

Wales Guidance: moving to Alert Level 1 from 7 June onwards

These guidelines are a major step change from previous guidelines. They are possible because:

- There are currently low levels of circulating virus in the community although the increasing rates of infection due to the Delta variant are causing some concern at the time of writing and ringers should bear this in mind when deciding whether to ring or not.
- Vaccination appears to have significant effectiveness against variants of Coronavirus currently circulating in the UK.
- Wales is moving to Alert Level 1 from Alert Level 2 and groups of up to 30 adults will be allowed to undertake regulated indoor activities from 7 June onwards.

These factors combine to mean that it is highly unlikely that people who are at risk of serious disease will have significant contact with an infectious person in a tower, if these guidelines are followed.

It is hoped that these will be a step on the way to even greater relaxation of restrictions in due course. However, it is probable, at some time in the future, that CCCBR guidelines will have to become more restrictive. This will be if and when virus transmission rises in the community, or new variants, not protected against by current vaccines, circulate in the community – because poorly ventilated ringing chambers can easily become pressure cookers for virus transmission.

We are moving swiftly with these relaxations, taking advantage of the current situation, to permit:

- Meaningful Sunday Service ringing
- Re-establishment of ringing communities
- Restoration of the physical fitness needed for ringing
- Opportunity to research the effectiveness of ventilation in different towers (to guide where adjustments need to be made for the long term sustainability of ringing)

Guidelines for Alert Level 1 from 7 June

Organised activities for groups of up to 30 people can take place indoors. This means that up to 30 people from different households can meet at one time. However, in practice this means that ringing sessions should be pre-arranged for set groups for the number of the bells in the tower, rather than drop-in. Consideration should be given to local circumstances e.g. proximity of ropes, tower ventilation, tower access and exits, when deciding how many ringers should be present. In the first instance, towers might decide that 6 ringers is a sensible number to start with. Before ringing commences, a risk assessment must be prepared and approved by the church authorities.

Hands – Face – Space rules apply. Hand sanitisation should take place before ringing and before changing ropes. Face coverings should be worn at all times inside. Social distancing in the tower should be 2 metres at all non-ringing times. But whilst ringing, “1 metre plus

mitigations” will be acceptable. The mitigations in place should be detailed in the risk assessment. Please note that the tower/ringing area will need of suitable size to be able to accommodate the ringers present at 2m social distancing at all non-ringing times. Hand hygiene remains important and ringers should continue to sanitise their hands on entry and exit to the tower and if they are ringing different bells during the ringing session.

Where they have access to them e.g. through a workplace or school/college/university, ringers are encouraged to perform **Lateral Flow Tests** twice weekly – preferably timing them for the days of any sustained ringing. Lateral flow tests work differently and have a different role to the more accurate PCR tests (which continue to be necessary for anyone with symptoms). However, they have been shown to be good at picking up highly infectious individuals. Anyone testing positive with a lateral flow test needs to isolate immediately, inform Test and Trace, and book a PCR test to confirm the infection. Further information on lateral flow tests in Wales is available [here](#).

Risk assessments should be undertaken or updated for each tower and should form part of the church risk assessment and be approved by the church authorities. The risk assessment should consider key elements such as:

- *Physical distancing between ringers*
- *Physical distancing between ringers and congregations*
- *The size and layout of the ringing chamber and tower entry/exit*
- *The ventilation available to prevent the accumulation of aerosol.*
- *The positioning of ringers to favour back to back or side to side and reduce face to face ringing.*
- *The risk assessment should refer to the guidance produced by the Central Council for Church Bellringers.*

Recheck before every session: “is it safe for me to ring?”

Ask oneself the following questions each time, before ringing:

1. Do I (or anyone in my household) have a temperature or fever?
2. Have I (or anyone in my household) lost the sense of taste or smell?
3. Do I (or anyone in my household) have a new continuous cough?
4. Have I (or anyone in my household) been in contact with anyone that is confirmed Covid-19 positive in the last 7 days.
5. Have I had a positive Lateral Flow Test in the past 7 days?

If the response to any of these is YES, then we should NOT ring until the possibility of Covid-19 infection has been excluded and any quarantine period has been completed.

Restrict ringing time to 45 minutes, whilst maintaining good tower ventilation. Whilst Wales is moving to Alert Level 1, longer periods of ringing should be restricted to planned episodes undertaken by low-risk individuals, whilst improving ventilation as much as possible.