

**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN WOLVERHAMPTON
ADVISES NOT GATHERING IN PERSON FOR WORSHIP**

8th January 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I write further to discussions I have had with many of you this week. As you know, the National Lockdown, that came into force on Wednesday 6.1.21 at 00:01am, allows places of worship to continue to operate and for congregations to attend in person, physically, for worship provided that they must not mingle with anyone outside of their household or support bubble and must maintain strict social distancing at all times. The national guidance on the safe use of places of worship sets out how they should be operated safely.

I am keen to set out the current very real public health challenges that we face in our city as a result of Covid-19 so that you are fully aware of the facts before you make any decision on how your worship takes place.

1. The rate in Wolverhampton is increasing fast and there is currently no evidence of it slowing
2. The rate is currently at 947.4 per 100,000 as at 8 January 2020. Compared to a rate of 337 on 24 December 2020
3. Wolverhampton's positivity rate is at its highest point since the pandemic started – 22.4%, which is in line with many London boroughs
4. Over the last 2 weeks we have seen an extreme spike in Covid case numbers, far exceeding anything previously
5. Wolverhampton's Covid case rate is seeing a significant increase across all age ranges including children
6. Currently our profile is similar to that of London and the South East 2-3 weeks ago
7. Based on the current high positivity rate and increasing overall rate, it is highly likely the new more aggressive variant is within the City

The decision on how worship takes place is of course entirely one for you, however in view of the above current public health position my advice to you is that I would recommend moving to a remote worship model to help keep our city safe.

As always I, and the Council, are very keen to work with you and your congregations to ensure that we keep our City safe and ensure that you can continue to operate safely.

Kind regards,

John
John Denley
Director of Public Health
City of Wolverhampton Council