**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**

**CORONAVIRUS – COVID19**

# GUIDANCE FOR CHURCH COUNCILS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY LOCAL LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

**25th September 2020**

***Introduction***

Following a sharp increase in coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in various local authority areas, new restrictions have been introduced to reduce the spread of the virus and protect public health for people living in the area.

The restrictions will be kept under review by Welsh Government.

Those living and working in these areas should carefully review Welsh Government Guidance at:

<https://gov.wales/local-lockdown>

This note is to guide church councils within these areas on actions they should take during these local restrictions.

***General Guidance***

Places of worship or church halls are not closed by these restrictions but they do impose new limitations on how activities are conducted. Government guidance lists the five main elements of the restrictions (numbered in bold below) and the implications for churches and church halls are set out under each element below

1. **People who live in a local lockdown area must stay in that area unless they have a good reason to leave it**
	1. People living within the areas cannot leave them to worship unless:
		1. they are a minister leading a service, or,
		2. to attend a funeral/wedding to which they have been invited (but not any related reception).
	2. Reasons to leave the areas can include to access or receive public services or access or receive childcare or education services. This does **not** include for purposes such as accessing voluntary services, attending exercise classes or socialising or attending a place of worship outside the area
2. **People from outside the two Local Authority areas should not enter the area unless they have a good reason**
	1. People living outside the areas should not travel into the areas to worship, unless:
		1. they are a minister leading a service, or,
		2. to attend a funeral/wedding to which they have been invited (but not any related reception).
	2. Reasons to enter the areas can include to access or receive public services or access or receive childcare or education services. This does **not** include for purposes such as accessing voluntary services, attending exercise classes, socialising or attending a place or worship.
3. **People living in the Local Authority Areas should not meet indoors (including in a café, pub, bar or restaurant) with anyone who is not a member of their household unless they have a good reason – extended household arrangements are suspended for those living in the area**.
	1. Churches can remain open for private prayer, worship, marriages, funerals and baptisms in accordance with published guidance on the Church in Wales website
	2. Church halls/community centres can also remain open (but for the limited uses already set out by regulations).
	3. Strict physical distancing between people and households is vital in the use of such premises
	4. Extended households and ‘bubbles’ are suspended. Gatherings with members of any other household can take place outdoors only.
	5. 30 people can still gather outdoors but with strict social distancing and only people from the areas affected
4. **Face coverings must be worn in nearly all indoor public places by people over the age of 11.**
	1. Face coverings must be worn by all people attending church or church halls. This includes the minister of religion.
	2. Eucharistic services can continue in one kind only following guidance available on the Church in Wales website.  Face coverings should be worn with the communicant only removing their mask briefly to place the host in their mouth.
5. **People must work from home wherever possible**
	1. Local church councils should consider carefully which of their work and services should be offered from home rather than from elsewhere.