

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

The Advisory Group welcomes the First Minister's announcement this week that, from Monday 4 April 2022, the legal requirement for face coverings to be worn in places of worship, or at weddings or funerals, is to be removed.

Whilst the legal restriction for face coverings is removed from 4 April, the Government's guidance still encourages the use of protective measures to reduce risk including face coverings, hand hygiene, adequate ventilation and similar measures. Activities within a place of worship which fall outwith an act of worship remain subject to any applicable guidance for the activity in question.

As indicated in the previous updates, the Advisory Group emphasises that it is for each congregation to consider how it navigates its journey into a less constrained future. Congregations should take decisions in the light of local circumstances and local risk assessment.

There may be a need to give reassurance as changes are introduced and to take account of the preferences of congregational members who are less ready to move at pace to resume pre-pandemic church life. For instance, some may prefer to continue to worship online, some may wish to continue to maintain a degree of social distancing while entering and leaving church and during worship. Some may still wish to continue wearing face coverings and should feel welcome to do so.

Kind regards

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