

# COVID-19 FAITHS UPDATE

## RAMADAN:

### SAFETY FIRST

We're staying on the lookout for ways of observing Ramadan safely for everyone involved; balancing tradition and innovation; not just seeing it in terms of bans, closures and things being forbidden, but finding creative ways to honour the spirit and principles behind Ramadan, even if the practices that most people have known all their lives are off-limits this year. We'd be grateful for examples you know – in the city, county or Rutland; in other parts of the UK; and around the world – sharing good practice with each other.

Public bodies across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are working closely with faith communities, groups and organisations to limit the spread of coronavirus and support people through times of illness, death and bereavement.

Due to the risk of infection, there are limits on prayer gatherings, visiting those who are ill, and funeral rituals. This newsletter sets out the latest position based on guidance from Public Health England and regular discussions between faith representatives and health and public services.

Faith communities, groups and organisations continue to have a vital role in offering spiritual, moral and practical support to overcome the pandemic.

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## Places of worship

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All places of worship remain closed for communal and individual worship. Many people are using technological solutions to hold virtual services and keep in contact.

Celebrants, staff and volunteers are increasingly using applications such as Facebook Live and Zoom to stream devotional content and maintain contact.

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## Visits to University Hospitals Leicester

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Visits to Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General and Glenfield Hospital are restricted. Chaplaincy services are still operating and can support patients and families who have limited contact with relatives on the wards.

The Chaplaincy service has acquired tablets which will enable patients in COVID wards to listen to prayers and messages. If you have any audio prayers that you want to be added, then please contact Reverend Mark Burleigh (Head of Chaplaincy) by e-mail: [mark.burleigh@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:mark.burleigh@uhl-tr.nhs.uk).

Close family visits may be permitted on compassionate grounds. Contacting the ward first has been advised by UHL before visiting patients in hospital.



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## Registration of deaths

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Registration services are currently accepting notifications of death by telephone only. Registration of births is suspended. As no weddings can take place at present, notifications of marriage are also suspended. Citizenship ceremonies are also suspended until further notice.

To register a death, call one of these numbers:

Leicester: **0116 454 1000**

Leicestershire: **0116 305 6565**

Rutland: **01572 758 380**

Or visit one of these websites:

### **Leicester**

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/births-marriages-and-deaths/register-a-death/>

### **Leicestershire & Rutland**

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration/register-a-death/registering-a-death](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration/register-a-death/registering-a-death)

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## Funerals

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If a person does pass away due to the coronavirus, their personal wishes concerning the preference of burial or cremation will be fully respected. All cemeteries in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland remain open for conducting funerals. At this time there are limits on who can attend a funeral: it can only be the household and close relatives of the deceased, providing they are not showing any symptoms. Social distancing must also be observed. This is to safeguard the health of staff and mourners. Funerals can be recorded to be shared with those who can't be present.

### **Preparation of the body**

Due to the risk of infection, many of the rites and rituals that are performed to prepare a body for funeral will not be possible at this time. Any rituals that might be undertaken will have to be performed by trained staff using full personal protective equipment. Vulnerable people should not take part in any rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body of an individual who has died from, or with symptoms of, coronavirus (Covid-19) for the duration of the pandemic. This includes washing, preparing or viewing the body.

There is evolving national guidance on this and we would encourage communities and families to contact their funeral directors if they have any questions or concerns.

## **Some Relevant Government Guidance**

9 April: Clarification that cemeteries and burial grounds can remain open

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>.

17 April: New powers for local and nation government to support the resilience of local death management systems, and step in if they become overwhelmed

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-death-management>.

19 April: Guidance on managing a funeral and who can attend.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

20 April: Guidance targeted at health and funeral professionals, for handling care of the deceased.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

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## **Faiths communities supporting the wider community**

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Many faith communities, groups and organisations are at the heart of volunteering. They are supporting vulnerable people with food deliveries, befriending, and spiritual support. If you are involved in this, please share with us by contacting [amran.ismail@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:amran.ismail@leicester.gov.uk)

You can also register your community service with Voluntary Action Leicester.

You can find more information on registering your interest to volunteer, requiring volunteers, guidance and information on volunteering on the websites below:

<https://www.volunteerleicestershire.org.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>