

Dear Friends,

This is a short briefing to ensure that you are aware of the implications for the life of our church communities following the latest government announcement on Wednesday 19th January.

Relaxation of Plan B

Plan B is to be relaxed in stages. This means that from 27 January face coverings will no longer be required by law to be worn in our churches.

However, the updated [Government Guidance](#) states that **'you should continue to wear a face covering in crowded and indoor spaces where you may continue to come into contact with people you do not normally meet.'**

Our advice is, therefore, that face coverings should continue to be worn in our churches. (However, of course, this cannot be imposed on individuals who choose not to do so).

Youth Ministry

The National Youth Association guidance states that from 20 January face coverings are no longer compulsory for youth and children's activities. The full advice can be seen [here](#).

The Local Situation

Please bear in mind the progress of the pandemic as you make decisions locally. Infection rates in Lancashire are starting to reduce from the peak earlier this month but remain significantly above both the national average and pre-Christmas levels.

Although restrictions are being relaxed, the NHS is still handling large numbers of cases whilst also dealing with the fallout of the last two years in terms of backlog of other medical cases and impact on staff; as outlined in [this article from last Monday in The Guardian](#) about The Royal Preston Hospital.

Public Health England Resources

There have been a number of helpful updated communications resources issued by Public Health England (PHE) recently. Parishes may appreciate being aware of them. You will find them [here](#) and they include posters, video content, sound files and social media assets, all free to download. There are also similar resources available for use in schools [here](#).

New information is being added all the time to the PHE website and you can find a useful guide to [download here](#) about navigating and finding your way around the whole PHE resource centre.

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems and can't find answers on the [advice compendium](#) please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org.

A prayer

Father,

We thank you for your loving care and providence, although we are unworthy.

We thank you for sending your dear Son Jesus to live among us, to share in our lot and to die for all that all might live.

We ask you to look with mercy on all people throughout the world who are fearful of the threats of pestilence, war and famine in these uncertain times.

Give us the courage to overcome fear trusting in your loving plan for all people which gives us hope for the future even in the face of present adversity.

Watch over us and protect us from all harm.

We ask this in the name of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

One God, now and forever.

Amen.

Regards

The Coronavirus Task Group