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It would be very helpful if members could let us know of anything that appears to indicate developments of policy or practice on the part of Government or other matters of general concern that should be pursued.

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FAITH & SOCIETY

COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship

For information and **possibly for action**

MHCLG has updated its guidance on [COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship \(for England\)](#), stressing that allowing places of worship to remain open for communal worship 'is now one of the very few legal exemptions that allow larger numbers of people to gather. It is therefore crucial that places of worship and those attending comply with both law and the COVID-19 Secure guidance'. It also stressed that when visiting a place of worship people should 'stay local' and avoid travelling outside their local areas.

The summary from the new guidance is reproduced below; however, reference should be made to the full guidance and to the other guidance it refers to.

'COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship

Under these restrictions, places of worship in England must only open for the following purposes:

Individual prayer

- A person, or single household, entering the venue to pray on their own.
- The number of individuals or households permitted in a place of worship at any one time will be dependent on the size of the building and ability to socially distance therein.

Communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person

- Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk.

Funerals

- Funerals must have no more than 30 people.
- Anyone working is not included as part of the 30 person limit. Please refer to [COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

Commemorative events to celebrate the life of a person who has died

- These are events which commemorate or mark the deceased's passing. Examples include the scattering of ashes and stone setting ceremonies. Such events must now have no more than 6 people in attendance. Anyone working is not included as part of the 6 person limit. These

limits on attendance do not typically apply to communal worship services, where prayers for the deceased may be said.

Significant life-cycle events, outside of marriage ceremonies and funerals

- Where such events are an element of communal worship they may continue, but they are subject to the requirements for communal worship set out above.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies

- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies must only take place with up to 6 people. Anyone working is not included. You should only consider booking a wedding or civil partnership (or continuing with one that is already booked) in exceptional circumstances. This may be for example, an urgent marriage where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover, or is to undergo debilitating treatment or life-changing surgery. Please refer to the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships.

Broadcasting or filming an act of worship

- Attending a place of worship for broadcasting or filming an act of worship is permitted but should only involve those people working or volunteering who are essential for the content of the service, and for technical support to enable people to watch and worship online or via a television or radio.
- If musicians or singers usually form part of the act of worship that is being broadcast, they may participate but only if they are essential to the delivery of that act of worship. The numbers or people involved should be kept as small as possible to minimize risks and participants should follow social distancing guidance.

Childcare and education

For registered childcare:

- where this is provided by a person registered on the Early Years Register under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006
- where the child concerned is eligible to attend (as the child of a critical worker or a vulnerable child)
- where the place of worship is used as part of a school

For supervised activities for children:

- These activities are permitted to continue where the child concerned is eligible to attend (as the child of a critical worker or a vulnerable child)
- Numbers should be limited to the number of people who can safely socially distance in the venue in line with COVID-19 Secure guidance. See [guidance on providers of out-of-school settings](#).

Essential voluntary and public services

- These will include the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions, or support in an emergency. See [COVID-19 guidance for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations](#).

Support groups

- Support groups that have to be delivered in person can continue with up to 15 participants where formally organised to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support - but they must take place at a premises other than a private home.
- Where a group includes someone covered by an exception (for example, someone who is working or volunteering), they are not generally counted as part of the gatherings limit.
- Examples include support to:
 - a) victims of crime (including domestic abuse)
 - b) those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour
 - c) new parents
 - d) those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness or terminal condition or who are vulnerable
 - e) those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
 - f) those who have suffered bereavement
 - g) vulnerable young people, including to enable them to meet youth workers.
- The limit of 15 does not include children under 5 who are accompanying a parent or guardian. Anyone working would also not be included.'

MHCLG has also published updated guidance on [Celebrating religious festivals during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

[Source: MHCLG, 11 January]

FUNDING

Government updates COVID-19 support guidance

For information **and possibly for action**

HM Treasury has, helpfully, [collated](#) the support options available to individuals and organisations in one document. CLAS members may wish to browse the document to see if they are able to benefit from any of the support measures. The document has been reproduced below.

'UK wide support for jobs

- The UK Government has extended the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) until the end of April 2021. The government will cover the cost of 80 per cent of the wages of furloughed employees for hours not worked – employers will only be asked to cover NICs and pension contributions.
- We have extended the [Self-Employed Income Support Scheme](#) until April 2021. The government is now providing a third SEISS grant, covering 80 per cent of average trading profits between November and January 2021, capped at £7,500 in total. We will also introduce a fourth grant, to cover February to April, in due course.

Support for businesses

- We have extended the deadline and given businesses across the UK until the end of March to access the [Bounce Back Loan Scheme](#), [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#), and [the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#).
- Businesses have also benefited from tax holidays and deferrals e.g. cutting VAT on hospitality and tourism from 20% to 5% and [business rates holidays](#) for eligible businesses across the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors (as well as Nurseries).
- The [Future Fund](#) which issues convertible loans worth between £125,000 to £5 million to innovative companies which are facing financing difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak remain open until the end of January 2021.
- Businesses forced to close can claim [grants of up to £3,000 per month](#) (worth over £1 billion per month). Any business in England forced to close due to national or local restrictions can claim grants, via their local authority, of up to £3,000 per month, per business premises, depending on rateable value. Businesses that remain open, but are impacted by local restrictions, can also claim grants worth up to £2,100 a month, whilst wet-led pubs also benefitted from a £1000 one-off extra grant in December 2020.
- In addition, on 5 January, the government announced all businesses in England forced to close can claim a [one-off grant of up to £9,000](#). This is in addition to the monthly closed grant

amounts above. The one-off additional grant each business premises will receive depends on their rateable value.

- The [Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme](#) that ensures trade credit insurance coverage and credit limits are maintained during the coronavirus pandemic to help businesses to trade with confidence has been extended to June 2021.

Support through our Plan for Jobs for the unemployed

- Our £2 billion UK wide [Kickstart scheme](#) creates paid, quality 6-month work placements for over 200,000 young people deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. The scheme is available across Great Britain.
- Our [Job Entry Targeted Support scheme](#) is providing six months of personalised support for people who have been unable to find work within the first 3 months of unemployment. The scheme is available across Great Britain.
- We are [doubling the number of work coaches](#) available to help people across the UK get back into to work.
- The new £2.9 billion UK-wide [Restart scheme](#) will go live from Summer 2021 to provide 12 months of tailored support for those out of work for at least 12 months.
- We're [expanding apprenticeships](#) in England and providing employers with a hiring incentive for each new apprentice they hire, with £2,000 available for every apprentice hired aged 16 to 24 and £1,500 for those aged 25 and over.
- We've also invested £111 million to [expand our traineeships](#) in England, a skills development programme for people of all ages that includes a work placement and gets you ready for an apprenticeship or job.
- The government's [sector-based Work Academy Programme](#) is supporting tens of thousands of jobseekers across the country to upskill, retrain and gain quality work experience through the government's. The scheme is available in England and Scotland.

For low income families

- For workers on low incomes who can't work from home and have been asked to self-isolate, we have offered [£500 self-isolation payments](#).
- We have boosted the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4 billion in 2020-21 including through a temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, an increase in Local Housing Allowance rates and relaxation of UC minimum income floor for self-employed claimants.
- We also introduced [SPP rebate scheme](#) reimbursing employers with <250 employees for up to two weeks of Covid-related SSP per employee and extended SSP to those ill or self-isolating due to Covid-19 or who are clinically vulnerable and unable to work as a result.

For local authorities

- Local authorities in England will be given an additional [£500 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses](#). This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding (worth £20 per head of population) which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted.
- We're also providing further funding for local authorities to support the ongoing public health and outbreak management costs of tackling coronavirus through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. Areas at Tier 3 and 4 will receive £4 per head of population per 28 days, and those at Tier 2 will receive £2 per head per 28 days. This funding, potentially worth over £200 million per month, can be used to fund local public health activities and is in addition to the more than £975 million that has been committed to date.
- In addition, local authorities are expected to receive over £3 billion of support next year to assist more than 4 million households least able to pay council tax, compensate for 75 per cent of the irrecoverable loss of council tax and business rates revenue in 2020-21, and other additional expenditure pressures arising from coronavirus. This £3 billion next year builds on the £6.7 billion provided for local authorities this year – taking the total support for local authorities to over £10 billion.
- We had already provided over £7 billion for local authorities, including:
 - £4.6 billion to protect vital services
 - £1.1 billion to protect social care through the Infection Control Fund
 - £100 million to maintain leisure provision
 - over £32 million to support those clinically extremely vulnerable during national restrictions in November
 - £30 million to support enforcement of Covid-19 regulations
 - £500 million to provide council tax reliefs to economically vulnerable people and households through the Hardship Fund.

Support in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

The UK Government has provided support for jobs and businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland through our UK wide loan and employment support schemes. For example:

As of 15 October we'd provided businesses across the UK with [CBILS and BBLs](#), including:

- Scotland with nearly 80,000 loans worth nearly £3 billion
- Wales over 50,500 loans worth over £1.7 billion
- Northern Ireland nearly 35,000 loans worth over £1.3 billion

We've also provided support through the [furlough scheme](#) which has protected:

- 779,500 jobs in Scotland
- 400,800 jobs in Wales
- 249,600 jobs in Northern Ireland

We've supported incomes of the [self-employed](#) across the UK, including:

- 157,000 people in Scotland
- 110,000 people in Wales
- 78,000 people in Northern Ireland

In addition to the above UK wide funding, we've also provided the devolved administrations with funding through the Barnett Formula where policy is devolved. It's up to the devolved administrations to decide how to use this funding.

The UK Government has guaranteed at least £8.6 billion of additional funding for the Scottish Government, £5.2 billion for the Welsh Government, and £3 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive to give the devolved administrations certainty to plan and deliver their coronavirus response. This is on top of their Spring Budget 2020 funding.'

[Source: HM Treasury, 8 January]