

Dear Friends,

Today's briefing contains advice on the following:

- Safeguarding and Past Cases Review 2
- Creating new routines

Over the next two days we will be emailing clergy with:

- Advice on pastoral care, especially in extremis
- Advice from the Property Team

We are aware of some inconsistencies of advice between government, national and local church with regard to church buildings. Your three bishops uphold what was said yesterday, which is that it is advisable for a single individual, usually the priest, to keep an eye on the church building during this time of closure. This is in line with government advice. They may wish to pray alone whilst there with the building locked. However, there is to be **no** livestreaming of services from church buildings.

The coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org email address is monitored seven days a week. We hope that increasingly you will have the advice you need to make decisions locally in an informed and intelligent way, but please do be in touch if you have doubts or uncertainties.

One of the recurring questions is around the handling of money or cash cards, particularly when shopping for those who cannot go out themselves. There is no way of making this a zero-risk activity, however there are things that you can do to mitigate that risk when carrying out this important service. Good hygiene and hand washing routines are essential, both before and after touching these things. Do not touch your face and wear gloves if possible. It would be preferable when picking up money or a cash card from someone else for that to have been put in an envelope and then left for 24hours before pickup.

Some of your people may wish to volunteer for the huge effort that will be required to support the vulnerable as Covid-19 starts to take hold. The RVS has set up a national register which can be found at goodsamapp.org (interesting name!).

Safeguarding (A note from Sharon Hassall, our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA))

As we consider the changes taking place in society as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19), one thing does not change; the need to consider best practice in safeguarding is as important now as it has ever been.

As churches consider a wide range of alternatives for maintaining contact with each other and providing the much-needed support to those who may be vulnerable and/or self-isolating within their communities, we must not forget that we need to do all these things safely. It is particularly important at this time to remember the basic understanding of what safeguarding is, i.e. the measures which we put in place to protect the most vulnerable.

Please consider these things as you work in this new and everchanging environment:

Reporting

One thing that has not changed is that If you have safeguarding concerns about a child or adult, contact your DSA within 24 hours. If a child or adult is in immediate danger or requires medical attention, call the police and/or social services immediately using the 999 emergency number.

Volunteers

The safeguarding team can be asked for advice about using volunteers to support the most vulnerable in our Churches who are affected by the restrictions that have been put in place to tackle Covid-19. The key here is accountability, openness and transparency.

Things to remember:

- use volunteers who are already known to you and ideally safely recruited
- be accountable, open and transparent (get PCC backing by phone or email for your plans and include your parish safeguarding officer)
- When handling money keep a note of what was spent, get a receipt and maybe take a photo of it. Share these details with another member of church leadership.
- Know your own limits, i.e. we are not all medics, financial advisers etc.... although your volunteers may be. It is better to seek advice if you are not sure.
- Hand wash regularly, keep tissues to hand and keep 2 metres apart.

Contact with offenders

As we see an increase in alternative methods of staying connected and communicating with each other, if you have someone who attends your church under a safeguarding agreement remember to be mindful of whom you are connecting them with via these mediums, especially WhatsApp where personal mobile numbers cannot be hidden. You could unwittingly be giving someone who poses a risk easy access to vulnerable members of your congregation. Please do stay connected with parishioners who have safeguarding agreements but do be mindful of doing this as safely as possible for all concerned.

Training

We have cancelled all face to face safeguarding training in line with government advice for the time being. We appreciate that this may cause a problem for some clergy and church officers who need to complete it because the normal requirements mean that clergy and church officers are required to undertake various levels of training. Those in leadership positions are required to complete either the Leadership Module (C2) or the Senior Leadership Module (C4) which are face to face modules. People in roles which require C0 or C1 training will still be required to complete that training as usual, using the online modules. Please contact your parish safeguarding officer for more details as to how to do this.

The National Safeguarding team have advised us that where a member of clergy or church officer has not been able to undertake the appropriate safeguarding training because of cancellations due to the Covid-19 virus, this constitutes a cogent reason why the House of Bishops guidance to have due regard to the need for safeguarding training to be completed for certain roles, has not been followed. In other words, it is acceptable

for clergy to continue to minister and church officers to undertake their roles, if they have either not done the training or not completed further training within the required time period, due to the impact of the virus. Records should be kept of who this applies to, to demonstrate the cogent reason, and they should attend the training as soon as possible when available.

Specific risks at this time

Sadly, there will be those who take advantage of the current climate to cause harm (most likely financial) to our most vulnerable. There have been reports of cold callers, door knockers and scam emails offering money or support during the current crisis. Please be aware of these and make sure the most vulnerable in your care are supported and informed as much as is possible.

Shopping on behalf of those who are self-isolating, for example, especially when using their own money, can leave people at risk of financial abuse and may in some cases fall under 'Regulated Activity' requiring DBS checks to be obtained. Working with accountability and transparency is essential. Keep copies or photos or receipts for example, or contact families of those that you serve in this way so that they are aware of what is happening.

Those in homes where domestic abuse is taking place, or families who are being supported by social services, or where there are those with disabilities and mental health challenges may now be at greater risk. This is especially the case as their usual contact points where they may be seen by others and the signs of harm and abuse potentially spotted are reduced. Keeping in contact with those you know to be vulnerable or who you may have concerns about.

Recording

Ensure you keep records of what activity is being undertaken that is outside your usual remit and by whom. A simple log of who is speaking to who, frequency of contact, and any issues that may arise will help you assess any potential risks. You may need to have someone coordinate this so that you can keep oversight of the activity that is being done and ensure the most vulnerable are being properly safeguarded. A single point of contact or short list of authorised contacts could be circulated with guidance on how to get in contact if help is needed.

PCR2 (Past Cases Review 2)

No date for an extension regarding this important piece of work has yet been given by the church nationally, and whilst completing this process may be more difficult for parish clergy and the diocese alike, it should still be possible. Please do find time, if you can, to complete and return the forms which were sent out to the best of your ability. This information that has been sought can be gathered through email or phone calls, but if you are struggling with any aspect of this please do phone the safeguarding team on the numbers below.

DBS

The Government published guidance last week with advice on viewing identity documents remotely. You may have already seen this, but I wanted to alert you all as we continue to ensure DBS checks take place.

[Safer Recruitment](#) and [Safer Recruitment – Permission to Officiate](#) remain in effect and despite the worrying situation with COVID-19, dioceses obviously still need to put in place DBS renewal arrangements for clergy and church officers in their area. The new guidance from the Disclosure and Barring Service, providing clarity on viewing documents remotely, is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-standard-and-enhanced-id-checking-guidelines>

Last, but not least, please do look after yourself and your team. Lone or home working can be a new and disorienting experience for some. Ensure your staff and volunteers have appropriate opportunity for support and time to debrief on their experiences. A regular catch-up call could be a good way to do this. Make sure you know your lines of communication and responsibility and work hard to keep them open.

Please contact Julie Grimshaw DBS, training and safeguarding administrator for advice on Training and DBS on **07368 197069**

Please contact Sharon Hassall on **07711 485170** or Rachael Campion on **07817 550224** for any safeguarding advice.

Creating a new routine

These are unsettling and unprecedented times, but we are people of faith and, whilst it is right for us to lament all that has been taken away, we are also called to seek God in new ways in the days and weeks to come. As Bishop Julian reminded us in his pastoral letter of 24th March, this is a time to pause and reflect on what is truly important about our faith, our prayer life and our worship and to be courageous enough to explore new ways of being, at least for a short while.

Some suggestions:

- Accept the restrictions imposed by the government and the national church. Recognise that for a while the working out of our roles as clergy will change, but the core of our ministry and vocation has not.
- Set **a new** routine for each day. Do not try and reproduce a typical day from last week.
- Prayer and care for our community is at the heart of who we are and what we do but can be done at home and there is a biblical precedent for it being somewhat hidden from sight of all except God (Luke 18: 9-14). Establish a new routine around prayer and reflection that ministers to yourself as well as others.
- Establish a new routine around reading and studying the Bible both on your own and with others, both within your household and virtually with others. Think about reading one of those theology books that has been on the shelf gathering dust for a while.
- Whilst clergy are used to working *from home*, we are not used to working *at home* so think how you will differentiate ministerial time from personal time. Perhaps wear different clothes such as a clergy shirt when undertaking

ministerial duties and very deliberately change when having down time. Work with the rest of the household to work out a routine that works for all of you.

- Be realistic about what you can do and how many phone calls, social media posts and emails you can and should send each day.
- Make sure you incorporate time that feeds your spirit in addition to prayer for the world, nation, community and parish. Do that thing you have always been meaning to do but have never had time for. Be courageous and imaginative.
- Do not try to plan too much or too far ahead, things are changing very fast and what might work today may be impossible tomorrow.
- Give attention to yourself, your family and to your friends and use time to reconnect and appreciate them. You may not get time like this again.
- Try not to listen to/ read/ watch too much media. If you can limit the places you get information from and the time you spend getting that information.
- Keep a journal. Record your thoughts and prayers and ideas that come to you as you slow down a little from the usual hectic round of ministerial tasks. Dare to dream some dreams about how to use the lessons learnt in your community once the pandemic has passed, which it will.

Thank you once again for the amazing imagination you are bringing to ministry in complex and fast-changing times. And please be assured of our prayers.

Any question or queries or to report self-isolation, please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org

Keep us, good Lord,

under the shadow of your mercy

in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,

and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may rejoice in your comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love

in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Yours,

Bishop Philip and the Coronavirus Task Group