

NEWBOLD CHURCH – RESPONSE TO STEP4

The approach taken by the Government in Step4 is to remove most coronavirus legislation but to promote guidance that emphasises the **personal and corporate responsibility of individuals and organisations** to protect others and themselves.

We recognise it may be **difficult to agree exactly what to do and how to come to a decision** on a specific point as everyone has a different set of criteria by which they judge whether they feel safe in different situations. These restrictions have necessarily been blunt instruments and for some people and in some places seem unnecessary or overly restrictive. For others, each easing of restrictions seemed to bring additional risk to themselves or those they love who have remained vulnerable to the virus. As a body we now need to move forward without these legal restrictions and decide how best to manage the risk to ourselves and others.

At Newbold church we believe that **everyone is known and loved individually by God** and that as many members within one body we are called to be responsible to and for one another, respecting the more vulnerable whose suffering is our suffering (1 Cor 12:12-27). The move to step 4 means we are being asked to take even more personal responsibility around coronavirus than when we were compelled to adhere to Government restrictions.

Easing of restriction: From Step4 legal limits on the numbers of people allowed to meet indoors and outdoors will be removed, including all capacity limits in churches, as well as removal of the 1 meter+ social distancing rules.

Response: Commencing with the Sabbath 24th July:

- No bookings will be necessary to attend the service.
- The chairs will be placed back in rows as they were prior to the pandemic.
- On request, people will be provided with **large cards** to put next to them when sat down, asking others to leave the seats next to them free.

Easing of restriction: Step4 also means there will no longer be a legal requirement to wear a face covering, though the government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed settings to protect themselves and others. There will no longer be limits on the number of people who can attend weddings, funerals and other life events (including receptions and celebrations). There will also be no restrictions on choirs and music groups, whether amateur or professional, or on congregational singing.

Response: at Newbold Church, everyone will be expected to comply with the following Risk Management Measures, should they choose to attend our in-person meetings:

- Everyone will **wear a mask at all times** (unless you have medical exemption).
- All are welcomed to **sing**. Wearing a face mask will help reduce the spread of infection.
- We will continue to provide **hand sanitiser** at entrances and key points such as toilets and expect everyone to make use of them.

- The building will be **well ventilated** by leaving all windows and doors open during the services and rehearsals.

For those who chose not to attend in person, we will:

- Continue to provide a live stream of the church service which will be available to watch subsequently on our video channel.
- Access to pastoral support is always available.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) you are no longer advised to shield. However, you should continue to follow the government guidance for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and are advised to continue taking extra precautions to protect yourself, such as limiting close contacts, shopping or travelling at quieter times of the day, keeping rooms ventilated and washing your hands regularly.

Further Recommendations:

- If you are not well, please, do not attend a place of worship, but rather follow government guidelines for testing, tracing and isolation.
- We would also suggest that people take a lateral flow test (free from pharmacies) prior to attending a church service.

Adapted for our circumstances in light of the government announcement (19.07.21), from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/COVID%2019%20Guidance%20from%20the%2019th%20July%202021%20v1.0.pdf> and based on government regulations: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship>