

Places of worship to re-open for individual prayer

Places of worship across England will be permitted to reopen for individual prayer from Monday 15 June, the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed today (Sunday 7 June).

This decision follows discussions between the Government and representatives of major faiths through the Places of Worship Taskforce which the Communities Secretary has chaired.

This move recognises the spiritual and mental health benefits for people being able to pray in their place of worship, and that for some people this cannot be replicated by praying at home.

New guidance will be published shortly to ensure the limited re-opening of places of worship can be done safely and in line with social distancing guidelines. This will recommend the thorough cleaning of shared spaces, hand cleansing at entry and exit and asking worshippers to bring their own items such as a prayer mat or religious text instead of sharing or using communal ones.

Individual prayer will be permitted from 15 June, but communally led prayer, worship or devotion such as services, evensong, informal prayer meetings, Mass, Jumma or Kirtan will not be possible at this stage.

The Government will continue to work with the Taskforce towards the full reopening of places of worship as soon as the scientific advice allows.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Ensuring places of worship can open again, beginning with individual prayer has been my priority. Their contribution to the common good of our country is clear, as places of solace, comfort, stability and dignity. And the need for them is all the greater as we weather the uncertainties of the pandemic.

I'm pleased this can now happen from 15 June. As Communities Secretary I have worked with faith leaders and representatives to prepare guidance that ensures this can be done safely.

People of all faiths have shown enormous patience and forbearance, unable to mark Easter, Passover, Ramadan or Vaisakhi with friends and family in the traditional way. As we control the virus, we are now able to move forwards with a limited, but important return to houses of worship.

Faith Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

Religious communities have shown enormous resilience and sacrifice in celebrating significant spiritual moments like Easter, Passover, Ramadan, Eid and Vaisakhi at home during these extraordinary times.

The Government has determined that this is the right time to begin re-opening places of worship for individual prayer.

It's our hope that this is the first step in places of worship reopening fully, when the science supports it. I look forward to continuing to discuss with the Taskforce how to address ongoing practical safety issues in the coming weeks.

Places of worship still have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and may decide to remain closed or reopen at a slower pace if they wish.

Under the existing regulations, funerals are allowed in places of worship where it is possible to do so safely. Other gatherings and services such as baptisms, weddings, supplementary schools, meetings and classes are not permitted. Also places of worship may open for ministers of religion to film or record a service for broadcast, for the hosting of essential voluntary activities such as homeless services, for registered early years and childcare providers and for blood donation sessions. Buildings should also remain closed to tourists.

- The guidance will be available shortly. Faith leaders should carry out a risk assessment of the place of worship and tailor this guidance as appropriate for the venue and practices being carried out. This will be in addition to any risk assessment already in place.
- Individual prayer within a place of worship is defined as a person or household entering the venue to pray on their own and not as part of a group, led prayer or communal act. They should be socially distanced from other individuals or households.
- The government is following the latest scientific and medical advice around how activities such as singing and/or playing instruments can best be managed safely. Further guidance will follow on this shortly, but for now such activity should be avoided.

[Extra mental health support for pupils](#)

and teachers

New online resources designed by health and education experts will be provided to schools and colleges to boost mental health support for staff and pupils, encouraging them to talk more confidently about the anxieties and concerns they feel as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Videos, webinars and teaching materials, produced in partnership with charities, will be made available to schools and colleges, helping to foster conversations about mental health and reassure many young people who are worried about the impact of the virus on their lives.

As more pupils return to the classroom as part of the Government's phased approach to the wider opening of schools, the Department for Education has announced grants worth more than £750,000 for the Diana Award, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Anne Frank Trust – to help hundreds of schools and colleges build relationships between pupils, boost their resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online.

A new £95,000 pilot project in partnership with the Education Support Partnership will focus on teachers' and leaders' mental health, providing online peer-support and telephone supervision from experts to around 250 school leaders.

It adds to the [support](#) the Government has already put in place to help families and children during the pandemic, with more than [£9 million](#) already being invested in mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need, and priority given to it within planning guides for a phased return to education.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

There has never been a more important time to speak about mental health and wellbeing – especially for thousands of children, young people and teachers who are adapting to education and different ways of living and learning in these unprecedented times.

Schools and colleges are often a safe haven for children and young people, but the challenges we face at this time mean we are all more likely to feel anxious or sad – no matter our age or circumstances.

These new resources, created with charities and health experts, will encourage confident conversations between friends, colleagues, pupils and their teachers, and improve our understanding of how to make ourselves and others feel better.

Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries said:

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on the importance of looking after our mental health. It is very normal during these uncertain and unusual times to be experiencing distress or anxiety, or be feeling low. What's important is that you get help.

We know the impact on our children and young people has been especially tough, which is why as schools return we're determined to equip teachers and pupils with the tools they need to look after their wellbeing.

Mental health must be a priority as we get start to get back to normality and I hope these brilliant new measures alongside our NHS services will help start new conversations and reassure children that it's ok not to be ok, and that support is available.

A new training [module](#) for teachers has also been published to support them in giving lessons on the Government's new Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum, which will make mental health and wellbeing a compulsory part of pupils' education in primary and secondary school.

Developed with clinical experts, the training module will help subject leads and teachers deliver the new curriculum effectively when it becomes compulsory from September, as well as improving their confidence in talking and teaching about mental wellbeing in class, especially as many measures to stop the spread of coronavirus remain in place and many people continue to experience restrictions in their daily lives.

While schools have some flexibility over how they introduce the new curriculum within the first year of compulsory teaching, the new module will help schools prepare ahead of time.

The Government's announcement today (Sunday 7 June) builds on the excellent partnership working already seen between schools, colleges and health services in local areas in response to the pandemic.

Professor Prathiba Chitsabesan, NHS England Associate National Clinical Director for Children and Young People's Mental Health, said:

The coronavirus outbreak has had an impact on everybody's lives, so it is understandable that children and young people may be experiencing anxiety, distress or low mood which is a normal response to a significant disruption to their lives.

The NHS is here for anyone who needs it, and has adapted to the pandemic through offering flexible options including phone and video consultations. We will continue to work in partnerships with schools and other services to ensure children and their families access the support they need.

In addition to the RSHE module, the new resources will include examples of

good practice already being used around the country, developed by mental health charity MindEd, to be provided to schools and colleges before the end of the summer term. These are in addition to high quality tools already made available by mental health charities, including the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and Place2Be.

Professor Peter Fonagy, Chief Executive of the Anna Freud Centre said:

We welcome this is important announcement. At this time of immense stress children have a right to expect that their teachers are well supported. This directly benefits children and young people not just in their education the quality they receive but also in their own wellbeing and the sense of support they experience.

Catherine Roche, CEO of children's mental health charity Place2Be said:

As a charity providing expert mental health support within school communities, at Place2Be we've heard first-hand from teachers, parents and children of the huge mental health challenges they are facing as a result of this pandemic.

These resources and training courses will be a welcome addition to help support the emotional wellbeing of teachers and pupils in the short and long term.

In response to continuing social distancing measures, while many older pupils remain at home to allow for vital year groups to return in a phased way, existing school and college-based mental health programmes have also adapted their work to make sure their services are still accessible for those who need them the most. This includes:

- The Link Programme, which connect schools and colleges to external specialist mental health services, which will begin offering online workshops nationally to facilitate joined-up working to plan for the recovery phase, and to ensure learning from successful areas already using this approach is shared; and
- Mental Health Support Teams around the country, which join up schools and colleges with additional trained staff supervised by their local NHS mental health services, will encourage teams to step up their support to more schools and colleges locally, accept referrals through new pathways, and help develop a recovery approach.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb has also written [Nick Gibb letter to Expert Advisory Group](#) (PDF, 409KB, 4 pages) to the members of the Department for Education's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on education staff wellbeing, accepting its recommendations including a commitment to develop a wellbeing charter for the teaching sector. The charter will help create an open culture around wellbeing and mental health, breaking down stigma, and will include commitments from the Government to regularly measure staff wellbeing, and to

embed this into training, guidance and policy making.

The grant to the Education Support Partnership will respond specifically to the mental health needs of school leaders at this challenging time and additional funding of £45,000 to Timewise will provide practical support and resources on flexible working in light of new arrangements for schools responding to coronavirus.

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, said:

Mind was pleased to contribute to the Expert Advisory Group on school staff wellbeing, but what is most important is that concrete action comes out of this when it comes to making sure mental health and wellbeing are prioritised within our education system. Today's announcement is a welcome first step, and we hope it will be the start of a sincere commitment to address issues like stress, and other mental health problems among school pupils and staff, helping make sure we build a fairer and kinder working and learning environment for everyone.

Coronavirus has impacted all of our lives, but some more than others. We cannot underestimate the long-term effects that this pandemic will have, especially on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Wellbeing and emotional support must be available to anyone who needs it, now so more than ever. As the UK Government asks schools to begin to open to more children, it is crucial that we all come together to support the mental health and physical health of teachers and pupils, not just now but for the years to come.

Stuart Rimmer, Principal of East Coast College and Expert Advisory Panel member said:

It is a hugely positive step that we are seeing thoughtful and considered announcements to support staff mental health and wellbeing in the school and college sector. Supporting leaders and front line staff is critical, amplified recently by significant additional pressures of COVID-19. Developing support programmes, peer to peer and coaching will help at these critical and complex times.

Sinead McBrearty, CEO of Education Support Partnership, said:

The mental health and wellbeing of teachers and senior leaders must sit at the heart of our education system. The Expert Advisory Group has brought new voices into the policy-making process, and the resulting recommendations set a direction for supporting and improving the wellbeing of those working in education.

Education Support is pleased to have the opportunity to pilot remote services for school leaders. Early testing has shown that online peer support and telephone supervision can help school leaders find ways to process the impact of work-related stress. We hope that the timing of this work will help school leaders in the short term, and inform best practice post-pandemic.

Charities to benefit from support for rough sleepers during pandemic

- Funding for frontline charities providing support to rough sleepers
- Over 130 charities set to benefit from £6m following a successful bidding process
- Investment builds on ongoing work to support rough sleepers into long-term accommodation, with more than 15,000 helped off streets during pandemic

Charities supporting vulnerable rough sleepers will be able to continue their vital work, backed by £6m of government funding, Homelessness Minister Luke Hall has announced today (Sunday 7 June).

A total of 132 charities across England will have access to the funding meaning they can continue to support those experiencing homelessness during coronavirus and beyond. This includes providing beds for those who need it as well as the specialist physical and mental health help they need to recover from life on the streets.

The funding is part of a £750m package of government support for UK charities who may have been impacted by the pandemic, £360m of which is dedicated to offering a lifeline to charities working to end homelessness.

Successful bids include:

Encompass Southwest – who support rough sleepers with some of the most complex needs in North Devon, as well as young people aged 14 to 21 who are at risk of rough sleeping or homelessness.

Helping Hands Community Project in Warwick – who support people experiencing homelessness, including victims of domestic violence, by offering a range of essential services from hot meals to advice and support sessions. It also upskills people through volunteer placements in its charity shop and café.

Stonewall Housing in East London – who work directly with LGBT+ homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

Young Women's Housing Project in Sheffield, Yorkshire and the Humber – who

provide safe supported accommodation and therapeutic support to young women aged 16-25 and their children, who have been affected by sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and peer/intimate partner abuse.

Coffee4Craig in Manchester – who provide vital support for rough sleepers and people in crisis. The Manchester drop-in is an evening and weekend service, offering hot meals, showers, medical support and more.

This announcement builds on the recent government commitment to provide thousands of long-term, safe homes for vulnerable rough sleepers taken off the streets during the pandemic. This is backed by £160 million this year and will support many of the thousands of rough sleepers currently housed in emergency accommodation to move on to more sustainable, long-term housing.

Homelessness Minister Luke Hall said:

The staggering effort between councils and charities across the country has ensured that over 90 percent of rough sleepers known to councils at the start of the pandemic have been offered safe accommodation. This work has helped to protect thousands of lives.

This money will help charities continue to support these people and ensure they are getting everything they need to prevent them from returning to a life on the streets so they can rebuild their lives once and for all.

To ensure that the funds were shared fairly, the process was managed independently by Homeless Link.

Rick Henderson, Chief Executive of Homeless Link, added:

Homelessness charities that many vulnerable people rely upon have continued to provide invaluable support, despite being hard hit by the current public health crisis.

This emergency funding will enable them to keep running their vital services, from specialist support for women, those experiencing domestic violence and young people, to providing hot meals or upskilling people experiencing homelessness – to name just a few.

The government's plans to support rough sleepers during the pandemic are being spearheaded by the Rough Sleeping Taskforce – led by Dame Louise Casey – which will bring together partners and businesses in order to use the coronavirus crisis and current successful work so far in bringing 'everyone in' as a catalyst towards ending rough sleeping for good.

As part of this commitment, Homes England, in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has pledged to work hand-in-hand

with leading housing associations and local authorities to fast-track thousands of units of longer-term accommodation for rough sleepers needed now.

The funding will also be used to provide the specialist staff former rough sleepers need. This includes those who can support their mental health or substance abuse problems, helping people rebuild their lives, move towards training and work, and remain off the streets for good.

Further Information

About Homeless Link: [Homeless Link](#) is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure that everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

Annex A

PDF, 190 KB, 7 pages

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[Commonwealth Points of Light Award: Her Majesty The Queen Congratulates Pakistani Volunteers](#)

The award to Huzaifa Ahmad (Co-Founder and CEO Rizq) and Syed Hassaan Irfan (Executive Director, Rizq), recognised their work providing food security to local communities, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. Celebrate the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. The call with Her Majesty The Queen also marked National Volunteering Week in the UK, an annual celebration of the power and contribution of volunteering.

Huzaifa Ahmed and Syed Hassaan Ahmed, representing 'Rizq' from Pakistan, a social enterprise, which started as a university project in 2015 aimed at ensuring a hunger free Pakistan by distributing excess food to the most vulnerable.

During the coronavirus pandemic and in the holy month of Ramazan, Huzaifa and Hassaan mobilised a network of over 3,000 volunteers to distribute over 2.2 million meals to across 23 cities.

Huzaifa Ahmad said:

Food is a fundamental need. For every human to reach his or her true potential it is important for this basic right to be accessible, affordable and available.

I want to thank the Commonwealth for recognising our efforts and honouring us with this award. I would like to dedicate it to our amazing volunteers and Rizq heroes.

Syed Hassaan Irfan said:

We have more food than ever before yet more people than ever go hungry every day. We all have an individual responsibility to eliminate hunger – no one should go without a daily meal.

This award is a tribute to the people of Pakistan, the work of volunteers in Pakistan, and our strong tradition of helping each other.

The British High Commissioner, Dr Christian Turner CMG, said:

It was an honour to hear Her Majesty recognise Rizq's remarkable work to tackle food insecurity. Moments like this are examples of the profoundly positive relations between the UK, Pakistan and Commonwealth.

Notes to editors on the Commonwealth Points of Light award:

- The awards are made by Her Majesty the Queen, as Head of the Commonwealth, to thank inspirational volunteers across all the Commonwealth nations for the difference they are making in their communities.
- The Commonwealth Points of Light award launched in April 2018 to coincide with the UK hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in London.
- The British High Commission was asked to suggest volunteers from Pakistan for a Points of Light award, to coincide with national volunteering week happening this week in the UK, June 1-7.
- More details of the work of Rizq can be found [here](#)

- The following people in Pakistan have previously been awarded a Points of Light Award:

[Master Ayub](#) – a fireman who runs an open-air school for children who otherwise cannot have an education.

[Mohammed Amjad Saqib](#) – runs the largest microfinance organisation in Pakistan, 'Akhuwat'

[Hamza Farrukh](#) – addressing the water crisis, with 'Bondh-E-Shams', serving 45,000 people across 13 remote Pakistani villages.

- More information, including details of other Commonwealth Points of Light recipients, can be found [here](#)
- More information on National Volunteers Week can be found [here](#)

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British High Commission
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[NHS volunteers extend support to frontline health and social care staff](#)

- NHS Volunteer Responders scheme expanded to offer vital support to frontline health and social care staff
- Over 285,000 volunteer tasks have been carried out so far, helping people from across the community with tasks like delivering shopping
- Announcement comes as part of Volunteers Week 2020

NHS volunteer responders will be carrying out socially-distanced tasks including helping with delivering food shopping and dropping off personal medication to frontline staff at their homes.

While the country is moving into a new phase in the national effort against this pandemic, health and social care staff on the frontline continue to provide vital care and support to our loved ones, many of whom will still be shielding.

From Monday, the NHS volunteer responders will extend their support to health and social care workers across the country, helping them to protect those they care for by making fewer journeys and coming into contact with fewer people so they can focus on and continue their vital work.

Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:

The NHS volunteer responders have played a vital role in our response to coronavirus, and I am hugely thankful for their support. Their selfless efforts to protect those who need to shield or self-isolate has helped stop the spread of the virus and alleviated pressure on health and care services during this unprecedented pandemic.

Following the success of the volunteers scheme, support is now being extended to all our wonderful health and care staff who continue to go above and beyond.

We want to support them in whatever way we can to make their lives easier while they continue to support others most in need.

Since the beginning of April, NHS volunteer responders have completed hundreds of thousands of acts of support and kindness, helping vulnerable individuals, the shielded population, and supporting those who are self-isolating or caring for others.

Yesterday, as part of Volunteers Week, Care Minister Helen Whately conducted a 'check in and chat' session with an individual self-isolating in Oxfordshire. Check in and chats are a friendly chat between volunteers and individuals who are shielding or self-isolating and provide short-term telephone support to individuals who are at risk of loneliness as a consequence of self-isolation.

Neil Churchill, Director of Patient Experience, Participation and Equalities at NHS England said:

Thanks to the kindness of the British public, our army of volunteers have helped thousands of people across the country in their greatest time of need.

These helpers continue to be on hand to support the most vulnerable people in our society and it is fantastic that this invaluable offer is now being extended to help our dedicated NHS staff who continue to work day and night to care for thousands of people during the pandemic.

Catherine Johnstone CBE, Chief Executive of Royal Voluntary Service said:

NHS volunteer responders stepped forward to support during the coronavirus pandemic and as we enter the next phase of our fight against the disease, I'm delighted that their help can now also be called upon by staff working in health and social care. The opportunity for frontline staff to access help with their shopping and prescription deliveries will free up more of their time to care.

Professor Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive of Care England said:

Care England welcomes this new scheme for volunteers to support social care staff. Our staff are our biggest resource and we know that the scheme will make a difference in reducing the potential for staff to come into contact with COVID-19.

The NHS volunteer responders programme was developed by NHS England in partnership with the Royal Voluntary Service and facilitated by the Good Sam app.

Volunteers carry out simple, one-off non-medical tasks to support people in England who need help with accessing essentials or who would benefit from a friendly chat to help prevent loneliness.

The programme is also providing support to NHS and local authorities with transport tasks such as delivering blood pressure monitors to patients or transporting small quantities of PPE to care homes.

NHS volunteer responders is a new scheme established as part of the COVID-19 response, involving volunteers who carry out simple, non-medical tasks to support people in England. The scheme helps people to stay safe and well at home.

The support of NHS volunteer responders is now available to anyone who:

- has been advised to shield by a health professional
- is vulnerable for another reason (for instance disability, pregnancy, over 70, have Parkinson's, epilepsy, or are vulnerable due to a mental health condition)
- is self-isolating because they have confirmed COVID-19 or suspected symptoms, or they have been in contact with someone who has
- is someone with caring responsibilities, if this support helps them to continue in their caring role

NHS volunteer responders have been recruited for 5 key roles:

- community response volunteer: this involves collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies for someone who is self-isolating or vulnerable, and delivering these supplies to their home
- community response volunteer plus: these volunteers can collect and deliver shopping, medication or other essential supplies for patients

with cognitive impairments and or significant vulnerabilities, and who are shielding

- check-in and chat volunteer: this provides short-term telephone support to individuals who would benefit from someone to talk to during their self-isolation
- patient transport volunteer: these volunteers providing transport by car to patients who are medically fit for discharge, as well as taking patients to their essential appointments
- NHS transport volunteer: this involves transporting equipment, supplies and/or medication between NHS services and sites; it may also involve assisting pharmacies with medication delivery

NHS volunteer responders are not intended to replace local groups helping their vulnerable neighbours but is an additional service provided by the NHS.

The NHS and Royal Voluntary Service continues to encourage those needing support to self-refer by calling 0808 196 3646.