

Romsey Methodist Church

Risk Assessment in relation to Covid-19

Activity: Business Meetings

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General to all Sections

Introduction:

The Coronavirus-19 is a highly infectious disease primarily affecting the respiratory system. The disease can be transmitted as an aerosol from human exhalation/inhalation or by physical contact with an infected surface. The disease can be transmitted prior to an infected person exhibiting symptoms. Surfaces can remain infected between 48 hours to 72 hours. It is understood that transmission of the virus likely occurs mainly indoors and in settings where there is close proximity between people.

For the purposes of preparing and sharing food and drink the government has issued guidance that the Coronavirus-19 is very unlikely to be transmitted through food or food packing provided normal food hygiene precautions are undertaken <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19> and <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/personal-hygiene>

Description of activity

The church wishes to re-establish meetings concerning the business and operation of the organisation. The meetings covered by this risk assessment include the **Church Council, Annual Church Meeting and Leadership Team**. Other essential meetings of a business type arrangement may also be covered by this risk assessment.

Persons at risk:

The persons at risk are primarily the attendees to the meeting and the cleaner.

Nature & likelihood of hazard:

The probability of infection is highly related to the current prevalence of the disease in the community. The probability of infection for those attending the service may be associated with contact infection and airborne transmission. Whilst the cleaner, working in isolation after the service, might be at higher risk from contact infection with the risk from infection from inhalation being very unlikely. The steward(s) at the entrance and exit are more likely to be at risk from infection by inhalation from participants arriving and leaving. The likelihood of the hazard affecting a person increases with the number and length of time people attending, together with the relative size of the space being occupied. Transmission of the disease may vary according to the prevalence and strain of the Covid-19 virus in the community.

Severity of hazard:

The severity of the infection primarily varies with age, gender, ethnicity, obesity and any underlying co-morbidity. The severity is increased with age; being male; being from a Black-Asian-Minority Ethnic group;

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being obese; having co-morbidities and for those people who are required to clinically shield. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892085/disparities_review.pdf

Children appear to be the least affected from the infection although they may transmit the disease and have relatively high levels of contact outside of attending worship.

The severity of the virus may be reduced or eliminated by a program of immunisation.

Level of risk:

Without further demographic or clinical information it is assumed that all persons on duty and attending the event are at the same level of high risk of infection without control measures, and that all mitigation measures apply to everyone, excepting children. All duty holders (paid and voluntary) shall have access to the risk assessment on the website and may decline to perform the duty if they believe it may be unsafe for them to do so. Participants attending the meeting will be able to access joining instructions which will inform the requirements of attendance.

Mitigation and control of risks:

Where possible individuals may mitigate significantly their risks by undertaking immunisation. This risk assessment is based on the assumption that individuals have not received or acquired immunisation.

A business meeting may consist of those attending the premises and also participants communicating via other communication channels such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. A business meeting may also be held off-site. The following risk assessment applies to those attending the premises of Romsey Methodist Church.

All persons attending, whether immunised or not, shall comply with all aspects of this risk assessment and relevant accompanying joining instructions.

The measures taken conform to the regulations <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/364/made/data.pdf>

- i) The arrangements will comply with government guidance and guidance from the Methodist Church UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december>
and
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/guide-for-church-council-and-other-church-meetings-final-170920.pdf> (methodist.org.uk)
- ii) Those attending meetings have an obligation to comply with legal requirements and respect the decision of the managing trustees to ensure compliance whilst on the premises.
- iii) **Government legislation.** The premises have been designated as being in an area where guidance on the restrictions <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do> apply.
- iv) Whilst attending the premises for a meeting you **must not** meet or mingle with friends, family or others unless they are part of your household or support bubble. (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>). The requirement for social distancing does not apply to members of the same household or support bubble.
- v) **Government guidance.** Whilst engaging in a meeting on the premises, all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times. This means people should be 2 metres

apart, or more than 1 metre apart as well as taking extra steps to stay safe (such as wearing a face coverings) to reduce the risk of transmission. The requirement for social distancing does not apply to members of the same household or support bubble.

- vi) **Government legislation.** It is a legal requirement to wear a face covering whilst on the premises excepting for children and valid health reasons. Surgical masks may be available at the entry for those without a suitable face covering on arrival. A face covering is a material which safely covers the nose and mouth and must securely fit round the side of the face. More information can be found in [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#:~:text=Face%20coverings%20are%20not%20required,you%20leave%20your%20seating%20area](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#:~:text=Face%20coverings%20are%20not%20required,you%20leave%20your%20seating%20area).
- vii) **Whilst restrictions apply, the Leadership Team will regularly review the prevalence of the disease in the community and decide upon a maximum number of persons able to attend any meeting.**
- viii) The Chairperson and/or Secretary for the meeting will be responsible for inviting and limiting the physical attendance at the meeting to ensure compliance with (iii).
- ix) The seating in both the sanctuary and main hall shall be arranged with at least 2 metres between the chair(s) of each household. Those persons living in the same household and support bubble may reduce the separation of chairs to less than a metre. The grouping of chairs shall be such that a sufficient distance can be maintained when attendees are joining or leaving their seats.
- x) Depending upon the number of households (& support bubbles) attending and available seating arrangements, the likely number of persons attending shall be determined (see vii above) in the sanctuary, and in the main hall overflowing into the small hall depending upon seating arrangements.
- xi) Unusually if there are concurrent business meetings in both the sanctuary and main hall, then those attending each gathering must remain distinct for the duration of being on the premises.
- xii) Those wishing to come to a meeting should be mindful and advised not to attend if they are feeling unwell or have symptoms that may relate to Covid-19.
- xiii) A person who is self-isolating **must not attend** as required by legislation. A person self-isolating may be directed to a streamed version of the meeting on the website (<https://www.romseymethodist.church/>) or viewed on YouTube.
- xiv) Those attending the premises will be reminded to minimise the touching of surfaces or objects.
- xv) It is a requirement that those addressing the congregation at any time during the service maintain at least the *social distance* to the nearest member of the congregation. Those addressing the congregation may remove their face covering temporarily.
- xvi) Everyone attending the premises will comply with the signage and other instructions in order to minimise the risk of infection and/or the transmission of the virus.
- xvii) Personal greetings such as handshaking, hugs, etc are discouraged excepting for persons from the same household.
- xviii) Whichever entrance & exit is used then *social distancing* between individuals/households must be maintained.
- xix) All doors relating to internal thoroughfares will remain open so as to minimise door handles being touched whilst facilitating ventilation, and thereby reducing the transmission of the virus.

- xx) Before and after the meeting ventilation to the sanctuary and main/small hall will be maximised by a combination of the use of air purifiers, opening doors and windows. The ventilation required will be relative to the number of people attending and the ambient temperature. The ceiling fan will be used to increase the movement of air in the sanctuary and other forced ventilation and filtration may be used in the sanctuary or main hall. External doors may be closed provided air purification and filtration is operating.
- xxi) Everyone attending the church building will wash their hands or use a hand sanitiser upon entry.
- xxii) All persons entering the building will be invited to have attendance and contact details registered in order to facilitate tracing should that be necessary as part of a public health requirement. Those attending may use an NHS app and scan the NHS Test & Trace QR code to register attendance in the building: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/> A separate record will be maintained for those attending separate meetings (ie in the sanctuary and hall).
- xxiii) No person will be admitted to the building if they are Covid-19 symptomatic.
- xxiv) Personal items should not be left in the building.
- xxv) Items belonging to the church should not be removed without the permission.
- xxvi) When handwashing is undertaken in the toilets the electric hand dryer or paper hand towels should be used for drying hands: the latter being disposed in the bin provided. Material hand towels have been removed to avoid contact transmission.
- xxvii) As well as washing hands sanitisers are provided in toilets for users.
- xxviii) Sanitising wipes are provided in toilets so that users may clean handles, switches, etc after use. The wipes are to be disposed within the bins provided.
- xxix) Wherever possible everyone attending the building should be self-sufficient with tissues, pens, refreshments, etc. Care must be undertaken not to touch, handle, replace or share objects (eg pens, pencils, books, etc) that might aid the transmission of the virus. Those attending a meeting will be encouraged to bring a refreshment.
- xxx) Refreshments will not be served.
- xxxi) A sanitiser will be available for use at each exit of the building.
- xxxii) Should a person feel unwell or demonstrate symptoms of Covid-19 then they should be isolated in the Wesley Room. Those assisting the person should ensure a surgical mask and protective gloves are worn. The unwell person should remain in the Wesley Room until it is safe to exit the building without further contact of others. The Wesley Room and other areas where the person was sitting will be sanitised. A note against the name of the person should be made on the registration sheet. In the event of a more complex condition emergency services should be contacted.

Conduct of a Business Meeting

- xxxiii) The Business Meeting may consist of attendees and participants with access to the meeting via Zoom or Microsoft Teams or other electronic means.
- xxxiv) Those attending should register with the Chairperson and/or Secretary in advance of the meeting.
- xxxv) Those attending should be given information on the Agenda about the entrance/exit arrangement.
- xxxvi) Those participating electronically should be given the link on the Agenda.
- xxxvii) The Chairperson will have to be aware that communication between attendees and participants may be difficult during the meeting.
- xxxviii) The Chairperson and/or Secretary may have separate communication links with participants.
- xxxix) The number of attendees at a business meeting on the premises shall not exceed 30 at this time.

- xl) Tables and/or seating should be set out in advance of attendees arriving.
- xli) Those attendees from the same household or support bubble may adjust the spacing between seats.
- xliv) All papers for the meeting should be emailed to attendees and participants in advance.
- xlvi) Papers should not be tabled at the meeting but displayed to attendees and communicated to participants via Zoom, etc
- xlviii) Attendees and participants wishing to speak should attract the attention of the Chairperson by raising their hand.
- l) An attendee may remove their face covering whilst speaking at the meeting.
- li) Those attendees addressing the meeting for a significant period of time should increase the social distance with other attendees.
- lii) The Chairperson may use a microphone to avoid having to use a raised voice.
- liii) A mobile microphone should not be shared between attendees.
- liiii) Those attendees requiring the outside lift to vacate the building should contact a Church Steward who will ensure the lift is sanitised after each and every use.
- liiii) At the end of the meeting the sanctuary and/or hall will be ventilated thoroughly. All chairs should remain in position for at least 48 hours and if possible 72 hours to avoid unnecessary handling and possible transmission of the virus. If it is envisaged that the sanctuary will be used within 48 hours, then appropriate sanitisation of surfaces and other points of contact should be undertaken by the cleaner.
- liiii) Waste disposal will comply with <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste>
- liiii) Face coverings and PPE, such as gloves, may be disposed in 'black bag' waste' only (ie not recycling waste) and need not be double bagged or quarantined for 72 hours unless the waste is suspected to be associated with an infected person (eg a person taken ill).
- liiii) The Cleaner will perform hygienic cleaning (ie sanitising toilets, wash basins, door handles, etc) as soon as practicable after the event and before the building is used for other purposes.
- liiii) In the event of fire, all fire safety measures take precedence.

By registering those attending the building agree and will be required to follow the mitigation measures to ensure safety.