

Current Risk Mitigation Factors for Bell Ringing at St Mary's, Nantwich during the Covid-19 pandemic

This document identifies the current values and associated rationale that qualify the controls in the “*Risk Assessment for Bell Ringing at St Mary's, Nantwich during the Covid-19 pandemic*” (Issue 4.0). Any more restrictive UK Government or church constraint which may arise shall take precedence.

Social Distancing

There is no current social distancing requirement defined by the UK Government for England. Ringers are however requested to try to maintain a minimum distance of 1m from other ringers (outside their support bubble) whilst in the ringing chamber and to be mindful of other ringers' concerns. The ropes will be kept 1m+ apart, and currently any combination of all eight bells may be rung.

Face Coverings

The UK Government, having moved to Plan B for Winter 2021 following the emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid-19[1], has updated its rules on face coverings to state “*In England, you must wear a face covering...in places of worship...and must keep it on until you leave unless you are exempt or have a reasonable excuse for removing it.*”[10]. The reasonable excuses to this **legal requirement** include medical grounds (including severe distress).

NB: The UK Government's Statutory Instrument, which formally defines the rules for wearing face coverings, includes an exemption in the case of “*a person providing services in the relevant place under arrangements made with the person responsible for the relevant place*”[11] (where a “place of worship” is listed earlier as a “relevant place”). The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) and the House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group have discussed this and they believe this exemption would apply to bell ringers with the incumbent's permission (as the “person responsible”). However, given the prevalence and current transmissibility of the omicron variant of the virus, we do not intend to apply this exemption at Nantwich.

Therefore, face coverings must now be worn at all times whilst in the tower (i.e. in the Ringing Chamber and the Belfry), unless exempt on medical grounds.

Ventilation

At least two of the doors shall be kept open during any ringing event. If there is no appreciable cross-draught, or if a ringing event is longer than 30 minutes, or there are more than 16 people present, three or more doors shall be kept open.

Elapsed Time between Ringing Events

Commonly touched surfaces shall be sanitised between two ringing events of more than 30 minutes duration if these events are separated by fewer than 36 hours.

Ringling Events

Event	Description
Service Ringing	Happening: yes. For all normal services, and occasional services (subject to prior arrangements). Duration and Format: Up to 30 minutes ringing before and 30 minutes after services (with the same band). Attendance: No fixed limit; all welcome, but we shall aim to control numbers to no more than 16 in the tower at any time.

Event	Description
Thursday Practice Nights	<p>Happening: yes.</p> <p>Duration and Format: The normal Thursday night two hour practice will comprise two sessions: starting with a Rounds and Call Changes session for the beginners of an hour; and then a session for more experienced ringers (or a continuation of the beginners' session until sufficient experienced ringers are in attendance). This should reduce the numbers of ringers present in the tower at the same time.</p> <p>Attendance: No fixed limit; all welcome, but we shall aim to control number to no more than 16 in the tower at any time.</p>
Bell Handling Practices	<p>Happening: yes.</p> <p>Duration and Format: The additional bell handling practices (currently on Tuesdays) will be for no more than 75 minutes. Face coverings will be necessary during the face-to-face teaching elements, where social distancing cannot be maintained.</p> <p>Attendance: By Invitation only. We will try to keep the number present to no more than 12 in the tower at any one time.</p>
Quarters and Peals	<p>Happening: Not at present. Arrangements for quarters and longer length ringing would need a short risk assessment.</p>
Visiting Ringers	<p>Happening: Yes. Individual and small groups of ringers (typically a family) are welcome to attend our service ringing and normal (Thursday night) practices. It would be appreciated if any advance notice could be given. Applications for visits by bands on outings will be considered but would have to agree to our risk assessment controls.</p>

Appendix: References

1. [Coronavirus rules set out by the UK Government to address the Covid-19 pandemic](#), under constant revision, UK Government.
2. [COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship](#), as revised 10 December 2021, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.
3. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance](#), as revised 10 December 2021, The Church of England.
4. [Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public](#), Version 10.1, 10 December 2021, The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group.
5. [COVID-19: Opening and managing church buildings](#), Version 2.3, 9 December 2021, The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group.
6. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Standing Guidance](#), as published 23 December 2021, The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.
7. [Carbon Dioxide monitoring whilst ringing](#), 9 May 2021, The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.
8. [Regular rapid coronavirus \(COVID-19\) tests if you do not have symptoms](#), last reviewed 23 December 2021, NHS.
9. [Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#), Guidance on writing Risk Assessments including example templates, Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
10. [Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions...](#), updated 10 December 2021, UK Government.
11. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings\) \(England\) Regulations 2021, Section 3](#), Updated 10 December 2021, UK Government.

Appendix: Change History

Date	Version	Description
06/12/2021	1.0 Draft A	Initial version distributed for review/approval. To be read and approved in conjunction with version 4.0 of the Tower Risk Assessment.
08/12/2021	1.0 Draft B	Recommendation to wear face coverings simplified.

Date	Version	Description
10/12/2021	1.0 Draft C	Updated to reflect mandatory requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship (unless exempt). Updated set of references included. Some references are flagged as requiring updates or retirement in the light of more recent changes to other higher level documents published by HM Government and the House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group.
30/12/2021	1.0 Draft D	Updated to reflect discussions between the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and the House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group regarding whether bell ringers may be exempt from wearing face coverings. This does not change our approach to wearing face coverings. Updated and augmented set of references – now all appear to be consistent!
04/01/2022	1.0	Issued as approved after review (of Draft C) by members of the Standing Committee.