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Local Government

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Dear all,

We want to start by saying thank you for all you have done throughout the pandemic.

Our faith communities are essential to the lives of millions across the country. Your continued resilience, innovation, compassion and support to people of all faiths and none is recognised across our different ministerial responsibilities, and something we are all grateful for.

We know that you are continuing to look for ways to support the country in the weeks and months ahead. Anything that you and your communities can do is greatly appreciated. Many people from a wide range of faith communities have already volunteered as NHS Responders, are assisting with the vaccine rollout and undertaking countless tasks locally to ensure people are cared for. In addition, communities are supporting the test and trace programme, which was successfully piloted using places of worship as testing sites, encouraging communities to access these services.

We want to make the process of engaging and supporting the ongoing COVID response effort as simple as possible. With that in mind, we have produced the attached “how to” Q&A that you can distribute through your communities to answer the question “how can I help”. This compliments the broader vaccines communications Q&A we have been sharing regularly with you.

It is not an exhaustive list of activities, but it does summarise the simplest ways community leaders and members can get involved and target support where it is most needed.

Finally, we want to thank you for your continued support to keep communities safe by adapting your faith practices and implementing COVID Secure measures in your Places of Worship. It should not be understated how critical it is for us all to continue to comply with the COVID guidance, including the [guidance for places of worship](#), to ensure all communities remain safe and we continue to reduce transmission of the virus while we roll out the vaccination programme across the country.

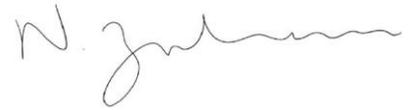
With many thanks again for your continued support



LORD GREENHALGH



LORD BETHEL



NADHIM ZAHAWI MP

How can I help my community with the Covid-19 response?

We know that Faith communities are continuing to look for ways to support the country in the weeks and months ahead. This It is not an exhaustive list of activities, but it does summarise the simplest ways community leaders and members can get involved and target support where it is most needed.

Community Leaders:

HOW CAN I keep my place of worship safe?

Under the national lockdown, places of worship remain open for communal worship. This is now one of the very few legal exemptions that allow larger numbers of people to gather. It is therefore crucial that places of worship and those attending comply with both law and the COVID-19 Secure guidance.

It is essential that places of worship comply with the [COVID-secure guidance](#) in order to keep their communities safe and reduce transmission of the virus. This includes adhering to social distancing, wearing face coverings unless exempt and adapting some faith practices where necessary.

HOW CAN I make my place of worship available as a vaccination centre?

Information about volunteering to provide space as a vaccination centre can be found in the Annex – Vaccination Location Requirements, Information for Venue Owners. This includes information about the necessary criteria and how to go about suggesting a vaccination location.

HOW CAN I encourage my community to get vaccinated?

A widespread vaccination programme is one of the key ways we hope to be able to start allowing greater social activity in the coming months, but it is only possible if everyone gets vaccinated. Many faith leaders have written urging people of faith to take the vaccine. You may wish to share these thoughts or distribute your own to encourage community members to take up the vaccine when it is offered to them.

If you are offered the vaccine, you could share your experience of getting vaccinated with your community to undermine some of the fearful and harmful false narratives circulating about the vaccine.

HOW CAN I answer questions community members have about the vaccine?

We know that there is a great deal of information out there about the vaccine, not all of it accurate or helpful.

For the most up to date, accurate information about the vaccine, go to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme>. This includes information about vaccine ingredients, groups who are eligible to receive the vaccine, and answers some of the key questions communities have about the safety of the vaccine.

We also want to encourage you to get in touch with DHExternalAffairs@dhsc.gov.uk and MHCLG officials with any further questions, so that we can continue to support you as much as possible.

Some helpful links for further information include:

Daily data summary -

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/?_ga=2.218839707.329771229.1610380715-938063789.1606390656

Government vaccination programme information -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme>

Vaccination deployment plan - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-covid-19-vaccines-delivery-plan>

Joint letter from four CMOs explaining the change in dosing intervals -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-the-profession-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-the-uk-covid-19-vaccination-programmes/letter-to-the-profession-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-regarding-the-uk-covid-19-vaccination-programmes>

HOW CAN I support the Government's Test and Trace Programme?

Make sure your communities are signed up to the [NHS COVID-19 app](#), and that your place of worship displays Test and Trace QR codes to facilitate contact tracing if there is a positive case of COVID.

You can use multiple QR codes for different sections of the building (e.g. prayer hall, library) and/or split larger rooms into smaller sections – this means that if there is a positive case in one of these areas, only those who sign into that area will be contacted.

Continue to explain the importance of self-isolating if a positive COVID test result is received and that this is a legally enforceable requirement with potential fines for non-compliance. If you have not done so already, consider setting up a volunteer service to provide support to those who are self-isolating and other vulnerable community members to prevent transmission of the virus.

HOW CAN I provide my place of worship to host a COVID testing unit?

If you are able to provide space to host a COVID testing unit, contact your local public health officials (such as the office of the Director of Public Health for your region). They will be able to progress your offer.

You will also need community members who are able to volunteer to administer COVID tests, who will be supported by the health officials.

Community Members:

HOW CAN I stay safe in my place of worship?

Under the national lockdown, places of worship remain open for communal worship. This is now one of the very few legal exemptions that allow larger numbers of people to gather. It is therefore crucial that places of worship and those attending comply with both law and the COVID-19 Secure guidance.

It is essential that you comply with the [COVID-secure guidance](#) in order to keep their communities safe and reduce transmission of the virus. This includes adhering to social distancing and not mixing with people outside of your household/support bubble, wearing face coverings unless exempt and maintaining good hand hygiene.

HOW CAN I volunteer to administer the vaccine?

[St John Ambulance \(SJA\)](#) is currently working through the charity's existing networks to sign up vaccination volunteers – this route is now open to members of the public who have not previously volunteered with SJA.

[NHS Volunteer Responder](#) is signing up its existing network and the public for steward volunteer roles. These roles will largely be supporting the vaccination centres which are rolling out over the coming weeks as supplies allow.

HOW CAN I support the vaccine rollout?

The key way you can support the vaccine rollout is to get vaccinated when you are offered a vaccine by your local NHS Trust, and to encourage friends and family members to get vaccinated when they are eligible.

Members of the public who are able to support their neighbours and the NHS through a number of roles – including food or medication deliveries, lifts to medical appointments or 'check-in and chat' phone calls – can do so by signing up to the [NHS Volunteer Responder programme](#).

HOW CAN I find out more about the vaccine?

We know that there is a great deal of information out there about the vaccine, not all of it accurate or helpful.

For the most up to date, accurate information about the vaccine, go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme>. This includes

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Green book - Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination information for public health professionals-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a>

HOW CAN I support the Government's Test and Trace Programme?

Make sure you are signed up to the NHS COVID-19 app, as this is the easiest way to register your details for contact tracing and get notified if you are required to self-isolate after being in proximity to a positive COVID case.

If you are asked by Test and Trace to self-isolate, make sure that you do so and have arrangements in place for food deliveries and other support if necessary.

HOW CAN I volunteer to support vulnerable people and those who need it during the pandemic?

One way to support your neighbours and the NHS is by signing up to and participating in the NHS Volunteer Responder programme, which offers volunteers a number of roles – including food or medication deliveries, lifts to medical appointments and 'check-in and chat' phone calls. NHS VR also offers more regular 'check-in and chat plus' phone calls for vulnerable people.

The NHS VR website also signposts volunteers who want to do more to support the COVID-19 response to relevant volunteering opportunities and organisations. Please see <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/other-ways-you-can-help> for more details.

You can also visit the [gov.uk page on volunteering](#) to see a list of websites which may be advertising opportunities in your area, for example through the 'Do-it', 'Volunteering Matters', the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action websites as well as NCVO's local volunteer centre directory.

Annex: Vaccination location requirements – Information for venue owners

The NHS is keen to expand the number and type of vaccination locations across the country to support delivery of the vaccination programme.

Places of worship, alongside other new sites, are being considered provided they can meet certain criteria.

NHSE/I undertakes an assessment of all potential sites which may be considered under the Vaccinations programme. This will include size, location, availability, suitability and will include an assessment around accessibility (aligned to the Equality Act 2010). Where there are running costs to be incurred, the site will also be subject to a value for money assessment. Sites will be secured under formal lease or licence.

Should venue owners have sites which they may wish to put forward for use by the Programme, submissions may be made to the National team and in conjunction with regional and local teams, an assessment of the offer will be made.

As a minimum, the venues should be:

- Accessible
- Available on exclusive use through the period of the Programme (currently assuming leases to September 2021)
- Able to provide at least c350sqm plus staff/public facilities (ideally, ground floor), with parking on site or close by.
- Able to provide separate entrance & exit points to assist with social distancing and support a natural flow of patients through the building to comply with social distancing guidance.
- Wifi enabled - the site will need appropriate wifi connectivity depending on the use of the venue
- Well ventilated
- Accessible via local transport or in the local community

The NHS can fully kit the sites in terms of clinical and non-clinical equipment.

All sites will be assessed on their ability to provide three key areas:

1. Arrival and check-in
2. Clinical assessment
3. Delivery of vaccination

There are minimum space requirements for each area. However, there is a degree of flexibility in the configuration. For example, repurposing large venues (sport stadiums, conference centres etc.) could potentially house the entire end to end user journey in a single room. Alternatively, smaller venues might find it better to carve out distinct areas in to separate rooms.

If you own a venue that meets the requirements above which you would like to put forward as a vaccination location, please email helen.wilkinson22@nhs.net with the subject line: **POW Vaccination site query**.