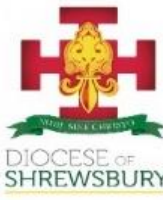




COVID-19  
St Winefrides.  
Bishops' Conference  
(Step 4 Guidance 17th July 21)



## CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Covid-19 Route Map: Step 4 Guidance has been released by the above. A statement from the Catholic Bishops of England was released in the newsletter 18/7/21. The first paragraph is below and forms the basis for the rest of the note.

“On 19th July, the current legislative powers which assist the mitigations against the covid-19 virus transmission will be rescinded by HM Government. Nevertheless, there will be an encouragement to personal and corporate responsibility in this area; as the Prime Minister said in his most recent statement “The pandemic is not over.” Even without this legislation in place, the Church in England and Wales will be adopting a cautious approach to capacity and activity within our buildings, especially at corporate acts of worship.”

The Health and Safety Executive have issued new guidance for employers and for organisations, and this makes clear that a duty to keep premises safe continues beyond the removal of any covid-19 legislation. The Government has stated that would be on a risk-based approach for all organisations with the responsibility to ensure appropriate measures to safeguard public health sitting with the management of the organisation

### Mitigations

It is important to mitigate against the risks of virus transmission. Although the vaccine rollout programme is very successful to date, over 85% of adults having had one dose and 64% two doses, the risk of transmission is still live and there are enough people not protected by vaccination to result in significant hospitalisations. However, HM Government has clearly stated that the progression from infection to hospitalisation and ultimately to deaths has been appreciably reduced through the vaccine programme. Most people admitted to hospital currently are only partially vaccinated or not vaccinated at all and communities should continue to encourage people to participate in the vaccination programme.

Due to the design of the church coupled with the need to provide an adequate throughput of air, the sacristy fire door and all doors leading to it from the transept, will remain open. The need for airflow through the transept is greater than the need for the external fire door to be closed. There is only a requirement for this during and leading up to the service.

## **Social Distancing and Capacity of Churches**

There will be no change to the current practices or limits, it will be reviewed with time.



- Continuing use of physical mitigations, hand sanitiser used on entry and specifically face coverings continue to be worn unless a medical exemption applies.
- Continued use of social distancing of 1 metre or greater when seated or moving around the church
- Evaluation of the virus prevalence in the local area

## **Maximum Number That Can Be Accommodated in Church with Social Distancing**

At the church, all available seats allow safe distancing of a metre or greater between benches. This has necessitated chaining off some benches to ensure that this spacing can be achieved.

The safe number for St Winefride's church with social distancing between occupants of benches has been calculated at 46.

This number assumes that all the occupants are sitting at 2 per bench, either at each end of the bench or as a group/bubble of 2.

This number may increase if it falls within the remit of a risk assessment carried out by health and safety co-ordinators. Their decision is final.

## Congregational Singing

Indoor congregational singing is still prohibited at Step 4 for the time being during normal services

There are provisions for “single small group of singers” “only where essential to an act of communal worship”. These will be addressed only if necessary due to the size and shape of the church.

## Acts of Worship

### Weekend Masses

1. Stewards will remain in place and provide support for weekend Masses. The Stewards Rota will also continue.

**Note:** It should be noted that the age limit and some other restrictions on volunteering to perform stewarding duties have been revised. This allows former stewards to return to stewarding duties. If you would like to be help with some of these essential duties, please se Fr. Francis or Deacon Jim in the first instance, a health questionnaire will need to be filled in.

2. Stewards to prepare the church for Mass.
3. All entrants to the church will be requested to wear a face except for those with an exemption for medical reasons.
4. All entrants will be requested to hand sanitise on entry.
5. All entrants will be requested to supply Track and Trace information by either signing in via the NHS Covid App or by providing details to a steward.
6. To maintain social distancing, the existing layout of the church shall remain with specific benches blocked to allow for the 1m spacing with mitigation (face coverings) between those attending.
7. To this end parishioners will continue to be shown to a seat or bench by a steward.
8. The one-way system will remain in force.
9. There will be no singing allowed during the Mass.
10. There will be no offertory collection during Mass. The existing practice of collecting the offertory at the door on exit from the church will remain in place.
11. There will be no offertory procession during Mass.
12. Invitation to communion will be managed by the stewards.
13. Exit from the church will also be managed by the stewards to ensure a timely and safe exit from the church.
14. Based on the Bishops Conference advice, “thorough” cleaning of benches is no longer required after each Mass. However, stewards will be responsible for wiping high frequency touch points such as the tops, end of benches, and strike plates after the parishioners have left the church.

In summary, the only change for weekend Masses, that the cleaning of benches has been replaced by the cleaning of high frequency touch points. The Risk Assessment for weekend Masses will be subject to periodic review.

Changes in the Risk Assessment will therefore drive any relaxation in the provisions described above only where it is considered safe to do so.

## **Weekday Masses**

Currently weekday Masses are being streamed but attended Masses are planned to start Monday 26th July 2021.

(Details will be published in the parish newsletter).

Based on the Bishops' Conference guidance, it is proposed that the risk assessment for these Masses is to be based on Parishioner self-regulation and individual responsibility in adhering to the COVID-19 safety policies in place.

1. Stewarding of these Masses will not be required.
2. The celebrants of the Mass will be responsible for ensuring the church is prepared and safely maintained including ensuring adequate ventilation.
3. There will be no singing allowed during the Mass.
4. Individuals attending these Masses will be responsible for their own safety including:
  - Wearing a face covering and sanitising of hands, on entry to the church
  - Self-recording of Track and Trace information by either means of the NHS Covid App or by filling in a Track and Trace slip.
  - Seating themselves, maintaining social distancing between individuals attending the Mass can continue to be observed
  - Orderly, responsible, and attentive behaviour when going to receive Holy Communion
  - An orderly exit from the church.