

Use of PPE when verifying a death

Following requests for clarification, the LMC have pulled together some recently updated guidance on the use of PPE when verifying a death.

Guidance for care of the deceased during the COVID-19 pandemic, issued by the Royal College of Pathologists in March 2020, suggests that unless an invasive procedure is being performed (i.e. an autopsy), disposable gloves, disposable aprons, disposable eye protection and fluid-resistant (Type IIR) surgical masks (FRSM) are considered to be adequate levels of PPE.

This guidance is available here: <https://www.rcpath.org/uploads/assets/0b7d77fa-b385-4c60-b47dde930477494b/G200-TBPs-Guidance-for-care-of-deceased-during-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

Recent Hospice UK guidance also recommends that a surgical mask, gloves and an apron should be worn as a minimum to maintain the safety of the clinician carrying out the verification of death, and should be applied to all verifications of expected adult death irrespective of any COVID-19 status (i.e. not suspected, suspected, confirmed).

However, it should be noted that Government guidance for staff who manage the deceased includes the following: *“Placing a barrier, such as a cloth or face-mask, over the mouth of the deceased when moving them may prevent the release of droplets from the respiratory tract”*. Therefore, whilst moving the deceased is not on the official list of aerosol-generating procedures, it may be that clinicians may wish to discuss placing something over the deceased’s face with the funeral director if their examination involves any movement of the body.

The full guidance is available here: <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#guidance-for-staff-who-manage-the-deceased>