



25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**RE: COVID-19 – Muslim burial update**

Dear Muslim community/ Assalamu Alaikum

This is an extraordinary situation on a global scale and unprecedented in recent times. Therefore, it needs an extraordinary response that will mean all our Mosques working together, particularly to comply with Covid-19 burial regulations.

We know this has been widely discussed and is a very emotive subject. We want to reassure everybody that we are working together as a group to ensure that we have the right practices in place to help families who may sadly face this difficult situation.

To further help support the work around Covid-19, we have now set up a regular resilience meeting of elected Members and senior officers from Blackburn with Darwen Council, members of the Blackburn Muslim Burial Society and the Lancashire Council of Mosques. This group will help ensure tight co-ordination and allow any issues and problems to be solved.

To be consistent, we are working to the National Burial Council guidelines and we are doing everything we possibly can to ensure we can protect religious rights and beliefs whilst also keeping our communities safe.

As such, Blackburn with Darwen Council will help provide all of the relevant resources and the Public Health Department will continue to work alongside the Blackburn Muslim Burial Society and Lancashire Council of Mosques to ensure all Islamic and Covid-19 requirements are met as sympathetically as possible.

To help, and for the safety of our residents, we ask that in the current climate, all practical Muslim funeral rites and burials are carried out by the Blackburn Muslim Burial Society only and not done by individual Mosques or Islamic organisations.

This will help ensure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) resources are effectively used and that Covid-19 safety requirements are met by volunteers.

Our partnership approach will also help protect the health and safety of our volunteers who will be undertaking ghusl, shrouding and burial activity and one of our priorities is sourcing the right PPE clothing and equipment.

Again, we know this is an incredibly difficult and emotive subject, and we will endeavour to keep you updated at every point so that we can continue to support you and provide the reassurance at this difficult time.



To help support our Muslim community, it is important to ensure we have a single point for information that is up to date, trustworthy, consistent and accurate.

Imran Patel from the Blackburn Muslim Burial Society has been nominated by the group to help lead the work with Mosques. Imran's priority is to ensure that we can continue to support the burials from the Muslim community throughout this period. Imran can be contacted directly on 07703 228796.

During this anxious time, we appeal to our communities to do what they can to reduce the amount of misinformation being shared on social media by only communicating verified sources of information.

We know a number of WhatsApp groups have been disseminating posts to a wide circulation that are not based on fact. This has caused many elderly and vulnerable people to experience days of anxiety. If you or your Mosque has WhatsApp groups, we would find it helpful if messages could be moderated and challenged.

Please be assured we are working hard on behalf of the Muslim community in Blackburn with Darwen and talking to people at the highest level to help inform and influence.

Finally we will ensure Islamic and Covid-19 requirements are met as sympathetically as possible as this is of paramount importance and our key priority.

JazakAllah and with kind regards,

Councillor Mohammed Khan  
Leader of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Professor Dominic Harrison  
Director of Public Health  
Blackburn with Darwen Council

Moulana Rafiq Sufi  
Chair of Lancashire Council of Mosques

Imran Patel  
Blackburn Muslim Burial Society