

CATHOLIC DIOCESE of NOTTINGHAM

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Diocesan Guidelines – as at 30 March 2020

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Purpose

The Diocese of Nottingham is committed to the highest standards of health and safety. We take seriously the protection of all of our clergy, employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as **'staff'** for the purposes of these guidelines) and view this as a priority. Therefore, this policy is designed to highlight measures we are taking to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the responsibilities all should take to this effect.

As government guidance is subject to change, these guidelines will be reviewed at least fortnightly and updated accordingly.

A) Government Commons Statement – 24 March 2020

"People should only leave their home for one of four reasons:

- *first, to shop for basic necessities, such as food, as infrequently as possible;*
- *secondly, to exercise once a day, for example a run, walk or cycle, alone or with members of the same household;*
- *thirdly, for any medical need, or to provide care or help to a vulnerable person; and*
- *fourthly, to travel to and from work, but only where it cannot be done from home, and employers should be taking every possible step to ensure that staff can work remotely."*

B) Personal Responsibility for Hygiene and Social Distancing at Work

As per national guidelines we would advise that all staff take personal responsibility for their hygiene by: -

- Washing their hands thoroughly using soap and warm water for 20 seconds as frequently as reasonably possible.
- Covering their mouth when coughing and sneezing using either their inner elbow or a tissue which is disposed of in a bin as soon as possible.
- Implementing social distancing. This means not being in close contact with anyone else; maintaining a minimum 2 metre gap with other people.
- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces (e.g. door-handles, keyboards, copiers, desks and other office equipment) that are regularly touched, using standard cleaning products.

C) Self-Isolation

If any member of staff becomes unwell with virus symptoms, such as a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or if anyone who lives with a member of staff displays symptoms, the member of staff must go home and stay at home.

a. Person Showing Symptoms

As per the National Advice, if anyone shows symptoms of the virus, themselves, they must immediately self-isolate for 7 days.

b. Contact with Someone who Shows Symptoms

If a member of Staff has been in contact with anyone who is displaying symptoms, they must self-isolate for 14 days, even if they have no symptoms themselves.

If anyone lives with someone who shows symptoms, the whole household must self-isolate for 14 days.

c. Social Shielding of 'High Risk' Groups

Staff who form part of the 'high risk' group either through age (70+) or through an underlying health issue or both are strongly advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks; they should stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact.

d. Travelling Overseas

Following government advice, anyone who has travelled overseas may need to implement self-isolation on their return to the UK (or they may even be quarantined).

e. Exclusion from Place of Work

If the relevant line-manager, Parish Priest or other Diocesan Officer is concerned that a member of Staff is displaying the COVID-19 symptoms or that they have been in contact with someone who has the virus, they should take the decision to send that person home. For employees this will be treated as a period of self-isolation or absence through sickness.

f. Self-Isolation Reporting

Staff must inform their relevant line-manager, Parish Priest or other Diocesan Officer, as appropriate, as soon as possible after self-isolation is imposed, advising circumstances and dates. Employees must also advise Parish Payroll (parish.accounts1@dioceseofnottingham.uk)

D) Employee Absence through Sickness

- If an employee contracts the virus they must follow normal practice for absence through sickness and remain off work until the agreed time (as advised by government guidelines) and only return to work with the agreement of their line manager.
- Employees who have COVID-19 or are advised to stay at home, should obtain an 'isolation note' by visiting NHS 111 online (111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/), rather than visiting a doctor. For COVID-19 cases this replaces the usual need to provide a 'fit note' (sometimes called a 'sick note') after 7 days of sickness absence.
- Parish Payroll (parish.accounts1@dioceseofnottingham.uk) must be advised of all absences due to sickness.

E) Employees' Attendance at Work

The Diocese of Nottingham will follow national guidelines concerning attendance at work, including the statement from the Secretary of Health to the House of Commons on 24 March: "employers should be taking every possible step to ensure that staff can work remotely ... where people absolutely cannot work from home, they can still go to work."

a. Working from Home

It may be desirable or necessary for some or all employees to work from home.

- In the event of school closures, employees who are responsible for the care of children in their family are permitted to work from home.
- Where required, the relevant line manager, Parish Priest or other Diocesan Officer, as appropriate, is to make the necessary provision for working from home.
- Employees are required to agree a pattern of work that suits them and their line managers. Flexibility of working hours may be permitted where possible.
- Regular communication is essential for employees who work from home.
- Employees are reminded that working from home is not time off, therefore the capability and availability to work is required.
- Prior authorisation will be required for an employee to work from home.

b. Working from Diocesan or Parish Office

It may be that it is not possible for an employee to work from home. Where government guidance permits, if they are not displaying symptoms or self-isolating, they may be asked to attend their usual place of work (e.g. curial or parish office). This should be agreed with the relevant line manager, Parish Priest or other Diocesan Officer, as appropriate, and kept

to a minimum. Where this occurs, employees are reminded strictly to observe their Personal Responsibility for Hygiene and Social Distancing at Work (see C above).

c. Employee Obligation to Attend Place of Work

Employees should feel under no obligation to attend their place of work if they have reasonable cause to be uncomfortable with this or are feeling unwell. The Diocese does not wish to ask employees to attend their place of work where the employee has a reasonable concern that this creates a risk to their own health or the health of others.

d. Furlough

If, for any reason related to the coronavirus situation, an employee cannot work from their usual place of work or from home, that employee should be placed on 'furlough'.

- Furlough is a temporary period of leave to help Parishes or Diocesan offices deal with situations in which there is less work available for employees at this time due to the COVID-19 situation.
- The employee will remain employed during the furlough period and their usual contractual terms will apply, including pay, unless otherwise advised.
- Employees are not required to attend work until advised they are required to return to work.
- They must remain available for work during this time so that they can be brought back in immediately as the situation changes.
- The Diocese will be applying to HMRC to claim 80% funding for furlough pay via its Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJR Scheme)
- It is essential that Parish Payroll (parish.accounts1@dioceseofnottingham.uk) is advised if an employee is to be furloughed. The employee must be formally informed by the Diocese in the required way and the appropriate records must be kept for the HMRC claim.

e. Security of employment

- Until further notice and as far as is possible, during this time employees' contracted hours of work and rates of pay will not be affected by changes in working practices implemented to delay the spread of coronavirus. If the situation changes substantially, further advice will be issued.
- Until further notice, any proposed dismissal or termination of employment contract must receive the prior approval of the Chief Operating Officer before being implemented.

F) Gathering in Groups

Staff should follow prevailing government instructions on gathering in public, other than with members of their own household. (As at 23 March 2020, no more than two people).

G) Travel

Staff should not travel unnecessarily.

The government guidelines state: *"Following on from the government's guidance on social distancing in relation to COVID-19, people should avoid travelling unless it is essential.*

This guidance is for people planning to visit second homes or holiday premises during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Essential travel does not include visits to second homes, camp sites, caravan parks or similar, whether for isolation purposes or holidays. People should remain in their primary residence."

H) Communications

Diocesan and Parish business will continue by email and telephone only. Postal services should not be used. If physical post is essential for any reason, then the recipient should be informed, and an electronic copy should also be sent. Delays in collection and processing of communications sent through the post should be expected.

I) Parish Ministry

Parishes must follow the guidance from the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and from Bishop Patrick in relation to the provision of Masses and other Sacraments, meetings and visits.

a. Parish Support for Vulnerable People should be through Approved Schemes

Concern for parishioners and our communities remains at the core of our mission.

However, given the imperatives of the present epidemic, this needs to be exercised in new and different ways (e.g. by phone and other remote communication). Full use should be made of established community schemes as the primary mechanism for supporting vulnerable and isolated people. Nevertheless, the ministry of Parish Priests to their flock remains and, in emergencies, or where necessary and appropriate, this should continue to be undertaken with full regard to health and safety, safeguarding and financial protections.

Parishes should not normally establish, oversee or take responsibility for support groups, schemes or mechanisms. It is essential for all concerned that such schemes operate with appropriate health and safety, safeguarding and financial integrity frameworks. This is to protect both the volunteers and those receiving the service. It is particularly important that such schemes do not cut across the government restrictions on travel.

People who wish to volunteer should be encouraged to do so through the publicly established schemes in each local authority area, such as those outlined in the list attached. Parish priests may facilitate parish participation through such schemes, but parish volunteers should not be working on behalf of the Church, or in a Church-related activity, during this period, without the express approval of the Parish Priest. (*See b. Parish Support Through the Parish Priest below.*) The exception is volunteer hospital chaplains who can continue to work so long as this is authorised by the relevant hospital and is in full compliance with their health and safety guidance. This will ensure all are working in line with government directions and within the appropriate safety frameworks.

People should, of course, be encouraged to be concerned for the needs of their neighbours. They should, however, be urged to find creative ways of remotely staying in touch with people they know, especially with people who are isolated and vulnerable, and to provide spiritual and practical support. Such support should not, however, be given on behalf of the Church but as individual Christians. If practical help or visits are required these should only be through the approved publicly established volunteer schemes, or if these are not available or appropriate, through the Parish Priest as laid out below.

b. Parish Support Through the Parish Priest

Where there is no approved scheme for providing support for an isolated or vulnerable person in need, or where there is a scheme that the Parish Priest has checked and verified for parish (not just individual) participation, the Parish Priest must personally validate requests for help and offers to volunteer. Both the person making the request and the volunteer must be validated by the Parish Priest. Guidance for volunteers (see Attachment 1), for Safeguarding and for Data Protection must be followed at all times.

c. Volunteers

Volunteers must be personally known to and approved by the Parish Priest. They must have a current (within 3 years) DBS that covers them for working with vulnerable adults and/or children. This will need to be verified by your Parish Safeguarding Representative before any volunteering is undertaken.

Appendix 1 provides guidance for Safe Working for Volunteers. A copy should be given to every Parish Volunteer approved by the Parish Priest and Parish Safeguarding Representative for giving support in the name of the Church, Diocese or Parish to those who are vulnerable during the COVID-19 epidemic. Safeguarding policies and procedures must be applied at all times (see *d. Safeguarding* below).

Volunteers can be older people in the at-risk group. This should be taken into account. When planning, consider ways in which volunteers can help in ways that reduce risk, such as telephone calls to isolated and vulnerable people. (Volunteers may be isolated themselves.)

d. Safeguarding

The policy of the Diocese is to follow all government advice on self-isolating and social distancing. This being the case, should a member of Staff assist or otherwise engage with another person in the parish 'in the name of the Church' then usual Safeguarding rules, including DBS, apply.

(Note: If they are doing it as a neighbour or friend to another, in a way that is not organised or overseen by the parish, then that is a private arrangement and as such does not qualify for a DBS check.)

i. DBS Checks

In accordance with advice from the Disclosure and Barring Service, to ensure that the necessary DBS checks can still be carried out, the DBS ID checking guidance has been changed for a temporary period from 24 March 2020.

The change will enable:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted
- The change should only be implemented for urgent cases where it is not possible to follow the normal identity checking guidelines.
- Approval from the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator must always first be obtained.
- All the relevant DBS forms can be downloaded from the Diocesan website. The completed forms must be sent to the Safeguarding Office by email.
- The applicant must present the original versions of documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role.

ii. DBS Renewal

No-one should put their own health, or that of the member of Staff at risk by attempting to do a DBS renewal, which involves a physical meeting. Many renewals are for individuals who already have a DBS with the Diocese, albeit over the three-year renewal period.

iii. New Volunteers

New volunteers must be checked in the usual way where there is eligibility.

iv. Safeguarding Guidance

The Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator must be contacted for specific advice about circumstances or situations.

J) Data Protection

The Data Protection Policy of the Diocese of Nottingham continues to apply and should be checked as required (www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/data-protection-policy). If needed, further advice should be sought from the Chief Operating Officer (coo@dioceseofnottingham.uk).

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has issued additional guidance, which should be followed:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-coronavirus/>, and
<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/03/community-groups-and-covid-19/>

Only selected extracts are provided below. Full guidance can be found through the links above. *The ICO recognises the unprecedented challenges we are all facing during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.*

a. Sharing Information

We know you might need to share information quickly or adapt the way you work. Data protection will not stop you doing that. It's about being proportionate - if something feels excessive from the public's point of view, then it probably is.

- *Take proper care of things like people's names and addresses as well as more sensitive details about their health or religion.*
- *Be clear, open and honest with people about what you are doing with their personal information. Tell them why you need it, what you'll do with it and who you're going to share it with.*
- *If you can, think ahead. What kind of information are you likely to share? What do you need to do to make sure that happens securely?*
- *If you're not sure whether you should be handling personal data, think about whether it falls into one of the following categories:*
 - A) *Would the person expect me to use their information in this way (legitimate interests)?*
 - B) *Have they given me their clear and unambiguous consent to use their personal information (consent)?*
 - C) *Is the person's health or safety at risk if I don't use their personal data (vital interests)?*

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, you can handle and share personal data.

b. Data Protection when Working from Home

During the pandemic, staff may work from home more frequently than usual and they can use their own device or communications equipment. Data protection law doesn't prevent that, but you'll need to consider the same kinds of security measures for homeworking that you'd use in normal circumstances.

K) Further Information

Links to some online resources are provided below

www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/
www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance
www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/
www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/coronavirus

Please contact office@dioceseofnottingham.uk if further information is required

ATTACHMENT 1 Safe working for volunteers

Thank you for providing support to those who are vulnerable during the COVID-19 epidemic.

In order to volunteer you must have a current (within 3 years) DBS that covers you for working with vulnerable adults and/or children. This will need to be verified by your Parish Safeguarding Representative before you undertake any volunteering.

Please follow these guidelines at all times

1. **Do not enter anyone's home.** If you feel they need urgent help or are at risk, call the police or social services immediately
2. **If at all possible, always work with someone** to provide the help or have someone with you when you drop shopping or supplies off at someone's home.
3. **Do not give out your personal details** to anyone. If you are giving support via a phone call to someone, use a mobile phone and activate 'number withheld' function. Make all calls with someone else with you in the room so that they can hear the conversation – use speaker phone if you can.
4. **Always let someone know what you are doing**, when and where – ideally a family member who knows when to expect you back from the task you have been asked to carry out.
5. **If you have symptoms of the COVID-19 virus**, follow NHS guidelines and do not visit vulnerable people. Avoid physical contact at all times and use hand sanitiser and/or follow NHS handwashing guidelines.
6. **Follow NHS and government advice** over 'Social Distancing'. If you are in close proximity to others, always ask if the contact is necessary.
7. **All help through this organised scheme** must be requested by your Parish Priest. If you respond to a request for help outside of this scheme, it is a private arrangement.
8. **Money** – if you are helping by getting shopping for someone it must be according to a written list you are given. The person requesting help will be asked to reimburse the cost through the Parish they have contacted to get the help and this will be arranged through bank transfer or cheque. Keep all receipts – give the original to the person you are helping but also take a photo on your phone of the receipt and email it to the Parish arranging the help. Do not accept money – politely refuse if offered.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
3. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information
4. Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs. This includes gatherings in places of worship.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media. This includes visiting parishioners at home.
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

Further guidelines were released on 23rd March

People should only leave their home for one of four reasons:

1. to shop for basic necessities, such as food, as infrequently as possible;
2. to exercise once a day, for example a run, walk or cycle, alone or with members of the same household;
3. for any medical need, or to provide care or help to a vulnerable person; and
4. to travel to and from work, but only where it cannot be done from home.

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is pragmatically possible.

ATTACHMENT 2 Volunteer Schemes

These are links we have been able to find to the currently advertised volunteer schemes:

Nottinghamshire community support and volunteering hub	https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/coronavirus/nottinghamshire-community-support-and-volunteering-hub
Gedling Borough Council	http://www.gedling.gov.uk/givingforgedling/
Derbyshire County Council Community Response Unit	https://derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/health-protection/disease-control/coronavirus/community-response-unit/if-you-want-to-volunteer/if-you-want-to-volunteer.aspx
Connex Community Support (Derbyshire Dales)	https://connex.org.uk/
NHS Volunteer Responders	https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS
List of local groups and organisations offering help and support	https://nottstv.com/coronavirus-list-of-local-groups-and-organisations-offering-help-and-support/
VCS Lincoln, VCS North Kesteven and VCS West Lindsey	https://voluntarycentreservices.org.uk/community-activity-and-volunteering-information-coronavirus-response/
Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service	http://www.lincolnshirecvs.org.uk/covid-19/
CareinLincs	https://www.careinlincs.co.uk/supporting-vulnerable-people-in-lincolnshire
Lincolnshire Co-op Groups Supporting the Community	https://www.lincolnshire.coop/community/groups-supporting-the-community

We will identify other possibilities for people to contribute and update this list when we can