

Coronavirus guidance for pastoral visiting

Official Guidance changes frequently in response to the pandemic. The Methodist Church seeks to maintain an up-to-date overview of the situation relating to churches; for the latest updates, please see <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>

It is hoped that there will be an ongoing, gradual easing of the national lockdown, however it is possible that there may be further outbreaks over the coming months and likely that there will be more local lockdowns.

If new restrictions are imposed, it may be helpful to re-visit some of the guidance which was first circulated in late March 2020. This document is an update to that guidance, taking account of changes since March.

This guidance is in 2 parts:

Part 1 - Guidance for ministers, lay workers and pastoral coordinators

Part 2 - Guidance for volunteers

Part 1 - Guidance for ministers, lay workers and pastoral coordinators

(This is general guidance; practicalities will vary widely depending on the demographics of congregations, the makeup of local communities and local infection rates)

Who may benefit from additional support?

Check the list of members and adherents, who is self-isolating or shielding? Who does not have family living nearby?

What level of support can be provided by the church?

1. **Pastoral support** (either remotely by telephone/online or face to face)

Who may be available to provide pastoral support?

Existing pastoral visitors (some of whom may also be self-isolating) will be able to provide phone or online 'visits', others may be able to meet people face to face, depending on local circumstances. With permission, the pastoral visitors may also be able to provide the pastoral coordinator with useful information on individuals' current circumstances, including family contact details where appropriate.

2. **Practical support** for those who are self-isolating or shielding; they may need help with collecting shopping or other errands.

Who may be available to provide practical support?

Those who are existing pastoral visitors with a current DBS check and are exempt from the self-isolating list.

Those who are seeking to provide support, but have not done so before must be recruited safely following the church safeguarding guidance.

Implementation

1. **Pastoral support**

Contact (by phone or email) current pastoral visitors, discuss the importance of maintaining regular contact with those who are self-isolating and ask them to check who needs additional support with shopping etc.

2. Practical support volunteers

It may be helpful to decide how to organise this level of input:

- 1 volunteer could be allocated to support one or more specified individuals. (This may suit local geography)
- Alternatively, volunteers may commit to being available on certain days, with a central phone number for coordinating incoming requests for help. (This may be appropriate for larger, urban church communities)
- If possible, allocate volunteers who are already known to the self-isolating individual.

See **Part 2** for **Dos and don'ts for face to face contacts**

Part 2 - Guidance for volunteers

Thank you for volunteering to provide support for some of the more vulnerable members of the church community.

Official advice is changing frequently in response to the pandemic; please read this document in conjunction with the most recent national and local guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

This section covers 2 different forms of support provided by pastoral visitors

1. Providing Pastoral Support

- Pastoral support can be offered remotely by telephone or online. This limits the risk of infection which is particularly important where people fall into a clinically vulnerable group or who are shielding.
- Pastoral visits may be conducted outside, weather permitting, either in a public space such as a park or a private space such as someone's garden. If meeting in a public area, it is important to follow current guidelines on the number of people who can meet. This form of meeting may have limitations if the person being visited has mobility issues or is clinically vulnerable.
- Meeting inside is allowed (at the time of writing), but should be restricted to the household concerned and the person providing pastoral support only

2. Providing Practical Support

This role involves collecting essential supplies for people who are ill or self-isolating. You will be allocated one or more people who are unable to leave their homes and do not have other local support networks. Your role may include home visits.

Visitors will:

- Make phone contact with the person who is self-isolating, to establish contact and share phone numbers
- Discuss with the individual an appropriate level of support
- Make arrangements for how the person will share their list of requirements (some may not have internet access or smart phones)

- Make arrangements for delivering supplies and payment.

Payments may be made by:

- Bank transfer if they are online or a family member can arrange this
- Telephone banking – this can be arranged by phoning the number on the back of their bank card
- Cheque (if they don't have Covid19)
- Cash - The Post Office 'Payout Now' scheme was extended in April 2020 and offered to all banks, building societies and credit unions. It allows people who are shielding or self-isolating, to access cash without having to hand over a debit card and PIN to somebody else. If the bank allows it, someone can ask for a one-time barcode sent via text, email or post for a stipulated amount. A trusted friend or volunteer can exchange the voucher for the cash requested.

The person who is self-isolating needs to tell their bank exactly how much they want to withdraw from their account, up to a limit set by the bank, and allow a family member, trusted friend or volunteer to collect it on their behalf in exchange for the voucher.

- Deliver supplies. Remember that appropriate hand washing routines protect both the volunteer and the person receiving the delivery.
- Record transactions. Both parties should agree how much money has been handed over and that the change and receipts match. A record of all transactions should be made, including what was bought and for how much.
- Keep brief records of interactions including dates and times but **not** a detailed account of what occurred unless there are specific concerns. These may include safeguarding concerns and/or a deterioration in the health or wellbeing of the person being visited, including signs of Covid 19 (a high temperature or a new, continuous cough)
- Report any concerns to your volunteer coordinator. This may be your minister, lay worker or pastoral coordinator

Dos and don'ts for face to face contacts

Do follow current government guidance in relation to self-isolation when undertaking home visits. Visitors must not be linked to anyone who has come into contact with the virus nor showing any symptoms. If the visitor has either a high temperature or a new, continuous cough not only must they stop visiting and notify their minister, lay worker or pastoral coordinator, but it may be necessary for people who have been visited to be notified of the increased risk of infection. Current Track and Trace guidelines must be followed.

Do follow social distancing guidelines at all times.

Do ensure easy access to hand sanitiser for regular hand hygiene.

Do not undertake consecutive visits, if possible, to avoid any potential virus transfer.

Do not use toilet facilities within a person's house if possible.

Do not accept offers of food and drink during a visit, to avoid any potential virus transfer.