

Places of worship set to reopen for individual prayer shortly

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Individuals will be able to pray in places of worship next week – for the first time since the coronavirus lockdown in March.

The Government has confirmed that places of worship will be permitted to open for individual prayer in line with social distancing guidelines from Monday (15 June).

Individual prayer is defined as a single person or household entering a place of worship to pray on their own, but not as part of a group, led prayer or communal act. They must ensure they are socially distanced from other individuals or households throughout.

Services, evensong, informal prayer meetings, Mass, Jummah or Kirtan are not permitted at this stage, and neither are baptisms or weddings.

John Denley, Wolverhampton's Director of Public Health, said: "The limited re-opening of places of worship is very welcome news and we will be contacting faith leaders over the coming days to support them to prepare for the changes they can make from next week.

"This will incorporate things like ensuring shared spaces are thoroughly cleaned, hand sanitising is available when worshippers arrive and leave, and asking them to bring their own items such as a prayer mat or religious texts, instead of using communal ones."

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal, the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, added: "Faith leaders in Wolverhampton have worked extremely hard and have been instrumental in ensuring that lockdown measures are strictly adhered to in order to protect lives and we thank them for this.

"Their continued support with the difficult decisions which have had to be taken over recent months has meant that, collectively, we have been able to restrict the spread of coronavirus in Wolverhampton.

"Ultimately places of worship have discretion over when they consider it safe to reopen next week and we hope that as many of them as possible are able to do so.

"In the meantime it remains essential that we all continue to follow Government advice on preventing the spread of coronavirus through regular handwashing, social distancing and self-isolating where necessary."

Residents are reminded they must continue to follow social distancing guidelines to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Everyone must:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Work from home if you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance if you go out
- Wash your hands regularly
- Stay at home and self-isolate if you or anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid-19, including a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Anyone, irrespective of age, should be tested if they have symptoms of Covid-19. Testing will usually be offered at home or at a drive-through test centre. The test is most effective within one to three days of symptoms developing, and should be carried out in the first five days. For more information, and to apply for a test, please go to www.gov.uk/coronavirus. If you do not have access to the internet, please call 119. All appointments must be booked in advance.

Anyone in Wolverhampton who tests positive for Covid-19 will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and will need to isolate and share information about people that have been close contacts recently.

The latest information and guidance around coronavirus is available at www.gov.uk/coronavirus and on the council's own coronavirus pages at www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/coronavirus. There's lots of advice on how people can protect themselves and their families from coronavirus from the NHS at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

The council's Stay Safe, Be Kind campaign offers clear and simple advice about how people can help themselves, and how they can support others who may be particularly vulnerable at this time. For more information, please visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/stay-safe-be-kind.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1/ For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Paul Brown, Communications Manager, on 01902 555497 or email paul.brown@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

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