

To: West Yorkshire Faith
Communities

Adults and Health
Merrion House
5th Floor West
Leeds LS2 8BB

Contact: Victoria Eaton
Tel: 0113 378 8653
Victoria.Eaton@leeds.gov.uk

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Re: National lockdown and places of worship

Dear Faith Leaders

We are writing to thank you for your support and leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic and to ask for your help as we move into what may be the most challenging period so far.

Firstly, we wanted to thank you for all the support and comfort you are providing to West Yorkshire communities in these challenging times. We have all been inspired by the help you are giving to those who have been impacted by Covid-19 in different ways and we are indebted to you for helping spread important public health messages.

Covid-19 rates are increasing rapidly in West Yorkshire. Although the number of cases is currently lower than many other areas of the Country, urgent action is needed immediately if we are to prevent the infection levels seen in London and the South East in our communities.

The new variant of Covid-19 spreads much more easily than the previous strain and it is essential that we do all we can to prevent it taking hold. Places of worship are permitted to open for communal worship within the [guidelines on the safe use of places of worship](#) and people must not mix with people they don't live with or are in a support bubble with. Where places of worship remain open there should be particular attention paid to robust control measures, including social distancing, use of face covering and hand hygiene practices.

All places of worship have risk assessments to ensure that risks of Covid-19 transmission are clearly identified, and control measures are put in place to reduce these risks. The increased transmissibility of the new variant means that we are asking that risk assessments and control measures for places of worship are reviewed. Where you are not confident that the control measures are sufficient to prevent spread of the virus, we ask that you do not open for communal worship. In addition, given the new variant and despite being confident about any control measures you may still feel that it is wiser to pause communal worship at this time until we know more about how the new variant is spread. This would prevent any infection risk for your congregation.

We understand any decision to close for communal prayer will be disappointing for your congregation and we are happy to offer our support in providing messages to the community of any places of worship that close, if you feel this would be useful.

Please contact your local Public Health team if you need assistance – Parminder Grewal Parminder.Grewal@leeds.gov.uk or Tim Taylor Tim.Taylor@leeds.gov.uk.

Best wishes



Victoria Eaton
Director of Public Health