

The Bishop of Carlisle
The Right Reverend James Newcome
Bishop's House, Ambleside Road,
Keswick CA12 4DD

Dear colleague,

Further COVID Guidance Updates – Tuesday 12 January, 2021

Please find below, details of changes to guidance for churches which have been actioned by the Government in the last 24 hours. As ever, I wanted to bring these to your attention at the earliest possible moment and would ask that you carefully read the attached information.

Guidance for Places of Worship

The Government has updated its [guidance for places of worship](#) and, as such new and updated FAQs have been added to the [Church of England's coronavirus guidance](#) website page.

In particular, these updates refer to singing (please see below) and whether someone should work who is clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) (see below).

Is Singing Permitted?

The Government has advised that:

- Where singing or chanting is essential to an act of worship, this should be **limited to one person wherever possible**. Exceptionally, where it is essential to the service, up to three individuals should be permitted to do so. Strict social distancing should be observed and the use of Plexi-glass screens should be considered to protect worshippers, and each other.
- **Communal (congregational) singing should not take place**. This applies even if social distancing is being observed or face coverings are used, indoors and outdoors.

It has been confirmed that this guidance applies both to professional and amateur choirs where a congregation is present.

Under the Performing Arts guidance professional groups may continue to rehearse and train, and perform for broadcast or recording purposes if a congregation is not present. In such cases the numbers or people involved should be kept as small as possible to minimise risks and participants should follow social distancing guidance. Please see [Government guidance on places of worship](#) and on [Performing Arts](#) for more information.

Should I work if I'm clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)?

The Government has advised: 'You are strongly advised to work from home because the risk of exposure to the virus in your area may currently be higher. If you cannot work from home, then you should not attend work. This includes all clergy and lay volunteers and workers with churches.'

For more information please see:

- [Government Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#)
- [Church of England guidance on personal risk factors](#)

Once more I would reiterate the support that the Diocese is offering to all clergy, regardless of whether churches are closed for communal worship or open. I would also re-emphasise the need for a rigorous risk assessment to be completed if a decision is taken to keep your church buildings open, particularly with transmission rates continuing to be so worryingly high.

Please be assured of my continued prayers,

Bishop James