

Romsey Methodist Church

Risk Assessment in relation to Covid-19

Activity: Funerals

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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.

Description of activity:

The arrangements of a funeral service may differ according to the wishes of the family of the deceased and the advice given by the minister officiating the service. The service may take the form of a celebration or memorial service of the deceased person's life prior or post cremation or burial service. The service will be conducted in the sanctuary with a streamed service in the main hall for those who may not be present in the sanctuary for safe guarding reasons. The service may consist of a format of readings, prayers, sermon and pre-recorded music without singing. This type of service may be streamed live and/or recorded for those unable to attend the service in the sanctuary. The service may include all age groups. Adjustments are made throughout the risk assessment (**in bold**) when a coffin is present in the sanctuary.

Persons at risk:

The persons at risk are primarily the friends and family of the deceased, the minister, church stewards, **funeral director's staff**, potentially members of the church/community 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 a funeral maybe associated with contact infection and airborne transmission. The coffin and trestles must be regarded as potentially infectious. Whilst the cleaner, working in isolation after the funeral, 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.

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; 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.

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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. **The staff of the funeral director will be complying with the safety arrangements of their employer to minimise their risks for managing the movement of the coffin and any transport provided for mourners.**

The Joining Instructions based on this risk assessment must be given to the family of the deceased, minister and funeral director in order to properly and safely prepare for the service.

Mitigation and control of risks:

- i) The funeral arrangements will comply with <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>
- ii) The *social distance* is 2 meters.
- iii) Depending upon the number of households attending and available seating arrangements, the maximum number of persons attending overall should be 30 in the sanctuary and those persons in the hall who are clinically vulnerable **or** those self-isolating . This number will not include those on duty **or the funeral director's staff.**
- iv) Those attending the service of worship have an obligation to comply with legal requirements and respect the decision of the managing trustees to ensure compliance whilst on the premises.
- v) **Government legislation.** A person or persons will attend the service ('Gathering') as part of a 'Qualifying Group'. A legal requirement is that the Qualifying Group consists of no more than 6 persons (of any age), or consists of only persons who are members of the same household, or who are members of two households which are linked households in relation to one another (eg support bubble). Seating will be provided to ensure those from different households do not sit in groups of greater than 6 persons: this will apply both in the sanctuary and main hall.
- vi) **Government legislation.** It is a legal requirement that a person participates in a gathering, or service, as a member of a qualifying group and whilst participating in the gathering they cannot become a member of another qualifying group or otherwise mingle with any person who is participating in the gathering from another qualifying group.
- vii) **Government guidance.** Whilst engaging in an activity on the premises, all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times, even within a group of 6. This means people should be 2 meters apart, or more than 1 meter apart as well as taking extra steps to stay safe (such as wearing a face coverings) to reduce the risk of transmission: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>
- viii) **Government legislation.** It is a legal requirement to wear a face covering whilst on the premises excepting for children, valid health reasons or consuming refreshments. 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/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

[own#:~:text=Face%20coverings%20are%20not%20required,you%20leave%20your%20seating%20area.](#)

- ix) As per government guidance (4th September 2020) mourners who are self-isolating but are asymptomatic may attend. Mourners who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable may attend also. The family of the deceased are advised that those mourners in self isolation should not be in the presence of those who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable (who have priority). If those mourners who are in self isolation (and may be infectious) do attend, then other mourners must be advised by the family of the deceased so that appropriate mitigating action may be undertaken between those parties concerned. The church will find it extremely difficult to accommodate both those person(s) self-isolating and those persons who are clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable. The Minister and Church Stewards shall be advised in advance so as to provide remote seating in the sanctuary and possibly include use of the hall with a relay of the service. A recording of the service may be available also.
- x) All persons on duty (Church Stewards, Minister, video/audio member, etc) must use the personal protective equipment provided (ie surgical masks) and if appropriate disposable gloves.
- xi) All mourners and **the funeral director's staff** must wear suitable face coverings whilst in the building. Surgical masks may be available at the entry for those without a suitable face covering on arrival.
- xii) 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.
- xiii) Personal greetings such as handshaking, hugs, etc are discouraged excepting for persons from the same household.
- xiv) **Where a coffin is to be present in the service this shall be conveyed to the sanctuary (with or without a trolley) via the side entrance doorway and placed upon trestles provided by the funeral director's staff. This shall occur prior to the entry of the mourners and the funeral director's staff may depart the sanctuary to the vestibule and, if necessary, remain in the vestibule until the end of the service.**
- xv) Entry of the mourners to the church will be via the footpath at the side of the building as this facilitates at least 8 persons/households queueing at the *social distance* between individuals or households from the side entrance doorway to the pavement.
- xvi) A *social distance* will be maintained between individuals or households whilst waiting to enter and also within the building. Signage will be located outside and inside the building indicating the *social distance* between individuals.
- xvii) Entry to the building will be controlled by a Church Steward.
- xviii) A one-way system will be adopted so that people will leave the sanctuary via the front of the church.
- xix) All doors relating to internal thoroughfares will remain open so as to minimise door handles being touched.
- xx) The Stewards will control the ventilation in the sanctuary or main hall during the service. The degree of 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 use hand sanitiser upon entry and must wear a suitable *face covering*.
- xxii) All persons (Minister, Church Stewards, others on duty, friends and family of the deceased, etc) entering the building will have attendance and contact details registered in order to

facilitate tracing should that be necessary as part of a public health requirement. Those attending my 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/> It should be helpful if the registration details of each household for the friends and family of the deceased be given to the Minister in advance and communicated to Church Stewards to facilitate the optimum seating arrangement within the sanctuary. All local registers will be maintained for 21 days and destroyed within 4 weeks following attendance. **The funeral director will be responsible for maintaining the contact details of staff attending the funeral service.**

- xxiii) Those Church Stewards on duty, after using sanitiser, will wear protective gloves whilst setting up arrangements for the service.
- xxiv) Church Stewards will set out chairs to comply with *social distancing*, excepting where prior notice is given of groups and/or households requesting reduced *social distance* seating. The sofas will not be used as part of the seating plan.
- xxv) Those Church Stewards facilitating entry of worshippers at less than the *social distance* will wear *face coverings*. It is suggested that surgical masks are used which will provide a higher degree of protection for worshippers should a Church Steward be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic, and particularly if the Church Steward is over 60 years old and/or in a vulnerable category.
- xxvi) A Church Steward may make enquiry should the health of a person entering the church building be a concern. No person will be admitted to the building if they are Covid-19 symptomatic.
- xxvii) The front doors shall be used for those wishing to exit the building, **excepting removal of the coffin which shall be via the side entrance.**
- xxviii) Personal items should not be left in the building without the permission of a Church Steward.
- xxix) Items belonging to the church should not be removed without the permission of a Church Steward.
- xxx) When handwashing is undertaken in the toilets hot air dryers or paper hand towels should be used for drying hands and disposed in the bin provided. Hand towels have been removed to avoid contact transmission.
- xxxi) As well as washing hands sanitisers are provided in toilets for users.
- xxxii) 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.
- xxxiii) 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.
- xxxiv) **Only the staff of the funeral director may touch the coffin and trestles. On no account should the Minister or mourners touch the coffin.**
- xxxv) A sanitiser will be available for use at each exit of the building.
- xxxvi) Should a person feel unwell or demonstrate symptoms of Covid-19 then they should be isolated in the Wesley Room with a Church Steward attending wearing a surgical mask and protective gloves. The person should remain in the Wesley Room until it is safe to exit the building without further contact of others. The person may be given a surgical mask and the Wesley Room and other areas where the person was sitting will require sanitisation. 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.
- xxxvii) Memorial collections of cash or cheques will not be undertaken.
- xxxviii) A book of condolence will not be available.
- xxxix) The Sound/Video operator will sanitise all microphones and other equipment prior to use.

- xl) The Sound/Video operator must wear protective gloves when the Minister returns the microphone and immediately sanitise the headpiece in particular.
- xli) The Sound/Video operator should sanitise the operating desk without detriment to the equipment.
- xl(ii) The keyboard may be used provided it is sanitised before and after use. Wind instruments may not be used. Percussive and stringed instruments may be allowed to be used by the owner musician.
- xl(iii) The choice of music should not encourage singing, as singing is not allowed.
- xl(iv) The Minister should use a microphone to avoid having to use a raised voice and should remain on the platform whilst conducting the service.
- xl(v) Provided the Minister remains at the *social distance* no *face covering* is required whilst conducting the service. Following the service a *surgical face mask* should be used in situations where the social distance might be compromised.
- xl(vi) The Wesley Room is set aside for use by the Minister.
- xl(vii) The same person should use the lectern and microphone for readings, a eulogy and/or prayers.
- xl(viii) The service should be concluded in a reasonable time, and normally within 60 minutes.
- xl(ix) The family of the deceased may bring into the building simple memorabilia (eg photographs) and floral displays: these must be removed or disposed of at the conclusion of the service.
- l) At the end of the service 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 or main hall will be used within 48 hours, then appropriate sanitisation of surfaces and other points of contact should be undertaken by the cleaner.
 - li) At the end of the service all disposable *face coverings* personal protective equipment used by Church Stewards and Minister must be disposed in the bin within the office.
 - lii) Those wishing to come to the service should be mindful and advised not to attend if they are feeling unwell or have symptoms that may relate to Covid-19.
 - liii) Mourners will be reminded to minimise touching of surfaces or objects.
 - liv) Church Stewards may make every attempt to accommodate those not on the prescribed list of Friends and Family of the deceased provided *social distancing* is maintained.
 - lv) Only Church Stewards may set out chairs and those attending the service must refrain from relocating chairs. The sofas may not be used.
 - lvi) No Bibles or hymn books will be issued to the congregation to avoid onward transmission of the virus. However, mourners may bring and use personal copies of Bibles, hymn books and orders of service which must be removed after the service.
 - lvii) No refreshments will be served before or after the service.
 - lviii) Glasses of water may be available from a Church Steward at any time.
 - lix) **At the end of the service the funeral director's staff should leave the vestibule (if not already done so) and re-enter the building via the side entrance. The mourners will leave the sanctuary (and hall if used) via the front entrance. Once all mourners have left the building the coffin and trestles maybe be removed by the funeral director's staff via the side entrance.**
- lx) Those mourners outside each household will maintain *social distancing* as they leave the building via the front doors.
- lxi) Those mourners 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.
- lx(ii) People may meet outside the building for conversations at the appropriate *social distance*.
- lx(iii) Waste disposal will comply with <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste>

- lxiv) 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).
- lxv) 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.
- lxvi) 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.