

MOSQUES UPDATE: UK GOVERNMENT RE-OPENING GUIDANCE

On 10 June, MCB issued detailed guidance for safe reopening of mosques for congregational prayers (see bit.ly/MosqueReopening)

On 12 June, the UK Government has published generic guidance for places of worship of all faiths in England. New things we have learnt which are relevant to mosques are:

1. The expected date that mosques will be permitted by law to open for congregational worship is still “no earlier than **4 July**, subject to further scientific advice.”

2. From **13 June**, mosques are only permitted by law to open for:

- a.** Essential maintenance and cleaning
- b.** Broadcast an act of worship e.g. over internet, radio or TV
- c.** Provide essential voluntary services (e.g. providing food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people)
- d.** Very small funerals with members of the deceased’s household or close family members only, with 2 metre social distancing in place (for more details, see bit.ly/CovidFunerals).
- e.** ‘Individual worship’ only (see 4g).

3. Currently, the following activities in mosques are still not permitted by law:

- a.** Group or communal-led prayer (e.g. five daily prayers/jamaats, Friday jumuah prayers).
- b.** Other group or communal-led religious services (other than small funerals, as per above) (e.g. Qur'an circles, study circles, weddings/nikah ceremonies).
- c.** Madrasas, meetings or other classes, which should remain online.

4. Some important points to note are:

- a. Face coverings/masks:** these will not be mandatory in mosques, but are optional to provide additional protection as long as used properly. However, face coverings are mandatory in hospitals and on public transport from 15 June. The British Islamic Medical Association recommends that covering the face in the mosque is best practice and has good evidence for reducing risk.
- b. Young people and children:** will not be banned from mosques, but parents/guardians must ensure they follow social distancing. MCB recommends parents/guardians are discouraged from bringing young people/children to the mosque in the initial stages of reopening.

c. Elderly/vulnerable: individuals aged 70 years or older, or vulnerable as defined by the UK Government, or with certain illnesses/risk factors, or are shielding, are strongly advised to stay at home as much as possible.

d. Symptoms: Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend the mosque and should self-isolate at home immediately with other members of their household.

e. Test & Trace: there is no new information on the Test & Trace programme for places of worship provided except signposting to NHS website.

f. Capacity: there will be no fixed upper limit on the number of attendees. Each mosque must determine their new maximum capacity (estimated 15–20% of normal capacity) and establish measures to control this as part of your risk assessment.

g. Individual worship: the MCB has previously said that whilst individual worship may be suitable for church buildings, it is evident that implementing this for most mosques is considerably challenging and impractical. We recommend that it is more useful for mosque leaders to invest their time and efforts into preparing for safely resuming congregational prayers from as early as 4 July, with timeframes in Scotland and Wales to be announced.

5. For the full UK Government guidance issued on 12 June, visit gov.uk.

6. The MCB reiterates that mosques should not rush to reopen, before they have carefully planned and put in places all measures to ensure the safety and well-being of their communities. For the latest MCB guidance on reopening mosques safely, visit:

bit.ly/MosqueReopening

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