

Guidelines for a Parish Continuity Plan during COVID-19

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
24 th September 2020	2	The House of Bishops Recovery Group

The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).

This guidance has been produced so that each parish/benefice/mission community or alternative can prepare or update its continuity plan in preparedness for further possible developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular local outbreaks or a 'second wave'.

There cannot be a 'one size to fit all' plan. This document aims to help you review what you have been doing and help you to think about what next steps might be in the event that there is a pause in the easing of restrictions or a local outbreak leading to renewed lockdown.

Guidance.

Guidance is available from the National Church of England website on a wide range of issues; this is regularly updated: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Please pay particular attention to the risk assessment template document.

CONSIDERATIONS

If there is a local outbreak

- It is essential that incumbents, Churchwardens and other leaders are familiar with and apply the protocols contained in the government's [COVID-19 Early Outbreak Management Action Card](#) and know how to contact their local Public Health England Health Protection Team (PHE HPT).
- Local Authorities are responsible for managing COVID-19 outbreaks. While specific plans and protocols vary between authorities, it is essential that incumbents or Area/Rural Deans make contact now with their LA to determine their best point of contact in the event of a [future outbreak](#).
- Consideration should be given how best to communicate information and advice about any local, regional or national outbreaks, via notice boards, single-use news sheets, email and social media as appropriate. Church leaders can play a key role in addressing rumours, misinformation, fear and anxiety.

Worship

- Are your arrangements for worship in accordance with the latest church and government guidance? You may now be able to do more (or, if there is a local outbreak, less) than you have been.

- Please note that clergy being unable to conduct services because of personal risk does not affect the canonical requirement for services to be held in each benefice. Advice on cover or obtaining a dispensation can be obtained from the Archdeacon or Rural / Area Dean.

Pastoral Care

- Now is a good time to review what you have been offering for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish.
- Particularly for those who may need to self-isolate, how is support being maintained with phone calls and via social media, and helped with the delivery of shopping and / or medication.
- It is possible that people who had isolated and begun to be able to go out again will be asked to isolate once more in a local lockdown. Such people may particularly need contact and support.

Groups

- Each church group or organization using church premises should check that they are operating according to the latest advice and guidance.