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Our Ref: RH/worship

Dear all

Re: Covid-19 and Places of Worship

The last few weeks have seen a very rapid rise in the number of cases of Covid-19, in large part due to the emergence of a new and more infectious strain of the virus. The number of cases both nationally and locally is higher than at any time during the pandemic and in some areas of the county 1 in 20 people are infected. The NHS is under unprecedented pressure with up to half of hospital beds taken by Covid-19 patients.

We are now in the third national lockdown. Places of worship are allowed to remain open and people are allowed to attend for a service. However, this is one of very few legal exemptions that allow larger numbers of people to gather and it is crucial that people do not mingle with anyone outside of their household or support bubble. Government guidance is here.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december

Some places of worship have taken the decision to close for the duration of the lockdown given the very high risk currently. For those that have remained open we recommend that you reflect on whether you can do so safely given the more infectious strain of the virus that is circulating and the large numbers of people that are carrying the infection. If you do choose to remain open we recommend that you review your risk assessments to ensure that the very high risk is taken into account and that everything possible is being done to minimise the risk of infection – including strict social distancing, face coverings for worshippers, regular environment cleaning and facilities to ensure hand hygiene.

Kind regards



Dr Richard Harling MBE
Director of Health & Care

