

Version 3	Updated to reflect changes for Government's Step 4 guidance
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Following the change in Government guidance from the 19 July 2021, there are many restrictions which are being lifted in both work and home situations. There is no specific government guidance in this area of church life and therefore the following are suggestions for Presbyters and others to provide pastoral support in a safe way for all those concerned. These can also be used in conjunction with the Risk Assessment guide - [need to add link to risk assessment template](#).

It is anticipated that many pastoral visits will be principally undertaken in a domestic setting with a small number of people attending. It could be offered in a number of ways:

- i. Remotely: pastoral support could be offered remotely via telephone or other form of remote communication, this is particularly important where people fall into a clinically vulnerable group.
- ii. Outside: pastoral visits conducted outside, such as a private garden or a park, can reduce the risks of virus transfer as opposed to meeting indoors. There are obviously some limitations to this form of meeting, particularly if the person has mobility issues or falls within a vulnerable group.
- iii. Inside: meeting inside is acceptable perhaps with greater awareness of the suggestions below.

In all settings the following suggested principles could be considered:

- i. Contact the person concerned in advance to check how they are, if they are displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, and if they have any specific requirements or concerns about the visit so that you are prepared.
- ii. Risk assess the visit in advance to ensure that all issues have been considered by both parties.
- iii. Undertake a rapid lateral flow test before visiting. Packs of these tests can be ordered online, more information is here - [Regular rapid lateral flow coronavirus \(COVID-19\) tests - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk).
- iv. Do not meet if either party is displaying COVID-19 symptoms, if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or if you have tested positive for COVID-19.
- v. Both parties should wear a face covering and allow for opening windows if acceptable to provide some fresh air.
- vi. Ensure you have access to hand sanitiser for regular hand hygiene, particularly before and after a visit, and if undertaking a number of visits.
- vii. Ensure you have and use tissues when sneezing and dispose of safely; washing your hands afterwards.

Other Information: The Faith and Order Committee have produced a detailed document to support the Act of Holy Communion and this practical guide should be read in conjunction with this.