over each other is that of funerary rites. It is a collective obligation on the living to wash, shroud, pray over and bury the dead, through respectful completion of the necessary rites and rituals as described in the primary sources of scripture and elaborated upon in the classical schools of law. These form part of a continuous tradition in Islam and carries deep religious, spiritual, historical and cultural significance for Muslims. These rituals may remind the wider public of other faith traditions who have similar beliefs around our final gifts to those who have passed. Alternatives to burial are unacceptable in Islam.

3. Counsel to the Bereaved

As a community, we are going through very difficult times. The death of a loved one is never easy. Despite the comfort of knowing that they are returning to their Lord in accordance with His divine Decree, grief at one's loss is a perfectly normal response. This is even more the case in our current circumstance, where we may lose community members in large numbers. We may not also have the opportunity to bid them farewell in the traditional manner, due to fear of

transmitting the virus, or adhering appropriately to government guidelines around isolating and lockdown.

Nonetheless, we take solace from the words of the Prophet (s) when he said: '*The one who dies in a plague ... dies as a martyr in the path of God.*' (Al-Bukhari, Muslim). In every distress we go through there is a divine blessing and wisdom. This narration indicates that the one who dies from an infectious disease receives the reward of a martyr, which is a tremendous rank.

By scholarly agreement, such people are still afforded all the funerary rites, but families may be concerned about those rites not being performed properly during this very difficult period. There is a lot of confusion around what can and cannot be done, and also what might happen to the deceased if the funerary rites are not fully performed. This is understandable given the situation; however, we assure you that the Islamic tradition makes it abundantly clear that the souls of your loved ones will suffer no ill effects from any shortfall in this regard arising out of these circumstances. Furthermore, the tradition is clear that in such situations the community is not considered to be held accountable for what is beyond their ability to manage.

Rest assured: our and your prayers reach the Lord who hears all and answers every supplicant who calls unto Him. We beseech Him for His mercy and pray in this time, as in all times, for His Grace and Beneficence.

4. Counsel to Health Professionals and Chaplains

The BBSI recognises and tremendously appreciates the tireless and selfless work that all of our NHS workers - from medics to cleaners - are doing to keep us all safe and healthy. We want you to know that our membership is supplicating for all of you; praying that God rewards you with the best of rewards for this noble service you are engaged in; beseeching Him to keep you and your families safe.

It should be noted that, notwithstanding the various narrations about avoiding places of contagion, we know that the Prophet (upon whom be blessings and peace) treated a leper by placing his blessed hand in the same bowl as that of the afflicted (Al-Tirmidhi). Please, therefore, be aware that what you are doing is fulfilling a specific sunna as well as the general Sunna of assisting those in need. We pray that this work be a means for you to be drawn nearer to Him, in accordance with His Wisdom.

We would also advise you to take all precautions necessary to keep yourselves and your families safe during this very difficult period, especially if you have elderly parents, in which case you should consider quarantining yourself from them as far as possible.

Given the lockdown measures currently in place, it may well be that those who pass away from COVID-19 will do so alone, in a hospital bed, not surrounded by family or loved ones. Whatever your field but especially if you have access to such patients in their last stages, **you** are their family. Please take a little time, if possible, to minister to their spiritual needs at this critical stage of end of life. If possible, and if safe to do so:

- Comfort them and counsel them to **hope** in God's mercy and turn to Him, seeking His pardon, for they are returning to their Lord as martyrs, beloved in His presence

- **Encourage** them gently to recite the *shahada* and occupy their time in:
 - Prayer (in the hospital bed, in any direction, with any slight head movement)
 - Vocal remembrance (if possible given their breathing difficulties) or
 - Silent *dhikr* (of the mind or heart, with a *tasbeih/sibha* if that helps).
- For those in their very last stages, **recite the *shahada*** without encouraging or exhorting them to do so, and if you are able, recite Surah Yasin to ease their passing
- **Tayammum:** It may be that, as the rate of death increases, funeral services will be overwhelmed and *ghusl* will not be performed for the deceased. Only if it is possible:
 - Keep a small, clean stone (about palm size ideally) with you.
 - Once the patient has passed away, make the intention of *tayammum*.
 - Rub your gloved hands on the stone and pass once over their face,
 - Then rub again and pass over their forearms. Make sure to discard the gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
 - This will fulfil the responsibility of *ghusl* of the deceased if it is impossible for it to be done later on, and will be a means of you single-handedly lifting the burden of this responsibility from the community.

Lastly, the BBSI recognises that this period is going to be emotionally and psychologically very difficult for all those working on the front line of dealing with this crisis. It may be that you are transferred out of your comfort zone, need to work additional hours to cover unwell or isolating colleagues, and be confronted with a significant amount of death. This can be extremely stressful for anyone, even healthcare professionals who often feel that they should be able to deal with such situations. We have a number of doctors in the BBSI, and can assure you that **nothing** equips you for the experience of disaster medicine.

If you find yourself nearing breaking point, please reach out to services that are available, whether psychological or spiritual, and seek help. We will work with other organisations to try and ensure that this service is available to you, and assist you in whatever way we can, with our prayers if nothing else.

5. Fulfilling the Rights of the Deceased

There are general rights that the deceased have over the living: to pray for their forgiveness and acceptance; fulfilling their wishes and bequests as laid out in their wills; performing acts of worship, such as recitation of the Qur'an and asking God for the reward to be granted to them; and doing acts of lasting charity on their behalf.

There are also specific rights that the deceased have over the living, which are communal obligations. These largely revolve around the funerary rites, and which this guidance details. There are several stages of interring the deceased's body, each of which will be explained in detail: (1) storage, collection and transportation, (2) ritual cleansing (*ghusl*), (3) shrouding (*kafan*), (4) performance of the funeral prayer (*janaza*), and (5) burial of the deceased.

The BBSI emphatically exhorts community organisations, mosques, and charities to mobilise the community so that they might get trained in funerary rites. There are several online resources available for this.

The BBSI recognises the very courageous work being done by funeral workers, who will largely be on the front line of dealing with the deceased. We also understand that you have a great deal of anxiety about handling the bodies and the risks of contracting COVID-19 yourselves. There is a lot of uncertainty about this issue in the public, though top health experts and medical professionals have officially assured us that there is little to fear provided adequate PPE is utilised. This guidance takes as its priority the safety and health of those entrusted to perform the funerary rights of the deceased, and we ask Allah to reward you tremendously for the service you are providing: you are as those who guard the frontiers of the land from attack.

For these specific funerary rites, given the still-contagious nature of the virus and the possibility of contracting it from the body of the deceased, we strongly advise that there are those who should not be involved. This excludes presence at the funeral prayer and the site of the burial itself.

Exclusion criteria

There are certain categories of people who should avoid performing any of the funerary rites with the exception of the funeral prayer.

- Anyone elderly (over 60)
- Anyone with an underlying health condition (See Appendix A).
- Those who are in frequent contact with the above mentioned individuals
- Those who have not been properly instructed in the risks of dealing with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive bodies
- Those who have not received basic training in dealing with infectious bodies, which includes methods of handling the deceased, safe working procedures, donning and removing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), personal hygiene, and steps to be taken if something goes wrong.

In the course of work, individuals involved in burial-tasks should carefully monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19. Any individual who fits the description of those the government has advised to self-quarantine or self-isolate should not participate in these burial tasks. (See Appendix B)

It is very important, and possibly obligatory, under Islamic law for those vulnerable to the virus to act so as to avoid contracting it, especially in the situation where others are able to fulfil the rights of the deceased. We recognise that family members, under normal circumstances, play a leading role in these funerary rites, which also allow us to process our grief. However, the circumstance of the pandemic is different: it is a religious principle that one must avoid exposing oneself to, and exposing others to harm (*la darar wa la dirar*).

A. Collecting & Transferring the Deceased

- It is of utmost importance to treat the deceased with dignity and care at all times.
- The burial team should be the minimum number of people required to carry out the task safely and effectively. They should gather all appropriate information regarding the deceased prior to collection, his/her condition, potential infection risks, and any other information relevant to those who will be handling the body.
 - A hazard notification sheet is often provided detailing this information. It should be read and consulted carefully. Due to the sensitive nature of the information contained in the hazard notification sheet, it should only be shared with those who require information to safely handle the deceased. Burial teams should wherever applicable take the duty of confidentiality seriously.
- To minimize risk, the deceased may be placed in a body bag during collection and transfer. Individuals should avoid directly touching the deceased and minimize moving the body.
 - At the time of writing this guidance, Public Health England (PHE) has NOT mandated the use of body bags for COVID-19 victims, though it is standard practice in some hospitals for all the deceased during this pandemic.
 - The BBSI recommends precaution and strongly advises burial teams to consult the medical personnel on call regarding the use of body bags if the deceased is not already placed in one.
- In cases of likely risk of bodily leakage or delays leading to bodily decay, a body bag **MUST** be used.
- During collection and transfer, individuals should abstain from activities that increase the risk of contracting the virus. They should:
 - Not bring their hands into contact with their mouth, nose, or eyes
 - Cover all abrasions and cuts, especially on the hands, with waterproof dressings,
 - Have available disinfectant material;
 - Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- PPE equipment includes: gloves, eye protection, face masks, waterproof gowns and sleeves, and, in some cases, respiratory protective equipment (RPE).
 - Equipment should be stored properly, fit for purpose, worn properly, correctly fitted, and disposed of after use.
 - Individuals should be trained in the donning and removal of such equipment.
 - For more on this see the guidance from Public Health England. (See Appendix C and D)
- Burial teams should pay attention to the equipment they use. They should have dedicated equipment (vehicles, trolleys, etc.) for use with infected bodies. Equipment used should be of a type easy to decontaminate and disinfect.
- Equipment that has come into contact with the deceased should be disinfected regularly and after every use, such that the vehicle, tables or stretchers, surfaces and reusable PPE. Single-use items should be discarded safely and immediately after first use.
- After collecting and transferring the deceased, members of the burial team should: remove any protective clothing; dispose of such clothing safely; and wash their hands with soap thoroughly.

B. Washing (*ghusl*)

1. *Who should perform the washing?*

Washing of the deceased is a part of the Islamic ritual of honouring the deceased and a communal obligation on the Muslim community. Although this would ordinarily start with the family members, in this context those properly trained in PPE and with access to the appropriate equipment would need to take the lead.

Minimally, two people of the same sex as the deceased should be available for the washing, though more would ordinarily be required. Those selected to carry out the ritual cleansing should be from the 'safe list' noted above. Importantly, they should be aware of the Islamic rules on washing the deceased. Those on the exclusion list should not participate in the cleansing of the body.

2. *What is the procedure for washing the COVID-suspected deceased?*

Provided the funeral washers take precautions, washing the COVID-suspected deceased is safe. As of the writing of this guidance, it should be noted that Public Health England has NOT made it a requirement for the COVID-suspected deceased to be sealed in a body bag and have deemed hygienic preparations and even post-mortem to be permitted for those positively diagnosed with COVID-19. This is in line with their guidance for infectious diseases in general; it should be noted that COVID-19 is less infectious from deceased bodies than HIV, SARS, and Ebola, as well as other such similar serious diseases. The concern with COVID-19 is the likely *volume and rate* of funerals that will be required. Family and washers should be assured that all of the following guidance is both safe and in accordance with Islamic law.

A COVID-suspected body may be received from the morgue in one of two circumstances: with or without a 'DO NOT OPEN' tag.

1. In the case of a DO NOT OPEN tag, those performing the cleansing rite should don PPE and wipe over the sealed body bag from head to toe, after having applied some water to their gloved hands.
2. In the case where there is NO 'do not open' tag, and in light of PHE guidelines, it is possible for the deceased to be given a **minimal washing** with the following conditions:
 - a. that those washing the body wear all the appropriate PPE and are properly trained in its donning/removal,
 - b. that all reasonable means are taken to minimize risk of transmission, such as avoiding procedures that are aerosol-generating (like moving the body around),
 - c. that the deceased does not suffer from any other condition that creates a significantly higher-risk of transmitting disease, and
 - d. that those in charge of burial are able to provide a safe and dedicated space for washing that is properly disinfected/decontaminated after every washing procedure.
3. The minimal washing consists of:
 - a. Minimal movement of the deceased's body
 - b. Avoiding removing the disinfectant covering from the face
 - c. Pouring water over the deceased's body from neck down
 - d. Flowing hair may be washed or wiped
 - e. Avoiding performance of *istinja* or pressing the abdomen to extrude contents

4. If any of the steps above cannot be safely undertaken, including not having access to adequate PPE, then the option to wipe over the body bag should be utilised.
5. If one is either (1) advised by morgue staff that the risk of infection is extremely high, or (2) the rate of then - as a last resort - the deceased can be buried without either *ghusl* or wiping.

3. Shrouding (*Kafan/Takfin*)

Ordinarily, shrouding is carried out immediately after *ghusl*, and it is recommended to use three white sheets (cotton or partly synthetic) for men and five for women. This is unlikely to be possible for a COVID-suspected deceased. In this case, the BBSI affirms that **the body bag will fulfill** the religious requirement of shrouding. An additional shroud may be wrapped over the body bag, though this is not required, and the body then placed in the casket. The outer part of the casket should be wiped with the appropriate disinfectant as part of transfer procedures.

4. Funeral Prayer (*janaza*)

Who should pray and where?

The ideal in our tradition is that there be a large gathering of people, including family members, to pray over the deceased following the ritual washing (*ghusl*) of the body. However, the communal obligation is also fulfilled even if only one Muslim (male or female) prays over the deceased.

It is envisaged that there may well be significant restrictions on gatherings, and that mosques may be closed for some time to come. In such a case, the funeral prayer may be performed in the cemetery, even though this is not ideal. The options are as follows:

1. Group performance of the *janaza* prayer with the family, whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing strategies, at the cemetery prior to burial.
2. Performance of the *janaza* prayer by a very small number of individuals (such as the washers), in the presence of the deceased's body. One individual praying over the deceased fulfils the community obligation (*fard kifaya*).
3. Performance of the funeral prayer in absentia (*salat al-janaza 'ala al-gha'ibin*) by other family members and well-wishers, which is valid in the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools of law. [This does not remove the communal obligation mentioned in (2) above - at least one person should fulfil that, if possible.] Hanafis and Malikis should consult their local scholars about following this option.

Muslims should always be aware that actions are in accordance with their intentions, and that 'one who intends a virtuous deed but does not perform it is like one who performed it.' If you would have gone to the funeral had you been able to do so, but were unable owing to your health, the need to socially isolate or community lockdown, you will be rewarded as though you had gone. For further details on how to perform the funeral prayer, please refer to Appendix E.

5. *Burying the Deceased*

1. *Who should not perform the burial?*

The burial may be attended by anyone, bearing in mind government guidelines about social distancing and community lockdown. The actual burial of the COVID-suspected deceased's body should not be performed by those on the exclusion list, as noted previously.

2. *Where is the deceased to be buried?*

In the *shari'a*, the minimal burial is for a body to be placed in the earth in such a manner where:

- The living are protected from the effects of bodily decay, such as the smell of the body
- The deceased's body is protected from mutilation or damage, such as by animals.

The basis is that a Muslim is buried:

- in a Muslim graveyard, or the section demarcated for Muslims within cemetery grounds,
- in his/her own individual grave,
- without transferring the body an excessive distance from one area to another, and
- without an undue delay.

The COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented. Given the higher rates of deaths occurring from this illness, Muslim communities will be forced to make decisions regarding burial procedures that are non-ideal. It should be noted, however, that classical jurists have given significant scope to depart from the ideal funerary rites in cases of need and necessity. Below, we provide guidance on a few issues pertaining to burials that will likely be pertinent to Muslim communities in the coming weeks.

(a) Mass Burials:

- A Muslim's body should ideally be buried in his/her individual grave.
- In times of general need (defined as any situation in which burying bodies individually in their own separate graves creates undue difficulty or harm), the shariah explicitly **permits burial of multiple bodies in the same grave.**
- For a mass burial, it is ideal that:
 - Men are buried in one shared grave and women in another, or, if they are placed in a single shared grave, men to one side and women to the other. If this is difficult, it is permitted to bury them in one grave intermixed.
 - It is advised that each body be separated from the other with a barrier, even a small one formed with dirt, whenever possible without undue difficulty.
 - Muslims are buried together in their own cemetery, or, if not possible, in a grave separate to those from other faith traditions.
- Burying the deceased in a shared grave is preferable to an excessive delay in burying them in their own grave. See further related points in 'Burial in a non-Muslim cemetery' and 'Delaying Burial'.

(b) Burial in a non-Muslim cemetery

- Muslims should ideally be buried in a Muslim cemetery.
- If this is not possible for a valid reason such as lack of space, it would be permitted to bury a Muslim in a non-Muslim cemetery
- When possible, a shared grave in a Muslim cemetery is to be given preference over an individual grave in a non-Muslim one. See related points below in ‘Transferring the Body’ and ‘Delaying Burial’.

(c) Transferring the Body

- It is permitted to transfer the deceased in cases of need or for a valid purpose, such as lack of space or capacity locally, or a bequest to be buried in one’s hometown.
- Decisions to transfer the body should be made in close consultation with the family of the deceased, relevant authorities, and the communities/sites to whom/where the deceased will be transferred to.
- When possible, transferring the body for burial without delay, even a long distance, is preferable to an excessive delay.
- When possible, transferring the deceased to a Muslim cemetery, even if a long distance, is to be given preference over a nearby burial in a non-Muslim cemetery.

(d) Delaying Burial

- The default is to carry out the burial procedure as quickly as possible.
- Slight delays are permitted if there is need, such as when the burial team is seeing to the funerary rites of others or when waiting for a space to be allocated for the deceased in a Muslim cemetery.
 - When possible, a slight delay to ensure burial in a Muslim cemetery is to be given preference over an immediate burial in a non-Muslim cemetery provided the deceased can be safely stored.
- Excessive delays should be absolutely avoided.
 - It is preferable to transfer the deceased elsewhere, or bury him in a shared Muslim grave, than to excessively delay funerary rites and burial. This is a matter that requires sensitive consultation with the family of the deceased.
- In cases where there are no other options and it is not possible to bury without delay, it would be permitted to delay the burial and other funerary rites. The deceased in this case should be kept stored in a manner that prevents bodily decay, is safe, and upholds their dignity. For this, the relevant authorities and experts should be consulted and communities should anticipate and plan for scenarios where this will be likely.

3. *How is the COVID-suspected deceased to be buried?*

- The burial and any activities associated with it should proceed as normal, but it should be restricted to the gravesite.
- Before transfer to the gravesite, the outside of the casket should be disinfected. Individuals tasked with carrying the casket to and from the transport vehicle should don the appropriate PPE, such as suitable single-use gloves. They should dispose of this equipment after first use and thoroughly wash their hands with water and soap or hand sanitizer.
- While transporting the deceased, it is recommended to engage in *dhikr* and supplication for the deceased.

- The funeral should be attended by a minimal number of people given current government guidance.
 - Some councils have set limits on the maximum number of people that may attend a funeral. As such, those arranging the funeral should consult their relevant local authorities regarding this.
 - If there is no set maximum set by the government or local authorities but only a general instruction to keep funerals small, it is recommended to follow the guidance of the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG), which has advised that funerals only be attended by immediate family or a few individuals.
 - It may give some solace to those unable to physically attend the actual burial to have it live-streamed, though one cannot actually join the funeral prayer via live-stream. For those who wish, the absentia funeral prayer remains an option.
- Attendees should be told to observe all social distancing, self-isolation, and personal hygiene guidelines advised by the government.
 - This means that for the time being the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, and those required to observe 14-day self isolation should not come to the funeral site, especially if the service will be attended by several people.
 - The BBSI understands that this will be extremely difficult for people who were close to the deceased, but wish to reassure them that true proximity is when hearts are entwined, not merely proximity of bodies.
- Viewing of the deceased before burial is permitted, including the face provided this is medically permitted, as the risk of infection is very low.
 - However, the deceased should under no circumstances be touched or kissed.
 - See the Royal College of Pathologists advice for this (PPE, social distancing).
- The deceased should be lowered into the grave as normally done in funeral services.
- It is recommended by many jurists that the deceased be given an admonitory address (*talqin*) after burial, which may be expressed in any manner that conveys a meaning similar to what is related below:
 - *Remember the covenant by which you exited this world; the testification that there is no god but God who has no partners and that Muhammad is the messenger and slave of God. Remember that the Day of Judgment is coming and that God resurrects those in the graves. Say: 'I have accepted that my Lord is God, that Islam is my religion, that Muhammad is a true Prophet, that the Ka`bah is the true direction for prayer, that the Qur'an is my guide and that all believers in God are brothers.'*
- It is recommended to recite some Quran over the grave after burial and make a supplication for the forgiveness of the deceased.

Word of Counsel

May God be praised – He is the Maker of the heavens and of the earth; the Creator of all things, and the One who sent His Chosen Messenger, our liege-lord, Muhammad, the most noble of all creation. God is the Eminent, the Forgiving, the Manager of all affairs, the Maker of destinies; who has brought all His creation into being, and makes it thus they change from state to state, and moves from one abode to the next.

God has established that we have not one life, nor even two – but five ‘lives’, in that there are five abodes of existences that we pass through. We all too often forget that, and we are tempted to think that the life of this world, *al-dunya*, is *the* life, the *only* life, when, in fact, it is the most passing and fleeting of all.

Rather, by God’s Mercy and His Grace, we have already lived through the abode of the life before this one, where all the souls were gathered, and we all took the covenant with our Lord, recognising His Unity and his Lordship. And from among those souls include the community of Muhammad – the community that you come from. Wahb ibn Munabbih narrates that when our liege-lord Moses asked his Lord about the community of Muhammad, God replied: “*It is the community of Ahmad (another name for Muhammad), whose people are content with whatever little provision I give them, and I am content with whatever little good works they do. I make each one of them enter the Garden by their testimony that ‘there is no god but God’.*”

And then we go through this world that we are in; and then we shall be placed in our graves; and then we leave our graves for the Resurrection and Gathering, until the moment that all of us reach our final abode. Remember of that time in the Gathering that our Prophet (s) declared: “*Each Prophet has one prayer which must be answered. They have prayed, but I have concealed my prayer, so that it may be an intercession for my nation, including, God willing, all those who died without partnering anything to God.*”

That intercession is for the life to come; that life that is spoken of in the Qur’an (44:51-7) as: “*Those who had taqwa will be in a secure place, in gardens and watersprings ... a favour from your Lord: that is the supreme triumph.*”

The Prophet (s) noted to us: “*the Garden comprises one hundred degrees; between each two degrees is like between Heaven and earth. Firdaus is the high degree, from which spring the four rivers of the Garden. Above it is the Highest Throne. When you petition God, therefore, ask for Firdaus!*” and, “*A herald shall announce: ‘O people of the Garden! It is time for you to be healthy and never fall ill. It is time for you to live and never die. It is time for you to be young and never grow old. And it is time for you to be happy and never be miserable.’*”

May God make us all of its people, through His Generosity, His Grace, His Mercy, and Grace.

Bibliography/Sources Consulted

Primary Sources

Abu Bakr al-Kasani. *Bada’i’ al-sana’i’ fi tartib al-shara’i’*. Edited by ‘Ali Mu’awwad and ‘Adil ‘Abd al-Mawjud. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997.

‘Ali ibn Sulayman al-Mardawi. *al-Insaf fi ma’rifat al-khilaf ‘ala madhhab al-Imam Ahmad*. Edited by Muhammad Shafi’i. 12 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997.

Mansur ibn Yunus al-Buhuti. *Kashshaf al-qina’ ‘an matn al-Iqna’*. 6 vols. Mecca: Matba’at al-Hukuma, 1974.

Muhammad Amin ibn 'Abidin. *Radd al-muhtar 'ala al-Durr al-Mukhtar*. 7 vols. Cairo: Bulaq, 1323-26 A.H.

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hattab. *Mawahib al-jalil li-sharh mukhtasar Khalil wa-bi-hamishihi al-Taj wa-al-iklil li-Mukhtasar Khalil*. 6 vols. Libya: Maktabat al-Najah, 1969.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dasuqi. *Hashiya 'ala al-Sharh al-kabir*. 4 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2002.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad 'Illaysh. *Minh al-jalil sharh Mukhtasar Khalil*. 9 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1984.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Khatib al-Shirbini. *Mughni al-muhtaj ila ma'rifa ma'ani al-faz al-Minhaj*. Edited by Muhammad Aytani. 4 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1997.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sarakhsi. *al-Mabsut*. 30 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, n.d.

Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudama. *al-Mughni*. Edited by 'Abd al-Fattah Muhammad Hulw & 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki. 15 vols. 3rd ed. Riyadh: Dar 'Alam al-Kutub, 1997.

Numerous authors. *Fatawa Hindiyya*. 6 vols. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980.

Sulayman ibn Umar al-'Ujayli. *Hashiyat al-Jamal*. Edited by 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Mahdi. 8 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1996.

Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi. *Rawdat al-talibin wa-'umdat al-muftin*. Edited by Ishraf Zuhayr al-Shawish. 10 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1985.

----- . *Kitab al-Majmu'*. Edited by Najib al-Muti'i. 10 vols. Cairo: Dar al-Nasr, 1971.

Secondary Sources

Health and Safety Executive, *Managing infection risks when handling the deceased Guidance for the mortuary, post-mortem room and funeral premises, and during exhumation* (2018).

Public Health England, *COVID-19: Guidance for infection prevention and control in healthcare settings. Version 1.0*. (last updated on March 23rd, 2020).

The Royal College of Pathologists, *Transmission-based precautions Guidance for care of deceased during COVID-19 pandemic* (issued 25th March, 2020)

The Association of Healthcare Cleaning Professionals' (AHCP) *Revised Healthcare Cleaning Manual*.

Appendix A - Who is at high risk from coronavirus

Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk. For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

Source: NHS (last reviewed on 24th March 2020)

Appendix B - Self-isolation if you or someone you live with has symptoms - Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. This is called self-isolation. If you are self-isolating, you must:

- not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day – but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people
- not go out to buy food or collect medicine – order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home
- not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home

If you have symptoms of coronavirus, you'll need to self-isolate for 7 days or until your temperature returns to normal. You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 7 days. A cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

If you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to self-isolate for 14 days from the day **their** symptoms started. This is because it can take 14 days for symptoms to appear. If more than 1 person at home has symptoms, self-isolate for 14 days from the day the first person started having symptoms.

If **you** then get symptoms, self-isolate for 7 days from when **your** symptoms start, even if it means you're self-isolating for longer than 14 days. If you do not get symptoms, you can stop self-isolating after 14 days.

Source: NHS (last reviewed on 24th March, 2020)

Appendix C - Guidance for the safe wearing of PPE

REASON FOR ISSUE	GOV.UK - COVID-19: guidance for health professionals
NOTES	This PPE ensemble is more enhanced than pandemic flu requirements due to COVID-2019 being a novel coronavirus and the evidence base for transmission limited. Therefore, this is based on expert opinion to date and may be revised as the situation evolves.

Use safe work practices to protect yourself and limit the spread of infection

Putting on PPE	Step by Step
Before you start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are hydrated • Remove jewellery and tie hair back • Check you have all the PPE you need, in the correct size
Hand hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow NHS Guidelines when washing hands • Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces • Rub hands palm to palm with interlaced fingers • It should take at least 15 seconds
Gown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on a long-sleeved fluid repellent disposable gown • Fasten neckties and waist ties
Respirator (FFP3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that you are familiar with the FFP3 respirator conforming to EN149 • Ensure that fit testing has been undertaken before using this equipment
Eyewear (preferably a full-face visor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye protection, such as single use goggles or full-face visors, must be worn • NOTE: Prescription glasses are not adequate protection
Gloves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double gloves can be used • Change gloves when moving from a dirty to a clean task • Remove glove (see removal instructions) • Decontaminate hands with alcohol hand-rub • Put on a pair of clean gloves, ensuring that the cuffs of the gloves cover the cuffs of the gown.

Source: Public Health England, COVID-19: infection prevention and control guidance (last reviewed 23rd March, 2020)

Appendix D - Guidance for the safe removal of PPE

Removing PPE	Step by Step
Before you start: read the adjacent notes	PPE should be removed in an order that minimises the potential for cross contamination. This should be done within the mortuary area and in a systematic way. All PPE should be disposed of as clinical waste.
Gloves: the outsides of the gloves are contaminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● grasp the outside of the glove with the opposite gloved hand; peel off ● hold the removed glove in gloved hand ● slide the fingers of the un-gloved hand under the remaining glove at the wrist ● peel the remaining glove off over the first glove and discard ● clean hands with alcohol hand rub
Gown: the front of the gown and sleeves will be contaminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● unfasten neck then waist ties ● pull gown away from the neck and shoulders, touching the inside of the gown only using a peeling motion as the outside of the gown will be contaminated ● turn the gown inside out, fold or roll into a bundle and discard into a lined waste bin
Eye protection (preferably a full-face visor): the outside will be contaminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to remove, use both hands to handle the retraining straps by pulling away from behind and discard ● clean hands with alcohol hand rub
Respirator (FFP3): remove FFP3 respirators in a safe area (adjacent to the mortuary or preparation room)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● do not touch the front of the respirator as it will be contaminated ● lean forward slightly ● reach to the back of the head with both hands to find the bottom retaining strap and bring it up to the top strap ● lift straps over the top of the head ● let the respirator fall away from your face and place in bin ● wash hands with soap and water

Appendix E - Performing the Funeral Prayer

Hanafi method

1. The janaza prayer is *fard kifaya* (communal obligation) - it is fulfilled by a minimum of one (1) person.
2. It is *sunna* for the imam to stand in front of the chest of the deceased.
3. The necessary components of the prayer are the 4 *takbirs* and standing up.
4. It is *sunna* to read the *thana* after the 1st *takbir*, salutations on the Prophet after the 2nd *takbir*, *dua* for the deceased after the 3rd and it is *wajib* to do the *salam* after the 4th *takbir*.
5. The hands should only be raised for the 1st *takbir*
6. *Sura al-Fatiha* can be prayed after the *thana* with the intention of *dua'* and not *qira'at*
7. Supplicating for forgiveness is not required for a child or an insane person; on the contrary the *dua* should be made that the children are a source of salvation for us.

Shafii Method

The funeral prayer (*salat al-janaza*) is a communal obligation, requiring a minimum of 1 person to pray it. For those that are unable to attend the *salat al-janaza* in person, they may pray the absentee funeral prayer (*salat al-gha'ib*). The following will apply:

1. The body of the deceased should be placed between the imam and the qibla, with the head to the right and the feet to the left. The imam should preferably be in front of the head of the body, if the body is a man, or to the midpoint of the body, if the body is a woman. (This condition does not exist for those praying *salat al-gha'ib*).
2. One stands, intending to pray an obligatory funeral prayer, with the intention occurring at the time of the opening *takbir*. (For those praying *salat al-gha'ib*, they intend to pray a *sunna* prayer that is *salat al-gha'ib*.)
3. The opening *takbir* (*Allahu akbar*) is then followed by the reciting of surah al-Fatiha (quietly, to one's self);
4. Then this is followed by a second *takbir*, which is then followed by quietly saying '*alhamdulillah*', and then (quietly, to one's self) recitation of the prayer upon the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, in the same way that one would do so in the second half of the *tashahud* in the ritual daily prayer;
5. Which is then followed by a third *takbir*, which is then followed by (quietly, to one's self) supplicating for the deceased. It is recommended one says, "*Allahumma la tahrinna ajrahu wa la taftina ba'dahu wa-ghfir lana wa lahu*" ("O God, do not deprive us of his reward, nor afflict us after him. [O God,] grant us and him forgiveness.")
6. Which is then followed by a fourth *takbir*, which is then followed by (quietly, to one's self) praying for all the Muslims;
7. Which is then followed by saying aloud '*as-salam 'alaykum*' to the right, and then to the left.

Takbir	Hanafi (no raising hands in <i>takbir</i> 2, 3, 4)	Shafi'i/Jamhur (raise hands in each <i>takbir</i>)
After first takbir	<p><i>Thana:</i> سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ. تَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ. وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ</p> <p><i>Subhanak-Allahuma wa bi hamdika wa tabaraka-smuka wa ta'aala jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruk</i></p>	Sura al-Fatiha
After second takbir	Durud/Salat Ibrahim (as at the end of prayer in the <i>tashhahud</i>)	Durud/Salat Ibrahim (as at the end of prayer in the <i>tashhahud</i>)
After third takbir	<p>prayers of forgiveness for the deceased</p> <p>اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنثَانَا , اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَيَّ</p>	prayers of forgiveness for the deceased - as in Hanafi prayer
	<p>الإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَيَّ الْإِيمَانَ , بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ</p> <p>Allahumma-ghafir li hayyina wa mayyitina wa shahidina wa gha'ibina wa saghirina wa kabirina wa dhakarina wa unthana. Allahumma man ahyay tahu minna fa ahyihi 'alal-Islam wa man tawaffaytahu minna fa tawaffahu 'alal Iman bi rahmatika ya arhamar rahimin</p>	
After the fourth takbir	two salams, right and left	prayers of forgiveness for the community, followed by the giving of salam to the right and to the left

AHCP	Association of Healthcare Cleaning Professionals
BBSI	The British Board of Scholars and Imams
<i>Dafan</i>	Burying the deceased
<i>Dhikr</i>	Remembrance of God
DMAG	Deceased Management Advisory Group
<i>Durud</i>	Farsi word for praying salutation on the Prophet
<i>Fard Kifaya</i>	Communal obligation
<i>Ghusl</i>	Ritual washing of the deceased
<i>Kafan</i>	Shroud
PHE	Public Health England
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
<i>Qira'at</i>	Recitation of the Qur'an
RPE	Respiratory protective equipment
<i>Salat Ibrahim</i>	Salutation on the Prophet (s) often recited in the prayer
<i>Salat al-Janaza</i>	Funeral prayer
<i>salat al-janaza 'ala al-gha'ibin/ Salat al-gha'ib</i>	Funeral prayer in absentia
<i>Shahada</i>	Testimony of faith
<i>Sibha</i>	Rosary bead
SICP	Standard infection control precaution
<i>Takbir</i>	To say Allahu Akbar
<i>Talqin</i>	Admonitory address (to recite: La ilaha illa Allahu Muhammadur Rasul Allah)
<i>Tasbih</i>	Rosary bead
<i>Tayammum</i>	Ritual dry ablution in the absence of water or where it is difficult to use water
TBP	Transmission-based precaution
<i>Thana</i>	To pray: <i>Subhanak Allahuma wa bi hamdika wa tabarak asmuka wa ta 'aala jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruka</i>

www.bbsi.org.uk
Info@bbsi.org.uk
[Facebook.com/bbsionline](https://www.facebook.com/bbsionline)
[@bbsionline](https://www.instagram.com/bbsionline)