**COVID-19 Latest Information for Churches**

(Published 4 November 2020)

The North England Conference are today communicating the government’s latest announcement of a national lockdown that will be effective from Thursday 5 November, and planned to last for a four week period until Wednesday 2 December. The primary restrictions are:

1. Stay at home, except for specific purposes.
2. Avoid meeting people you do not live with, except for specific purposes.
3. Close certain businesses and venues – including places of worship.

Churches will close, unless they are being used to pre-record or broadcast elements of worship (e.g. praise teams, guest speakers), or they are providing essential services such as food banks / distribution, which are intended to serve the mental and physical health of individuals as beneficiaries.

No baptism or baby dedication services will take place. Wedding ceremonies will not be able to take place except in exceptional circumstances – please consult the NEC for details. No funeral services will take place in churches. Funerals limited to a maximum of 30 people will be permitted at gravesides only.

The national lockdown will be replaced with the current tier system. Local restrictions will be introduced depending on an area's infection rate, and our guidance updated accordingly.

We wish to thank each of you for your continued dedication to the North England Conference, the delivery of services online and on social media platforms within your local churches, and above all your continued work within your communities during this difficult time.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).**

***Q.****Does the national lockdown apply to all NEC churches?*

**A.** Yes. This is a legal requirement of all churches in the NEC territory without exception.

***Q.****How will churches know what to do after 2 December?*

**A.** The NEC will publish updated advice on this webpage at the expected end of the national lockdown, and will also communicate directly to Area Co-ordinators, Pastors and local church First Elders.

***Q.****Given the current situation, should churches simply suspend making any plans to re-open?*

**A.** No. Churches should take the opportunity to continue risk assessing their building and arrangements, and making any alterations as necessary.  In addition, churches should also use the time as an opportunity to redefine how we interact with our community as a result of this pandemic - making online services as relevant and far reaching as possible.

***Q.****Where can churches find useful information about COVID-19 that is prepared by our faith?*

**A.** Comprehensive information on the new national restrictions, including what they mean for working from home and business closures, why they are being introduced and the financial support available is available at: [New National Restrictions from 5 November.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november)

***Q.****Where can churches find government updates about local lockdown measures?*

A. Before attending any church, holding any religious event or visiting another household, churches should check whether there are any [geographic lockdown measures being introduced within your local area](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need-to-know).  There are 3 Local COVID Alert Levels – Medium, High and Very High.

Members can enter their Post Code in the [‘Find out the coronavirus restrictions in a local area’](https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions) website to find out what they can and cannot do.

***Q.****What should members do if they feel unwell at this time?*

**A.** If a member is unwell or has any of the [main symptoms of coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) - a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss or change to their sense of smell or taste – they should get a test immediately and stay at home where they should isolate. They must not invite anyone to their house and not leave their home. They should not prepare food for others.