

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR HOME VISITS AND HOME COMMUNION – ST. NICOLAS CHURCH BOOKHAM

The Church of England guidance on pastoral support in the community (see - <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Advice%20on%20pastoral%20support%20in%20the%20community%20including%20care%20homes%20v2.0.pdf>) says that home visits, including home communion, are permitted in certain circumstances subject to a local risk assessment. This is intended to be that risk assessment. It is intended to provide a basis for deciding whether in a particular case a home visit or should take place and, if so, what steps should be taken to mitigate the risks of transmitting coronavirus.

Action No:	Actions	Comments	Risks	Risk Score < mitigation	Mitigation	Risk score > mitigation
1.	Is a visit necessary given the risk?	<p>Any visit carries a risk of virus transmission in either direction no matter how careful those involved are. It is well established that people can have and transmit COVID-19 without showing any symptoms themselves and the results could be extremely serious for the person infected, particularly if they are elderly.</p> <p>The CofE guidance implies that visits should not take place unless they are necessary and there no other ways in which pastoral care can be offered.</p> <p>As far as home communion is concerned, it should be borne in mind that the risks involved could be greater than the person attending a Sunday</p>	<p><u>Person to person contact</u> Maintaining social distancing in a person’s home may not always be possible and spending an hour or more in the same room as someone else even when 2 metres carries risks.</p>	12+	<p><u>Person to person contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits should only be made where the pastoral need cannot be met in some other way. • Visits should not be made to those confirmed as having COVID-19. • Visit should not be made to households that are self-isolating or in which there is someone who is shielding or has returned from a country in the last 14 days for which quarantine requirements apply. • Home communion should only be offered where the person concerned cannot, with assistance if need be attend church. As a general rule, if someone is leaving the house for other purposes they should be expected to come to church to receive communion even if they have had home communion in the past. (Communion can, of course, be brought to those with limited mobility in the pew.) 	6

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		service if they are able to do so as the person giving communion will be much closer to the recipient for much longer than at church.	<p><u>Cross contamination</u> Entering someone's home inevitably involves touching surfaces that made have been touched by others and may be touched by the person being visited after the visitor has left.</p>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The guidance suggests that visits by lay visitors should be agreed with the incumbent. <p><u>Cross contamination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the risk of cross contamination can be minimised by careful precautions, it cannot be eliminated. 	3
2.	Preparations prior to a visit	The risks can be reduced if the possibility of taking COVID-19 into the household are minimised and the person being visited knows what to expect and how to behave and what preparations they need to make.	<p><u>Person to person contact</u> In a pre-virus visit it would have been normal for hands to be shaken and people to have been close to one another.</p>	12+	<p><u>Person to person contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All visits should be arranged in advance and the person visited should be told that any home visit at this time carries risks. They should be specifically asked to confirm they are content to take the risks involved. The visit should be confirmed the day before, ideally by telephone. When the visit is confirmed the person being visited should be told: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there can be no handshakes or other physical contact. The visitor will remain 2 metres from the person being visited at all times. To aid this and reinforce the message it might be helpful to discuss where people will sit and 	3

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			<p><u>Cross contamination</u> Visits, particularly for home communion, will involve taking things into the house that could be contaminated.</p>	<p>9+</p>	<p>that it will be necessary for the person being visited to move back from the door to allow the visitor in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communion will be wafers only. ○ It the current exceptional circumstances it would be safer for both parties if refreshments were not offered. ○ It isn't possible for someone from outside the household to join the home communion service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The person being visited should be asked to confirm that neither they nor any member of their household has symptoms of COVID-19 or are otherwise unwell. ● The visit should be cancelled if there is the slightest doubt about the visitor's health, even if the symptoms appear not to be related to COVID-19 <p><u>Cross contamination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is best not to hand anything to the person being visited but where this cannot be avoided the items should have been quarantined for 3 days. ● In preparing for home communion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please wear a mask and disposable gloves when collecting the communion set and wafers from the sacristy. If this is done on a 	<p>3</p>

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					<p>Sunday before or after the 10 o'clock service the server should be asked to bring these to you as there is a 'one person at a time' rule in the sacristy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unless it is certain that the communion set has not been used for 3 days it should be washed and dried with kitchen paper. ○ Consecrated wafers are now being dated. Please use the wafers in the square pyx as these will be more than 3 days old. ○ Communion leaflets should be quarantined for 3 days before use. ○ When filling in the book to record that you have borrowed the communion set, please wear gloves and use your own pen. 	
3.	The visit		<p><u>Person to person contact</u> Even with careful explanation of the necessary precautions it is possible for things to go wrong: people forget in their own homes and slip easily into pre-coronavirus normal behaviour.</p>	6	<p><u>Person to person contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It may help to remind the person gently of the need to maintain social distancing on arrival. You might say that as far as you know you are fit and well but it is wise to play safe as people can have the virus without knowing it. ● Avoid all personal contact and if need be wait for the person being visited to move back before you enter. 	3

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			<p><u>Cross contamination</u> Again the risk of slipping into pre-coronavirus normal behaviour is real</p>	9	<p><u>Cross contamination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not touch anything if you can avoid it. Wear a mask and gloves to set out the table. Place the table and wafers where you and recipient will not breathe over them during the service. The wafers that are to be distributed should remain covered until the moment of distribution. Wear a mask and fresh gloves when distributing the wafers, sanitising your hands before putting the gloves on. Immediately after the service the pyx should be placed in a sealable plastic bag (as recommended in the guidance). 	3
4.	After the service		<p><u>Person to person contact</u> This should only be an issue if the communion set and wafers are returned to the sacristy on a Sunday when the server on duty may be in the room</p> <p><u>Cross contamination</u> Despite the care that will have been taken it</p>	6 6	<p><u>Person to person contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the communion set is to be returned on a Sunday they should be handed to the server rather than you yourself going into the sacristy. Any spare wafers should be appropriately consumed and not returned to the church. <p><u>Cross contamination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communion set should be washed in warm soapy water and dried with 	3 3

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			should be assumed that anything brought away from the visit will have been contaminated.		kitchen roll. Wash and sanitise hands before handling and placing back in the sacristy desk drawer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communion leaflets should be quarantined for 3 days after use. 	

APPENDIX 1: RISK SCORING MATRIX MODEL

Risk has been scored using a simple model of 'likelihood' and 'impact' with specific reference to transmission of Covid-19. It is recognised that risk of transmission cannot be eliminated, not least because of variables that are out of the direct control of those preparing for and supporting services in Church. In particular, if individuals choose to attend despite government guidance not to meet with groups indoors if they are among more vulnerable groups, as set out in Government guidance for places of worship, summarised in Appendix 2.

Covid-19 infections range from being asymptomatic with the vast majority being treated at home. Most do not resulting in serious illness requiring hospital admission, serious long term effects on health or death. The likelihood of increased risk of serious illness or death must be considered alongside Government guidance for vulnerable groups and individual decisions to attend services. For these reasons, it is not possible to attribute a full range of impact scores because of the multiple variables. An impact score of 3 has therefore been applied throughout the assessment.

- *Likelihood* = How likely risk is to result in cross infection (from minimal to extremely likely)
- *Impact* = The potential seriousness of an individual contracting Covid-19
- *Risk Score* = Likelihood score multiplied by Impact score

The matrix below provides a guide to assigning degrees of risk depending on the score.

		Impact				
		1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood	1	1	2	3	4	5
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	5	5	10	15	20	25

Risk score 1-7 – suggests that risks sufficiently minimised to proceed

Risk score 8-12 – suggests some further mitigation may be required or advisable

Risk score 15 and above – suggests that high risks persist unless significant mitigation is applied

APPENDIX 2: Government Guidance for Places of Worship and individual decisions to attend services

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Vulnerable Groups

In Section 5, Government guidance reiterates general guidance for individuals aged 70 years and over attending a place of worship.

"Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions. Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household. You should consider informing these groups in particular of the symptoms of COVID-19 and current stay alert and social distancing guidance."

The guidance also states in Section 5, that:

"Shielded patients are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship. From Monday 6 July, those shielding individuals may choose to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a support bubble with another household, they will therefore still be advised not to attend places of worship indoors."

It goes on to say:

"Advice for both the clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable is however advisory and they can choose how to manage their own risks."

The Government offers this as advice under the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 and not as legal requirements.

This risk assessment has been undertaken and appropriate measures to reduce risk of spread of infection to others introduced within St Nicolas Church. This includes reduced numbers of people to attend services and through a pre-booking system; provision of hand sanitizers; carefully considered advice prior to attending and on arrival to the Church; and systems for movement of people within and through the Church.

Individuals aged over 70 looking to attend places of worship should take this guidance into consideration together with local measures to minimise risk adopted by St Nicolas Church and consider how they should best manage their own risks. Each Sidesman and Welcomer volunteering to assist in preparation and during services has received a letter and invited to advise whether or not they wish to return to resume their duties now or in due course when they feel safe to do so. Individual decisions will be fully respected and return to rotas at a later date warmly welcomed. On booking places at services, each person receives confirmation that includes request not to attend if showing symptoms of Covid-19 or contact with anyone with symptoms in the previous seven days.

All considered, everyone must consider their own situation and make their own decision as to when the time is right to come to the Service in Church or to continue to enjoy the service online, and also when it would be appropriate for them to be involved in various roles once again.