



Press Release: 17th April, 2020

Statement on Funerals during COVID-19

Traveller organisations around the country are calling on Travellers to fully adhere to COVID19 public health measures, including restrictions on funerals. In this way people can show the deceased the respect and dignity they deserve.

Both the Government and the Catholic Church have stated that only immediate family members - up to a maximum of 10 people - should attend church and graveside services and physical distancing should be maintained at all times.

This relates to ALL funerals, including those of people who have died of COVID-19. There are no post-funeral social gatherings and An Gardaí Síochana have powers to enforce COVID-19 restrictions during this crisis.

These restrictions are not easy and Traveller organisations understand the importance of funerals to bereaved families. We want to make sure people take the long-term view on this. We want to make sure that as many people as possible are around to support bereaved families in the future.

Bereaved families are vulnerable, may be in a state of shock and feel unable to get the message across that it's ok to stay away from a funeral. But, given the COVID-19 situation, bereaved families do understand that people need to stay at home.

The reality is that we don't know who has, or who does not have, the virus – so it is vital that we take ALL precautions. We are all being encouraged to act as if we all have COVID-19 and that's why we've been told to stay at home as much as possible and not to meet up in groups.

The COVID-19 crisis is particularly hard on Travellers given underlying health conditions and overcrowded living conditions. Gathering at funerals is a sure-fire way to make the situation worse and pass on the virus if any one person does happen to have it. This puts the whole Traveller community at further risk. By adhering to the restrictions, we can do our part in reducing (as far as possible) further spread of virus and/or prevent any unnecessary deaths.

Marking the passing of a loved one is hugely important and to see a loved one buried without the usual ceremonies is very difficult. But it will be possible in the future to hold a church service for the loved one who has passed. At that point people will get a chance to pay their respects in person and pass on their good wishes to the family.

In the meantime, it is possible to communicate via mass card, telephone, What's App or Facebook and to pass on messages of sympathy that way. It is also possible to set up a book of online condolences at www.rip.ie.

Bereaved Traveller families need our support – not just now but into the future. By staying at home during COVID-19 we can make sure we will be there for them in the weeks, months and years to come.