

8 Steps guide

For mosques to safely
come out of lockdown

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As restrictions are removed due to increased vaccination rates, it is important that the Muslim community adapt the generic government guidance for our communities, our increased risk as predominantly ethnic minorities and lower rates of vaccination.

1

Review risk assessment

- * Speak to local public health
- * Local vaccination rates
- * bit.ly/mcb8stepsriskassessment

2

Volunteers

- * Keep Covid safety officer
- * Keep volunteers for crowded events (e.g. Friday prayers)

3

Entry Requirements

- * Avoid if Covid symptoms
- * No temperature checks
- * No age restrictions

4

Building adjustments

- * Open wudhu, toilets, racks
- * Own prayer mats optional
- * bit.ly/mcb8stepswudhura

5

Ventilation

- * Ensure good ventilation
- * Wall/ ceiling fans are ok
- * No AC if recirculating internal air

6

Face masks

- * Not mandatory, but we would highly encourage as mosques are indoor crowded locations.

7

No Social Distancing

- * Removed for congregational prayers. Consider encouraging during Nafl prayers.

8

Education & vaccination

- * Encourage congregation to consider vaccination
- * Educate - pandemic not over

Introduction

Why is this needed?

The two most dangerous phases during a flight are the first few minutes when you take off and the final few minutes when you land. This is because everything is changing quickly and a miscalculation can lead to disaster.

Similarly, during a pandemic the start and end of restrictions are full of potential danger. Just as we produced the internationally recognised 9 steps for operating a mosque under lockdown rules, we have put together this document detailing 8 steps on how to remove those restrictions safely while the pandemic is still present, but much more controlled due to the vaccination programme.

Our community is proportionally less vaccinated especially as we are predominantly young (up to half of British Muslims are under 24 years old), we are also predominantly from ethnic minorities which are at the highest risk and the Indian delta variant is increasing at a very fast rate across the country. These factors need to be considered especially as the lifting of restrictions does not remove our responsibility as Muslims to protect each other and others from harm.

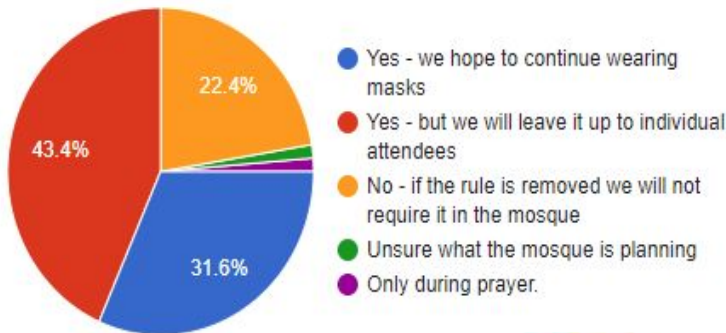
The aim of this document is to find a balance between maintaining safety and a measure of return to normal operation for our mosques and our performance of prayers. The UK is ahead of most countries in terms of our vaccination programme, therefore the lifting of these restrictions and our response to it is a test case that Muslims in other countries will be watching closely.

Note: this document applies only in England as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are emerging from restrictions at different times. Specific guides for those countries are being prepared.

Survey results

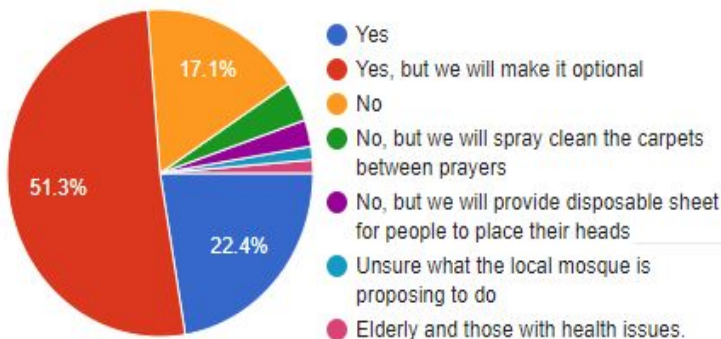
What do mosque leaders themselves think?

We undertook a national survey of mosque leaders to get their opinions on how to lift the restrictions. The results were as follows:



Should we continue wearing masks in mosques even if the government says we do not need to do so?

Are you planning to return to feet to feet prayer after the end of social distancing?

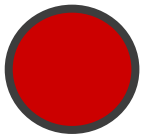


Will you ask attendees to bring their own prayer mats after end of restrictions?

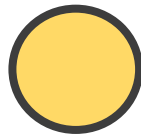


Step 1

Review risk assessment



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Each mosque to have undertaken risk assessment



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): Same



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Update risk assessment

OUR ADVICE

Updated risk assessment to reflect end of lockdown. To be done in conjunction with local public health officials.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

The rate of infections are going up and even though, alhumdulillah, many fewer are being hospitalised or dying - we should be careful as our community is higher risk and less vaccinated. Therefore a new risk assessment should be undertaken as it would be for any change in circumstances.

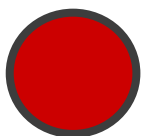
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Speak to local director of public health
- Find out vaccination rates in your area
- You can use this template for risk assessment bit.ly/mcb8stepsriskassessment
- Have plan in place for outbreak management

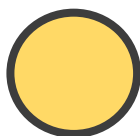


Step 2

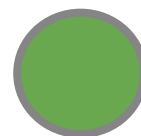
Volunteer management



PREVIOUS ADVICE:
Volunteers should be present at entrance and at each prayer



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): No advice



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Covid safety officer & volunteers for high traffic events only

OUR ADVICE

Keep at least one Covid safety officer & have volunteers for high traffic events such as Friday prayers.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

Having at least one person in charge of reviewing the situation and liaising with public health regarding local infection rates is important. For Friday prayers, having volunteers is useful for crowd management.

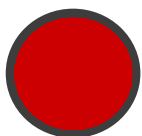
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Appoint 1 person as Covid safety officer
- Appoint a deputy for when they are away or busy
- Have regular team of volunteers for high traffic events
- Invest in training and appreciating the volunteers as they will be beneficial beyond covid management and for other events

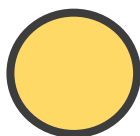


Step 3

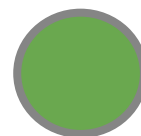
Entry Requirements



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Decline entry for > 60 / < 10 years old, is high risk and take temperature at entrance



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): No limits except advising those with symptoms or testing positive to self-isolate



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: No entry restrictions except those with symptoms of Covid

OUR ADVICE

No entry restrictions except for those with symptoms of Covid. No need for temperature checks.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

Temperature being raised is not a common feature of the new Indian variant. We do not want to restrict entry any more as all other venues are open and majority of those at risk are vaccinated or chosen not to be.

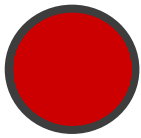
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Announce end of entry requirements to community
- Educate on new variant symptoms and to stay away if having them (see appendix)
- Consider impact of ending restrictions on those at high risk and how to make them feel more safe attending mosque
- Advise lateral flow tests as appropriate

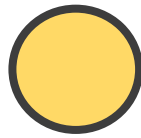


Step 4

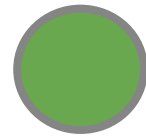
Building adjustments



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Wudhu areas, toilets, shoe racks all closed + bring your own prayer mat



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): No advice



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Most facilities to reopen with regular cleaning plan

OUR ADVICE

Reopen wudhu areas, toilets and shoe racks. Carry out regular cleaning. Bringing your own prayer mat optional.*

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

With sensible advice to people to avoid congregating and try use toilet or perform wudhu at home we should be able to reopen most areas of mosques. Regular cleaning should also increase safety by limiting outbreaks if unknowingly infected individuals attend prayers. Prayer mats are optional as requiring them may make feet to feet rows difficult to implement. Some may choose to cover the carpet area their head and hands touch.

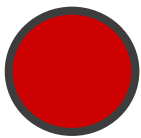
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Put signs up to remind people not to crowd near shoe racks, wudhu areas. You can use the following wudhu area risk assessment: bit.ly/mcb8stepswudhura
- Continue to ask people to do wudhu or use toilet at home.
- Decide on cleaning schedule that is sustainable and fairly regular.
- Some mosques may choose to provide disposable prayer mats, but please do consider recycling and the environment

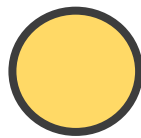


Step 5

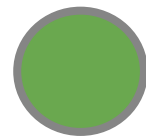
Ventilation



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Keep windows open and ceiling fans on



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): Encourage good ventilation



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Same

OUR ADVICE

Maintain good ventilation throughout mosque.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

There is good evidence that the virus is predominantly spread through the air so good ventilation is a useful tool to keep and continue to employ. Ceiling fans are recommended to help with ventilation, but floor fans may push the virus from an infected person to a non-infected person. Avoid AC recirculating the internal air.

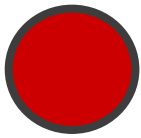
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep windows open especially during prayers
- Use wall or ceiling fans, but avoid floor fans
- AC that recirculate air should not be used, but if bringing in fresh air then useful.
- If the mosque has poor ventilation, consider how this can be improved as it is a useful long term investment for the safety of the congregation

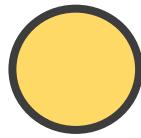


Step 6

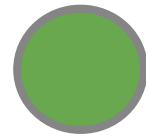
Face masks



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Masks to be worn universally unless medically exempt



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): Advice for personal responsibility to wear it indoors or in crowded locations.



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: We recommend masks strongly for Muslim communities.

OUR ADVICE

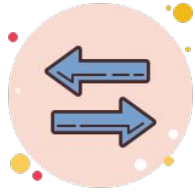
Masks are voluntary as per government advice, but we strongly recommend worshippers wear masks as mosques are indoor locations that can be crowded at prayer times.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

There is still risk from the Covid even to those who have both vaccinations as they do not provide 100% protection. As Muslim communities are predominantly from ethnic minorities and more likely to die from Covid, wearing masks is an unobtrusive way of protecting each other whilst in a crowded indoor mosque hall.

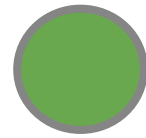
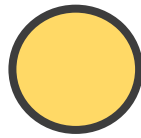
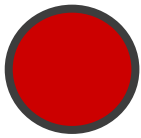
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advise the congregation on the importance and benefit of wearing masks.
- Trustees and imams can lead by example giving people confidence.
- There may be pressure to not wear masks now that it is voluntary. Please help combat this by putting signs up saying that the mosque welcomes those who wear masks. (See appendix)



Step 7

End of social distancing



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Social distancing of 1m or more required throughout

NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): No more social distancing needed

OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Return to praying in congregation without gaps

OUR ADVICE

As per government advice we can go back to praying next to each other without social distancing.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

Although there is much evidence for social distancing being beneficial, the risk balance is shifting with increased vaccinations alhamdulillah and we must take into account the importance of praying in congregation without gaps. We hope measures like wearing masks, increase ventilation and vaccination will mitigate for the lack of social distancing in a way that is more sustainable for the long term.

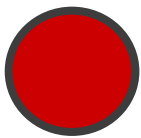
PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remove social distancing signs.
- Some may choose to still have a social distancing section, but the practicality of this will differ from mosque to mosque.
- An element of spacing can still be maintained during nafl prayers so please remind people to consider doing so.

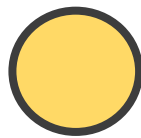


Step 8

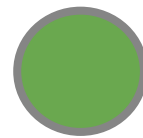
Education & vaccination



PREVIOUS ADVICE: Posters in mosques and reminders by management/ imams



NEW ADVICE (FROM GOVERNMENT): No advice



OUR ADVICE TO MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: Education on safety measures to continue please

OUR ADVICE

Continue to advise the congregation on safety measures proportional to infection rates in your area. Continue educating the congregation on vaccination via specialists.

REASONING FOR OUR ADVICE

The basis of the ending of restrictions is the increased levels of vaccinations, however Muslim communities and ethnic minorities have lower levels. The infection rates can increase dramatically quite quickly so it is important to monitor them and adjust accordingly. The restrictions are over, not the pandemic.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you want to invite experts to speak about the vaccination covid@britishima.org
- Please share safety messages from the MCB Covid Recovery Groups
- Remind the congregation that the restrictions are over, but the pandemic isn't.
- Review risk for your individual mosque using the risk chart in appendices.

Conclusion

Unity of purpose NOT uniformity of views

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **“Do not cause harm or return harm. Whoever harms others, Allah will harm him. Whoever is harsh with others, Allah will be harsh with him.”**
[Al sunan al Kubra 11070]

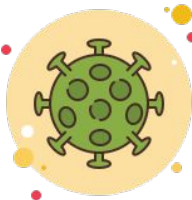
There will be those who disagree with some or all of these steps feeling them to be going too far and others feeling they don't go far enough. We hope that all will agree that there is a need to find a way to balance removing restrictions whilst keeping our communities safe and this was never going to be an easy task.

This document has been made with input from healthcare experts, islamic scholars, imams, Muslim community leaders and the wider Muslim community. We hope that Allah blesses the shura that has been undertaken and keeps our community safe regardless of which steps we choose to follow because in the end, He is the true protector of us all.

These steps can be extrapolated to funerals, weddings, madrassas and Eid prayers as well. However, they need to be reviewed with your local health care professionals.

May Allah help us emerge from this pandemic as a more united and changed ummah so that Allah will change our situation.

This guidance needs to be reviewed and implemented according to your own local context. To get involved with the Covid Recovery Groups (Medical, Mental Health, Disabilities, Mosques or Economic) please email: covid@mcb.org.uk



New Variant

Do not attend with these symptoms



Headache



Runny nose



Sore throat



Sneezing



Dry cough

Get Covid test done first & confirm negative before returning to mosque

(note: Lateral flow tests are only 50% accurate)



No Crowding

In this area please



**Please avoid crowding
& queue if necessary**



This Mosque

Welcomes
Wearers

Mask



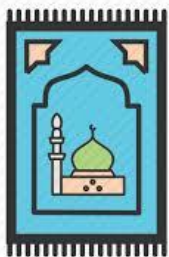
The Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not harm, do not return harm."

Wearing a mask is voluntary, but doing so helps protect others.



Prayer mat

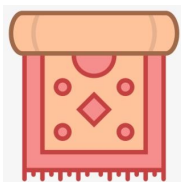
Options For Mosques



Bring your own prayer mat (optional)



Use a disposable prayer mat



Folded or Mini-prayer mat placed where hands & head placed for sijda