

# Draft

providers with responsibilities relating to managing the deceased. By their nature, it is difficult to predict the severity of the next pandemic, and other factors which may be relevant to excess deaths plans. For this reason, preparations to manage the deceased during a pandemic will be scalable and likely to include a range of measures and processes. However, all planning should be guided by the following four strategic objectives:

- the death management process must have the capacity to continue to operate under the pressure of the large number of excess deaths;
- any new measures and working arrangements to manage the deceased should maintain an appropriate level of dignity and respect for the deceased;
- the bereaved should be treated with care and compassion and their wishes for the deceased be respected as far as is possible;
- there should be clear and consistent communications to inform and engage with service providers and the public to ensure that plans are well-known and approved by all important stakeholders.

## General Principles

- 1.5 The local capability to manage excess deaths is a combination of both individual organisation plans, and a Local Resilience Forum (LRF) level plan to coordinate the response across LRFs. Plans to manage excess deaths need to reflect the roles and capabilities of all organisations which have a key role to play in managing the deceased. When developing excess deaths plans, it is important to remember that bereavement is a loss that will be individual to the family and friends of the deceased. People react differently and arrangements to communicate plans and any changes in the way the deceased are managed will need to take this into account. Whilst it is likely that the experiences of families and friends will differ to normal expectations, local service providers should aim to treat the bereaved with appropriate sensitivity and consideration at all times.
- 1.6 It is the responsibility of public bodies and service providers to ensure that their behaviour (both in planning for and responding to an influenza pandemic) complies with the law. With this in mind, local service providers are expected to participate as fully as possible in LRF planning, but private businesses must not enter into any agreements with each other or public bodies that might infringe Article 81 of the EC Treaty or the Competition Act 1998. Similarly, LRFs and local authorities should not take forward planning practices which would see service providers infringe EU or UK competition laws<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Insert note regarding competition law]

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- 3.21 The aim should be to maintain funeral services as near to normal as possible for as long as possible. However, it may become necessary for funeral directors to restrict the choices available to family members in order to enhance their capacity. Restricting choice does not mean removing the option of having a funeral. Many traditional elements of funeral services can be maintained. Realistically, however, local planners should ensure that those directly involved in conducting funerals are aware of the options for limiting or restricting funeral services. It will be important that public communications clearly explain why such limitations have become necessary. This is set out in more detail in Annex of this document.
- 3.22 Funeral directors will need to collaborate with registrars to ensure deaths are registered in a timely way. They will also need to consider ways in which they might be able to increase their capacity to hold the deceased prior to funerals.
- 3.23 Funeral directors, working in partnership with faith community representatives and cemetery and crematoria managers, should consider the following business continuity measures, which should be included in local authority and LRF plans as baseline BCP measures:
- Introduction of a variety of measures relating to normal work patterns including:
    - introduction of shift working;
    - working hours are increased; and
    - businesses moving to seven day week operation;
  - Staff roles reevaluated and essential services only, are maintained e.g.:
    - the dead are taken to the chapel;
    - no car service is offered;
    - bereaved persons attending funerals are met at the chapel;
  - Where several businesses are owned or networked, agreements to pool resources (e.g. reception staff, telephone operators, private ambulances) could be negotiated;
  - Agreements could be negotiated whereby funeral staff will support burial and cremation staff by taking on agreed nontechnical duties at the chapel, crematorium, and cemetery, with a view to assisting cemeteries and crematoria to deploy their own staff to other essential duties;
  - Employment of extra staff to act under the supervision of existing staff;
  - A limited choice of types and sizes of coffins is offered, to ensure manufacturers can supply to demand; and
  - Those arranging and conducting funerals should prepare for basic and shorter services at the chapel, or for memorial services to be held at other venues (e.g. the home or place of worship).