

Guidance for Ministry to the Sick and Housebound

When ministering to the sick and those unable to leave their home environment, extreme caution must be exercised to avoid any possibility of passing infection between the visitor and the person being visited.

General Advice for priests and other ministers



Where a housebound person (person who is too infirm to leave their home environment, or is 'shielding') is being visited, such meetings should take place at an arranged time, outside of their house where possible (e.g. in the garden or driveway of the house). Extraordinary ministers who are part of the housebound person's "bubble" may enter the house. If they are unable to leave the house follow the advice below in the section **"where people are unable to leave their house"**



Care should be taken to stay at least 2m away from anyone in the house at all times.



Do not give anything to the person you are visiting or accept anything from them, **except**: if Holy Communion is to be given; take care to follow the normal guidelines (re: hand-sanitising and face covering etc.) and to ensure that sacred vessels are thoroughly cleaned before and after use.

Where people are unable to leave their house:



Where a person is unable to leave their home due to illness, lay volunteers should not go into the home unless they are members of that person's support "bubble". Priests visiting these people should print out single-use copies of any materials (e.g. ritual texts) they need in advance and dispose of them after the visit.



Wear a face-covering and dispose of it (or quarantine it for 48 hours) when you leave. Avoid any contact with others in the House.



Bring hand sanitiser with you and sanitise your hands before entering and after leaving the house.



Wear gloves. Turn them inside-out and dispose of them when leaving.



If Sacramental oils are used; administer them with a cotton bud, which is to be burned after use.



When entering the house, keep interactions with others in the house to a minimum (keeping to the rule of six)

Ministry to those with COVID-19 Symptoms

Where a person is suffering from COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 and cannot leave their room, priests should not go in-person to make contact. These guidelines cover **only exceptional circumstances**:



Priests should only go into the house where the person is in **danger of death** and they are satisfied that adequate precautions can be taken to protect their own health.



Follow all of the guidelines (above) for visiting those unable to leave their home.



Leave all unnecessary personal items (wallet, phone, keys, books etc.) outside the house. Print out single-use copies of any necessary materials (e.g. ritual texts) in advance and dispose of them after the visit.



Do not make physical contact with the person you are visiting or with anyone else in the house.



Do not stay in the house any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Ministry to those in Hospitals

Where there is a need to visit a patient in hospital or in another healthcare facility (e.g. hospices or care homes), the following steps should be taken by Priests:



Find out what local safety measures are in place from the lead Chaplain.



Follow the guidelines set out by the institution you are visiting.

Reference:

These guidelines are a quick reference guide based on the document issued by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. The full text of those guidelines is available online [here](#). This has been formed based on Government guidelines for providing care to the clinically vulnerable ([here](#) and [here](#))