

Stationing Visits – Additional Guidance

It is hoped that as far as possible, visits can take place as described in the Code of Practice (Sections **I** and **N**) but in the light of COVID-19, additional provisions may have to be made and changes made depending on local circumstances.

In considering how visits can be arranged, it is important to remember that the situation is 'work' related and not subject to the guidelines for a 'social gathering'. All appropriate guidance for the safe use of any premises to be visited must be adhered to and Risk Assessments carefully followed. You may wish to consider a separate Risk Assessment for the visit both by the visiting minister and by the circuit and particularly for the meeting with the circuit Invitation Committee.

1. Before the 9.00 am phone call (**I4, N4**) Circuit Stewards must check the availability of premises likely to be visited to ensure they have followed the Covid secure guidelines and that necessary pre and post visit cleaning is arranged (door handles, striker plates, hard surfaces, switches...).
2. If any premises likely to be visited are LEPs and owned by another church, then the guidance laid down for that denomination is to be followed.
3. Circuit Stewards must clarify that those involved in the visit are not shielding or isolating.
4. During the 9.00 am phone call, determine if there is a shielding or isolating issue with the minister or any intended accompanying family/friend. See below.
5. During any visit, normal Covid procedures should be adhered to regarding masks, hand-washing, sanitising and social distancing.
6. Travel between sites would probably have to be on a 'follow me' basis although other arrangements may need to be considered (minibus, diagonal seating in a car...). See 5. overleaf. To reduce travel, you may wish to consider videoing churches beforehand for showing in a suitably ventilated and 'distanced' setting.
7. Any 'hospitality' during a visit should be in suitable commercial premises.
8. The size of the circuit Invitation Committee has never been prescribed and can vary considerably. To aid proper conversation in a socially distanced setting (possibly on the two metre rule without masks for this meeting), the 'rule of six' may be a starting point but ten would seem a limit. While much depends on the room or space available, to avoid raising of the voice yet allowing all to engage in the conversation, is a fine judgement to be considered.
9. The manse visit is possibly one of the most difficult elements to accommodate as well as being one that has fluctuated in recent weeks and in different parts of the country. It is, however, important to any minister looking to move. Undoubtedly, much can be achieved in a 'video tour' and may worth doing **now** and discussed during the 9.00 am. phone call. Most mobile phones have a simply administered videoing facility, often best transferred via Cloud based storage (One Drive, Google Drive, Cloud...), WhatsApp, Facebook or through creating a YouTube channel. Also see 3. overleaf

Alternative processes to consider if key personnel are shielding or isolating.

Connexionally, for many years, Ministers from other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs) have held 'visits' and conversations via videoing conferencing links (Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Microsoft Team, Jitsi Meet...) and during the current pandemic, most people have become familiar with this technology. However, it is not the same as meeting 'in person' but may need to be a part or replacement for a visit.

Care must be taken not to exclude key personnel just because they don't feel comfortable with the technology. There are many instances of video meetings where those without the technology have been able to participate in a suitably established, 'distanced' room. Conversely, those unable to attend, for example, a circuit Invitation Committee due to shielding, can join via a video link.

If either party feels that video-conferencing may be necessary for their particular circumstances, prior to the 9 am. call they should have given some thought as to how that may look. Ministers may suggest which premises they would like to have videoed, which people they would particularly like included in a brief video call and circuits could have similar suggestions. **I 8** and **N8** in the Code of Practice concerning "...too much [being] packed into one day" is just as relevant to video calls as it is in face-to-face meetings: space and time should be given for refreshment and breaks.

I 11 and **N 11** reminds that, "Meetings should give the opportunity for conversation. They should not be likened to an interview." Such intentions are even harder to achieve in a video call, particularly when meeting with the circuit Invitation Committee as described in **I 12**.and **N 12**. If all could bear in mind the basic principle of **I/N 11** above, then the prime practice as described in **I12** and **N12** still pertains.

If further information or explanation would be helpful, the links below provide additional guidance.

7 Steps to Working Closely together (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>):

- Complete a Covid-19 risk assessment
- Clean more often
- Ask your visitors and customers to wear face coverings
- Make sure everyone is social distancing
- Increase ventilation
- Take part in NHS Test & Trace
- Turn people with Covid-19 symptoms away

All other information can be found on the Methodist website at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/>,

The following scenarios also have links which could be helpful –

1. **Closed Churches:** If visiting premises which have remained closed since lock down, it is good to consider the information contained in the [Re-Opening a Building Checklist](#), to ensure the building is safe to visit.
2. **Meetings:** For additional information for holding a safe group meeting please look at the [Guide to Church Council and Other Church Meetings](#).
3. **Property visits:** for more details on safely viewing manse accommodation there are a number of useful considerations contained in the more specific [Guide for Pastoral visits](#).
4. **Films and Live-streaming:** for more details and help with this please have a look at the [Guide for Live Streaming](#). (Property Division are currently working on an update for this.)
5. **Travel Arrangements:** this is a difficult area and will be very much down to the persons concerned as to how comfortable they are with shared transport. It is therefore definitely worth signposting everyone to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>, as this does outline suggestions in great detail in order to give choice.