



**HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II  
21 APRIL 1926 – 08 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE FOR THE PERIOD OF  
NATIONAL MOURNING**

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*The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the responsibilities of Government Departments during the National Mourning period, including guidance on the conduct of their business and the provision of public services.*

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## **Introduction**

1. Following Buckingham Palace's announcement of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a period of National Mourning has started and will continue until the end of the day of the State Funeral.
2. The purpose of this document is to set out the responsibilities of central Government Departments during the National Mourning period. It provides some basic information and principles to follow.
3. All Government business and delivery of public services is expected to continue during the period of National Mourning, apart from public announcements and engagements, which must be agreed in advance. Further information is at paragraphs 23-31.
4. This document is intended to cover all civil servants in HMG working in any part of the UK. There is bespoke guidance available for Scottish Government officials, Welsh Government officials and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. This guidance will be issued by the relevant Permanent Secretary or by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Separate National Mourning guidance will provide direction to the public, businesses and institutions on observing National Mourning. The National Mourning guidance will be published as soon as possible on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
5. The Royal Household will announce details of the ceremonial events associated with the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in due course, with supporting information provided by the Cabinet Office on any implications of the events for the Government and the public.

## **Background**

6. The National Mourning period has commenced and will finish at the end of the day of the State Funeral.

## **Day of the State Funeral**

7. Confirmation of the date and timing of the State Funeral will be made by the Royal Household. Updated information will be provided on the [Royal website](#) and [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) when announced by the Royal Household.

## **Accession Council**

8. An Accession Council will be held to proclaim the new Sovereign and make certain consequential Orders. The Privy Council Office will lead on these arrangements and will be in contact with Privy Counsellors with further details.

## **Lying-in-State**

9. The Royal Household will set out any arrangements on Lying-in-State in due course.

### **Government response**

10. The Cabinet Office is responsible for central coordination of the Government's response in order to:

- Maintain strategic oversight of the Government's responsibilities;
- Provide a regular flow of information between the Royal Household and Government;
- Support the Prime Minister and other Ministers as required;
- Manage cross-cutting issues and share situational awareness;
- Lead and coordinate Government media relations and operational briefings and manage Government communications during the National Mourning period, in conjunction with No 10; and
- Clarify any points in relation to observing national mourning for Ministerial Private Offices.

11. Those Departments and Devolved Administrations with responsibilities for delivering events during the National Mourning period are as follows:

#### ***Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office***

- Communication and engagement with foreign and commonwealth governments and British Overseas Territories.
- Delivery of any plans for the logistics and handling of overseas VVIPs.

#### ***Ministry of Defence***

- Notification and deployment of military personnel for any ceremonial activity.
- Gun salutes.

#### ***Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport***

- Provide instructions to Government Departments, and publicly via GOV.UK, about half-masting of flags and about national silences.
- Deliver the plans to manage members of the public queueing for the Lying-in-State.
- Prepare the ceremonial routes in London and Windsor, which includes installation and dressing of flags and banners for mourning, the build of media infrastructure, installation of public address systems on the ceremonial procession routes, and ownership of vehicle validation and media access pass processes.

#### ***Department for Health and Social Care and UK Health Security Agency / Public Health Scotland / Wales / NI***

- Provide detailed guidance to the Government and public in respect of public health.

#### ***Home Office***

- Oversight of assurance of policing in England and Wales and security operations across the UK including robust assessments of threat and risk, and protective security.

#### ***Department for Transport***

- Oversight of UK aviation and road, rail and buses in England.
- Pass information between transport providers and central Government.

#### ***Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities***

- Oversight of advice including mourning guidance to Local Authorities outside London across the rest of England.

#### ***Northern Ireland Office***

- Oversight of devolved aspects in Northern Ireland including the planning and delivery of proclamations at Hillsborough Castle.
- Planning and delivery of the proclamation in Belfast.

#### ***Scottish Government and Welsh Government***

- Oversight of devolved aspects in Scotland and Wales, including the planning and delivery of proclamations in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

12. Each Government department has an operational lead that will be the main source of advice for their department. Departmental leads should be the first point of contact and will raise any issues by exception with the Cabinet Office.

#### **Communications**

13. The Cabinet Office will lead and coordinate Government communications in relation to events during the period of National Mourning, working with a wide range of partners both inside and outside Government and in conjunction with No. 10.
14. Civil Service Communications will support the coordination of internal communications across Government. All Heads of Internal Communications will have access to the Internal Communications Information Cell for:
- Confirming sequencing of events and internal messaging
  - Questions relating to internal messaging

#### **Guidance for Departments and Public Bodies**

15. Permanent Secretaries should make sure all Civil Servants working in their Department are aware of the Government Mourning Guidance. Ministers should consult their Permanent Secretaries on the application of the Government Mourning Guidance on Departmental business during the National Mourning period.
16. Departments are expected to convey the Government Mourning Guidance to civil servants working in their associated Executive Agencies, non-departmental public bodies and non-Ministerial Departments, and to ALBs staffed by public servants. Separate National Mourning guidance will be issued in due course.

#### **Condolence Messages and Wreaths**

17. Condolence messages will be conveyed to His Majesty The King by: the Prime Minister; the Cabinet Secretary; the Secretary of State for Defence; the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; and the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The First Ministers of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales will also convey a condolence message.
18. Official wreaths will be sent by: the Prime Minister; the Cabinet Secretary; the Secretary of State for Defence; the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; and the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The First Ministers of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales will also send official wreaths.

### **Books of Condolence**

19. A book of condolence will be available online at the [Royal website](#).
20. Internal Communications teams in departments have made arrangements to open books of condolence in their buildings for staff and official visitors to sign. They will shortly be placed in a central location which can be accessed by everyone in the building. Internal communications teams will provide full details on departmental intranets. Books of condolence will be displayed on a table with a white tablecloth with a small arrangement of white flowers and a framed picture of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
21. Books of condolence for Diplomatic Corps and foreign and Commonwealth VIPs will be opened at Lancaster House under arrangements made by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

### **Royal Photographs in Official Buildings**

22. Photographs of Her Majesty should remain displayed until further notice. Details of the arrangements for changing photographs or pictures of Her Majesty, which may be displayed in official buildings, will be announced in due course.

### **Government Business**

23. Departments will be providing support to the Royal Household in delivering the events during the National Mourning period. The expectation is that a number of Ministers will be involved in the events. Please see page 7 for further information on Parliament.
24. This is a period of National Mourning. Government business must reflect that and be respectful. All Government business and delivery of public services are expected to continue, however the expectation is that proactive announcements, public Ministerial visits, receptions and other social engagements, speaking engagements and media appearances will not happen during this period.
25. Public announcements and engagements, including press notices, visits, receptions and events, may only proceed with the express agreement of the Minister in charge of the department on advice from their Permanent Secretary, and then approved by the No10 grid team, who will judge whether such activity is respectful of and consistent with the period of National Mourning. The Cabinet Office will be responsible for any National Mourning period-related announcements and media queries.
26. Government social media should also be paused where it is not providing vital information to the public. Where business does proceed, the Minister in charge of the department should take express care to ensure that it is respectful, fitting for a period of National Mourning and appropriate in tone (this includes social media), and it must be cleared by the No10 grid team. Public health messaging, announcements relating to security and any change to the threat level (including the situation in Ukraine), routine statistical and other releases of information and requirements flowing from legal obligations should continue.

27. All other government business, including external meetings, responses to correspondence and other public and press enquiries, and all operational matters should continue.
28. Particular care in relation to all activities must be taken on the day of the State Funeral.
29. Where it is not clear that business falls within the description of the paragraphs above, advice may be sought by the Permanent Secretary from the Propriety & Ethics team in the Cabinet Office. A flow chart outlining the above process is found at Annex A at the bottom of this document.
30. The FCDO will issue guidance to posts about sensitivities in relation to official business and overseas events during the period of National Mourning. The Ministry of Defence will issue guidance for HM Armed Forces overseas.
31. Departments should ensure that this guidance is brought to the attention of their ALBs and that they abide by the above principles. They must seek their sponsoring department's agreement to items covered in the paragraphs above and the department will need to follow the necessary approval process as above.

#### ***Ceremonial activity preparations***

32. Buckingham Palace will announce details of the programme of ceremonial activities, which will include processions, a Lying-in-State and a State Funeral. Further detail will be provided by Departments on the impact of the ceremonial programme on Government buildings and transport.
33. Departments should observe any guidance in relation to the day of the State Funeral. Departments will wish to consider arrangements for their staff.

#### ***Parliament***

34. During the National Mourning period, Parliament will meet to agree its message of condolence and for the purpose of taking oaths to the new Sovereign. Other Parliamentary business will be suspended until after the State Funeral. Access to parts of the Parliamentary estate will be very limited during the National Mourning period due to the Lying-in-State.

#### **Conduct and formal marks of respect**

35. Permanent Secretaries should consider the following:

#### ***Flags***

36. Flags on Government buildings are being half-masted today as soon as possible as a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty. Guidance in relation to flags (on Government buildings) will be issued by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Please refer to the DCMS section of [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Local Authorities will be encouraged to follow this guidance.
37. The Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales will issue instructions for the flying of official flags on buildings within their estate. In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Office will issue instructions for those buildings covered by the Flags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.

### ***Gun Salutes***

38. A number of gun salutes will take place throughout the period of National Mourning. More information will be provided by the Ministry of Defence and made available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as soon as possible.

### ***Dress***

39. Civil Servants and Ministers involved in ceremonial or other public facing events during this period should wear appropriate mourning dress. This includes:

- dark coat, lounge suit with black tie, or dark suit/day dress; a dark hat and gloves are optional.

40. All other Civil Servants should wear their normal business attire, but should be mindful that this is a period of national mourning and dress accordingly. Particular care should be taken by those working in roles that interact directly with the public and those in offices close to the location of ceremonial events.

### ***Events***

41. Departments should ensure that any internal events that take place at this time are respectful and in fitting with the period of national mourning.

### **Correspondence**

42. Departments communicating directly with the Royal Household should use black-edged stationery during the period of National Mourning on matters relating to Her Majesty's demise. All other Government communications should be conducted in the usual format.

### **Public Services**

43. It remains essential that the Civil Service continues to support the delivery of public services. The public should remain able to access information and services including online services as usual. Any changes made to websites, such as the use of black edging or black banners, should take into consideration accessibility requirements for visually impaired users.

44. [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) will link to information provided by the Royal Household and carry the message of sympathy from the Prime Minister.

### **Public Information**

45. It is to be expected that many people will look to the Government for information during the National Mourning period, including the State Funeral. The [Royal website](https://www.royal.gov.uk) and [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) will be the primary source of information about the death and the funeral arrangements.

46. [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) is linking to a number of partners, who will carry regularly updated public information about the events of the coming days.

47. Businesses or other organisations wishing to pay their respects by half-masting flags or holding silences are invited to follow the guidance available on the DCMS pages of [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).



**Further Information**

48. Each department has an operational lead who should be the first point of contact for further queries.
49. For the most up to date information, please refer to the events page on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). This page will go live today.

**ANNEX A: Flow Chart to Escalate Queries**

