9 STEPS TO RE-OPENING MOSQUES SAFELY
2020

This guide is designed to help UK mosque leaders carefully plan and decide when and how to reopen, ahead of the expected easing of restrictions on places of worship for congregational prayer, whilst maintaining the safety and wellbeing of their communities.

It is a non-exhaustive list of considerations based on feedback received to date, and should be interpreted according to your local community needs and context.

Re-Opening Mosques Safely

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficient, the Most Merciful

When Muslims across the world closed their mosques in response to the unprecedented Coronavirus pandemic, we realised that this was one of the most difficult decisions we would have to take.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

"There is no wisdom equal to good planning."

Several months on with lockdown restrictions easing, the new challenge of how to re-open mosques safely is proving to be not any easier.

Alhumdulillah, there are literally dozens of different plans being drawn up across the world. We have attempted to bring together the best features of these plans in a simple 9-point plan. This also draws on feedback we have received from mosque leaders across the country through surveys, feedback webinars and one-to-one conversations during May and early June 2020, and is an updated version of the initial discussion guidelines issued in mid-May.

It is important to note that the points within this document are suggestion, and should be interpreted in the context of the local situation of each mosque and with reference to local scholars and medical professionals.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "There is no wisdom equal to good planning" (Mishkat). We pray that this planning combined with the very real unity that we have seen across the community will be rewarded by Allah by allowing us to emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

9 STEP PLAN FOR MOSQUE RE-OPENING

Step 1: Plan to Decide

Step 2: Plan the Space

Step 3: Plan the Equipment

Step 4: Plan the Staff and Volunteers

Step 5: Prepare the Community

Step 6: Plan the Pre-Prayer

Step 7: Plan the Prayer

Step 8: Plan the Post-Prayer

Step 9: Plan for Problems

STEP 1: PLAN HOW AND WHEN

Appoint COVID-19 Safety Officer & Team

Set up a team within the mosque with a clear leader as COVID safety officer.

Get Legal Advice

Have a designated legal advisor.

Get Medical Advice

Have a designated medical advisor.

Get Logistical Advice

Get in touch with your local umbrella body e.g. Council of Mosques / Muslim regional association. Also consider contacting your Community Engagement Officer at your Local Authority and ask for any support they are offering.

Get Insurance Advice

Get in touch with your insurance company regarding liabilities and coverage.

Have Mosque COVID Policies

Have a policy that outlines your approach to being COVID-19-secure.

Undertake Risk Assessment

Undertake a risk assessment (i.e. walk through mosque and work out all possible points things can go wrong and work out what you will do to stop that happening (see below).

Make Final Decision When To Open

Make a decision on when to open or not based on risk assessment and specialist advice and other considerations highlighted above - it is okay to say that you do not feel ready yet.

Decide How to Open

If choosing to open, make decisions on how you plan to open - i.e. number of prayers, Jummah or not, trial period, multiple congregations or not etc.

Decide What to Open

Janazahs, weddings, counselling, food bank etc. and which services will restart and how.

DOWNLOAD TEMPLATE RISK ASSESSMENT

DOWNLOAD KEY DECISION LIST

STEP 2: PLAN THE SPACE

Outdoor or Indoors

Consider if outdoor space is easily available for prayer instead, weather permitting e.g. car park or park. Ensure you liaise with your Local Authority first

Calculate Max Safe Capacity

Calculate the maximum safe capacity of the mosque with social distancing. Typically this is 15-20% of maximum capacity.

Mark Prayer Spaces

Mark out prayer spaces clearly using tape to make social distancing easy to follow.

Close Non-Essential Spaces

Close all non-essential spaces e.g. kitchen, meeting rooms etc. Consider removing Qur'ans or covering bookshelves.

Close Toilets / Wudhu Areas

Close all toilets and wudhu facilities (except one toilet for emergency use).

Ensure Good Ventilation

Keep windows open and ensure good ventilation of venue.

Plan Entrances and Exits

If possible, it is ideal to have separate entrances and exits in a one-way system to prevent bottlenecks.

Plan the Cleaning

Make sure there is a plan for cleaning between prayers including microphones / door handles / stair rails etc.

GUIDE TO MARKING PRAYER SPACES

This information is correct as of 09/06/2020. Advice is non-exhaustive and should be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

STEP 3: PLAN THE EQUIPMENT

1 - Building Reconfiguration

- Signage (e.g. one-way arrows, closed wudhu area / other rooms) in highly visible locations
- Marking tape (e.g. for marking physical distancing gaps on prayer hall carpet, entrances and exits)
- Barrier tape (e.g. for blocking off some access routes/rooms)
- Perspex screens (e.g. in reception/office workspace areas)
- Closed-lid pedal bins

2 - Public Health Information / New Rules

- Printed posters (e.g. for entrance/exist doors, noticeboards (inc. electronic display))
- Leaflet/flyer (e.g. to hand out, one for each worshippers)

3 - Fundraising

- Contactless payment card machine

4 - Disposables / PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

- Face masks/gloves/aprons for staff and volunteers
- Face masks for worshippers who arrive without their own (for a small donation/cover cost etc.)
- Black rubbish sacks
- Hand sanitiser/tissues at entrances/exits

5 - Cleaning Products

- 1. Vacuums/mops/dusters suitable for deep cleaning
- 2. Detergent/disinfectant products and sprays
- 3. Cloths/commercial blue roll/other consumables for surface wiping etc.

6 - Worshippers Bringing Own Equipment

- Face masks / face covering
- Prayer mat / musalla
- Qur'an / tasbih (or use a mobile phone App)
- Re-usable shoe bag (to avoid using shoe racks)

7 - Building Improvements to Consider in Medium to Long-Term Future

- Contactless sensor taps in toilets/wudhu
- Automatic entrance/exit doors
- Automatic fire door closers

8 - Online Service Delivery

- Clip-on/wireless microphones
- Camera/good quality mobile phone with tripod/stand
- Good quality Wi Fi router/boosters and laptop/computer connection
- Official 'Mosque' mobile phone (e.g. for managing announcement to/queries from community members, if wishing to avoid using personal phones)

DOWNLOAD TEMPLATE SIGNAGE

This information is correct as of 09/06/2020. Advice is non-exhaustive and should be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

STEP 4:
PLAN THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

COVID Safety Officer and Deputies

Allocate COVID safety officer and deputy on brothers' and sisters' side.

COVID Safety Officer Rota for Prayers

Allocate rota of COVID safety officer for each prayer.

Consider Security for Crowd Control

If feasible, allocate marshal or security at the door to prevent crowding.

Train Staff and Volunteers on COVID Screening

Give staff and volunteers training in identifying basic COVID symptoms at entrance.

Train Staff and Volunteers on Educating the Community

Give staff and volunteers training in how to educate the community on the changes.

Train Staff and Volunteers on PPE

Give staff and volunteers training in donning and doffing PPE where appropriate.

Train Staff and Volunteers on Queue Management

Give staff and volunteers training on managing queues at entrances and exits.

Train Staff and Volunteers on Venue Cleaning

Give staff and volunteers training in how to clean / disinfect venues.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST ON COVID SCREENING AT ENTRANCE

This information is correct as of 09/06/2020. Advice is non-exhaustive and should be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

STEP 5: PREPARE THE COMMUNITY

Educate on Criteria for Coming to the Mosque

Make it clear who should not be coming to the mosque and continuing to pray at home.

Educate on Bringing Own Prayer Mat

"Please bring your own prayer mats" messages. Also you should consider alternative options for those who do not bring their own.

Educate on Bringing Your Own Qur'an

Please bring your own Qur'an copy or use App.

Educate on Bringing Own Tasbeeh

Please bring your own Tasbeeh / Misbaha.

Educate on Face Covering

Ask people to use surgical mask or cover faces. There is evidence that this reduces viral transmission.

Educate on Performing Wudhu / Using Toilet at Home

Ask people to perform wudhu at home.
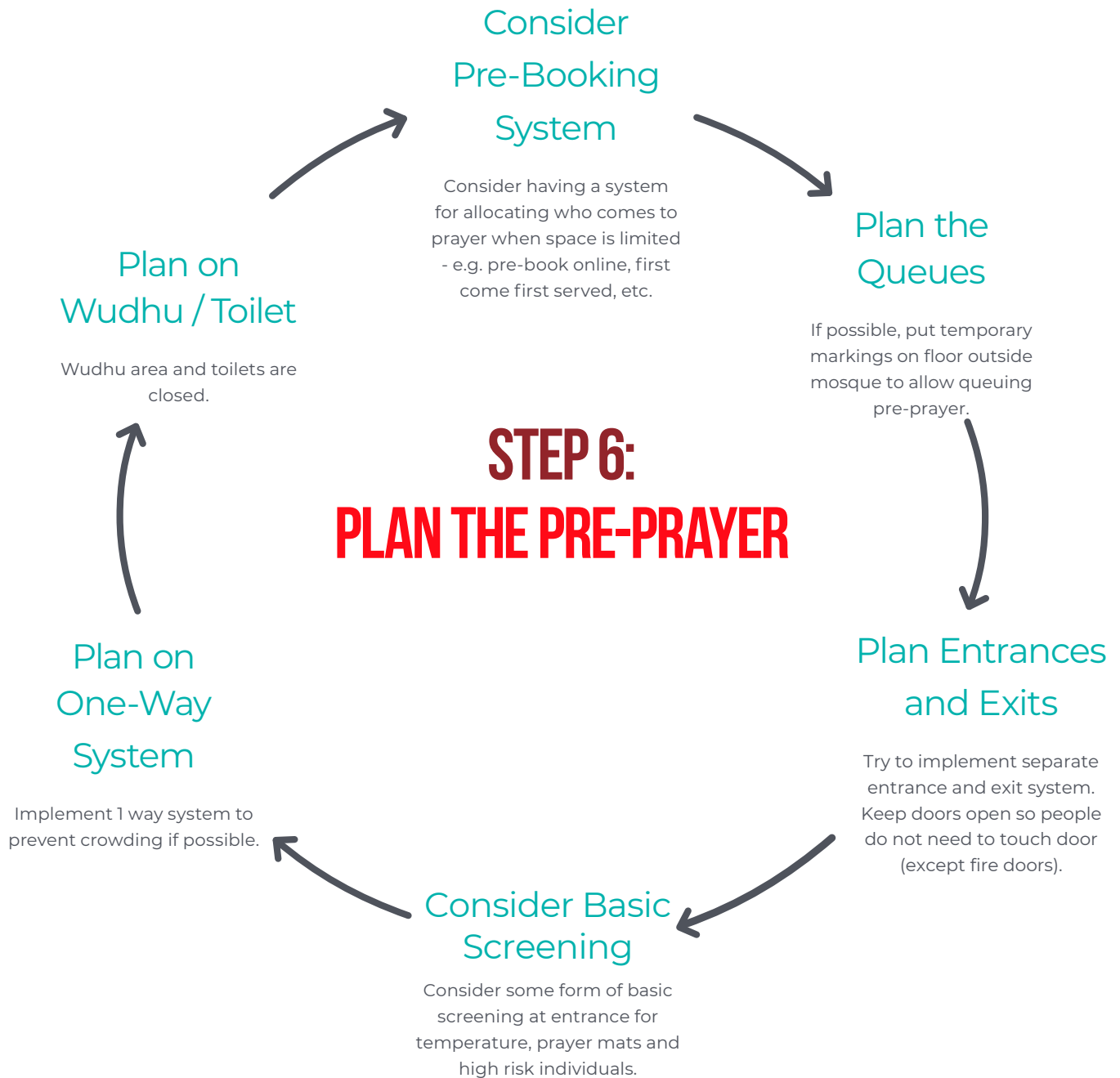
Educate the Community

Make sure you educate the community on these points using social media / printed posters / open meetings for community.

DECISION TOOL: WHO SHOULD COME TO THE MOSQUE

DOWNLOAD COMMUNICATION PLAN

This information is correct as of 09/06/2020. Advice is non-exhaustive and should be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

Consider Pre-Booking System

Consider having a system for allocating who comes to prayer when space is limited - e.g. pre-book online, first come first served, etc.

Plan the Queues

If possible, put temporary markings on floor outside mosque to allow queuing pre-prayer.

Plan on Wudhu / Toilet

Wudhu area and toilets are closed.

STEP 6:
PLAN THE PRE-PRAYER

Plan Entrances and Exits

Try to implement separate entrance and exit system. Keep doors open so people do not need to touch door (except fire doors).

Plan on One-Way System

Implement 1 way system to prevent crowding if possible.

Consider Basic Screening

Consider some form of basic screening at entrance for temperature, prayer mats and high risk individuals.

STAFF CHECKLIST ON COVID SCREENING AT ENTRANCE

STEP 7:
PLAN THE PRAYER

*Applicable when congregational prayers are allowed

6 ft / 2M

1 Limit Opening Times

Limit opening times for set number of minutes.

2 Remind About Sunnah at Home

Encourage sunnah / nafl prayers at home.

3 Each Person 2 Metres Apart on Marked Space

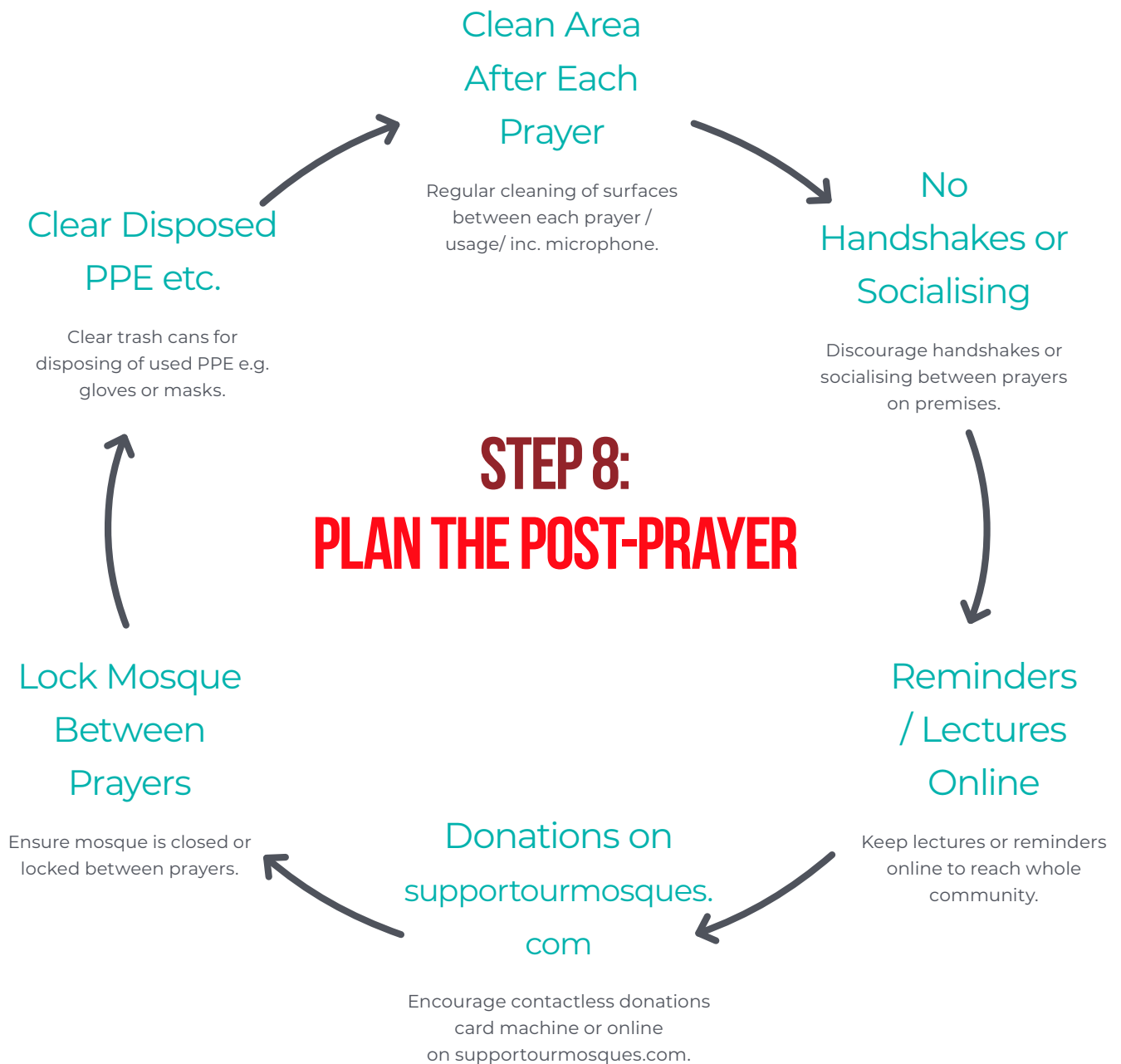Have 2 metre distance.

4 Empty Row Between Each Row

Leave empty row between rows with worshippers to allow for 2 metre spacing in all directions.

5 Khutba / Prayers to be Shorter

Keep khutba short. Also, when applicable, give reminder to reinforce these steps.

6 Multiple Congregations

If considering multiple congregations to fit in more people, allow 30 minutes to clean and clear between them.

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Clean Area After Each Prayer

Regular cleaning of surfaces between each prayer / usage/ inc. microphone.

No Handshakes or Socialising

Discourage handshakes or socialising between prayers on premises.

Clear Disposed PPE etc.

Clear trash cans for disposing of used PPE e.g. gloves or masks.

STEP 8:
PLAN THE POST-PRAYER

Reminders / Lectures Online

Keep lectures or reminders online to reach whole community.

Lock Mosque Between Prayers

Ensure mosque is closed or locked between prayers.

Donations on supportourmosques.com

Encourage contactless donations card machine or online on supportourmosques.com.

REGISTER YOUR MOSQUE AT SUPPORTOURMOSQUES.COM

STEP 9: PLAN FOR PROBLEMS

What if Someone is COVID Positive?

Plan for what happens if someone tests COVID +ve after coming to mosque (see below).

What if Somone Complains?

Plan for how to manage complaints from those who disagree with plans.

What About the Local Authorities?

Keep council and police informed of plans and opening times.

What About Contact Tracing?

Consider keeping details of those entering for contact tracing. Please make sure this is done in a GDPR or data governance compliant way.

How Do We Support Those Who Should Not Be Coming to the Mosque?

Advise how to support those who should not be coming to the mosque.

How Do We Continue Other Services?

Plan on how essential services of the mosque can continue in a safe manner e.g. weddings, food drives, janazahs.
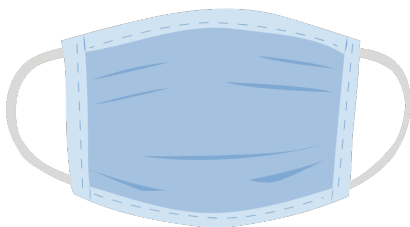
How Do We Open in a Fair Manner?

Make sure your reopening ensures fair access to both men and women, the disabled and other local community members.

Re-Assess and Review

Have set regular meetings to re-assess and review keeping the mosque open, especially in light of a possible second wave.

ACTION PLAN: IF A WORSHIPPER HAS COVID

This information is correct as of 09/06/2020. Advice is non-exhaustive and should be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

One of the main lessons from the pandemic is the importance of unity in combatting a threat that none of us could do on our own.

Muslim scholars, Imams, healthcare professionals, charities, lawyers, businesses, students, parents and umbrella bodies have come together like never before. We must ensure that we continue to work together so that the barakah of unity continues.

This guide has been collated by:

During early June 2020, the MCB held a number of feedback webinars, which supplemented an earlier online consultation in May 2020 which received responses from over 350 Muslim institutions nationwide.

Thank you also to representatives from over 30 regional and national Muslim associations for participating in the feedback webinars, sharing best practice, ideas and suggestions, including:

Lancashire Council of Mosques, Manchester Council of Mosques, Liverpool Region Mosque Network, Rochdale Council of Mosques, Council for Mosques (Bradford), Leeds Council of Mosques, Bolton Council of Mosques, Federation of Muslim Organisations (Leicestershire), Nottingham Council of Mosques, Joint Mosque Council Peterborough, Birmingham local mosques representatives, Luton Council of Mosques, Waltham Forest Council of Mosques, Newham Muslim Forum, Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques, Muslim Forum of Middlesex, Southwark Muslim Forum, Council of Bristol Mosques, Muslim Council of Scotland, Muslim Council of Wales, UK Islamic Mission, Muslim Association of Britain, Council of European Jamaats, Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Shia (Europe), Dawatul-Islam UK & Eire, Council of Sri Lankan Muslim Organisations UK, Muslim Welfare House, Federation of Student Islamic Societies, Council of Somali Organisations, Council of Nigerian Muslim Organisations, Muslim Community Association, and to all Muslim institution leaders and community members who joined the various feedback webinars and kindly contributed their time, suggestions and ideas to these guidelines.

For feedback, comments and suggestions, please email covid@mcb.org.uk

Appendix 1: Template Risk Assessment

		Concern	Potential Mitigations	Actions
Pre-opening	1	Lack of accountability and focus	Appoint a safety officer	Appoint Head of Operations
	2	Not considered all the risks	Carry out a risk Assessment	Prepare a risk assessment, meet with trustees for review, request insurance company to be part of risk assessment
	3	COVID-19 virus around the masjid	Deep clean prior to opening	Book carpet cleaner, sanitisation company, however if mosque has been empty over 72 hrs, safe to assume no COVID. Deep clean.
	4	Cleaning requirements	Review cleaning schedule for timings.	- Decide on high usage areas and frequency of cleans - cleaning schedule. - Stock up on cleaning material - sanitisers, detergents etc
	5	Social distancing	All to pray whilst maintaining social distancing	- Fiqh guidance to be produced and issued by dawah dept - Mark out 2m spaces - Prepare posters and signs
	6	People don't understand the 'new norm'	More guidance	- Guidance on social media - Posters
Restricting premises to essential usage only	7	Madrasah	To stay online until Sept.	Teachers, parents and children informed, separate risk assesment required
	8	High numbers in the mosque	No under 12's allowed (young children will not understand social distancing)	Incorporate into guidance for congregation and posters
	9	Reception area	Reduce reception hours to stop the lobby area filling up with people.	Advertise new hours, mark out 2m seating in lobby
	10	High traffic due to services	Limit services on-site. Keep others online.	- Services which can adhere to social distancing can use the site. Others which can stay online to remain online - legal surgery, job club, imam Q&A etc
	11	Spread of infection at Wudhu area	Close off wudhu area.	Seal area off, advise wudhu must be made prior to attending masjid. Only allow people to access by asking staff on an exceptional basis. Look up water flow regulations whilst wudhu areas are closed
	12	Car Park Congestion	Keep closed depending on numbers of attendees allowed.	Lock car park and put up posters/signs advising car park closed. Will help with 1 way flow system
	13	Elders, vulnerable & sick	Elders, vulnerable and sick advised to stay away. Keep them in a separate room if they turn up.	- Incorporate into guidance for congregation and on posters - Advise to stay home on social media. Too difficult to identify people with pre-exististing conditions.

This is an example of a high level risk assessment which has been modified from the one developed courtesy of Green Lane Masjid and Community Centre (GLMCC). A more thorough and robust risk assessment to identify touch points and other transmitting risks may be required. Not all actions will be applicable to all mosques.

Appendix 1: Template Risk Assessment (cont.)

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Daily Prayers	14	Congregation lingering in the mosque	Limited opening times	Signs outside mosque, on windows and on prayer timetable. Prayer stewards to advise people not distancing. Stewards to facilitate the crowd flow, allow space & time for shoes to be taken off/put on
	15	Entrance - Congestion on entrance	One way system of flow	Agree single entrance and exit points and sign post. Keep doors wedged open to reduce contact of touching doors.
	16	Spread of infection at shoe racks	Remove shoe racks and congregation to bring bags for shoes	Incorporate into guidance for congregation and posters. Provide shoe bags
	17	Prayer hall - spread of virus	Open windows	Appoint someone to open the windows daily. Introduce a daily cleaning routine.
	18	Prayer hall - spread of virus	Congregation to bring their own masalah, face masks and quran/phone app	• Inform congregation through guidance and posters • Remove Qur'ans from the mosque
	19	Operationally managing it safely	Can we manage it safely - operationally?	• First few days and trial runs with only staff and volunteers • Promote on social media
	20	Staff shortage to manage prayers	More staff to support prayers - e.g. fajr	Recruit volunteers?
	21	People don't understand new norm	More guidance	- Provide flyers - Imam to make announcement after salah - Staff/stewards to speak to those not adhering to social distancing
Staff	22	Staff risk of catching virus	Decide on whether we require PPE for staff	Either mosque purchases PPE for staff or staff purchase their own PPE
	23	Staff Toilets	Multiple users of bathrooms and kitchens	Staff to be allocated bathrooms to reduce over use of any 1 bathroom to reduce risk of infection. Mark out names on the bathrooms.
	24	Transferable risk items	Restrict items that can transfer risk	Minimise cash changing hands, sharing stationery, office numbers, meeting areas, 1 pen for congregation at reception, contactless donations only on site
	25	Cleaning	More regular cleaning of office spaces	Develop cleaning schedule for offices
	26	Sharing of microphones	Use separate microphones	Don't use a microphone, clean microphones or provide separate microphones if possible
Jumuah	27	High attendance	Investigate fiqh - is it fardh for everyone to attend in light of the circumstances?	Imams to disuss and prepare guidance - who should attend, is it fardh, should we remain closed for jumuah? What is required of the community at this time?
	28	High attendance	Consider smaller congregation numbers	• Several jamaat - check fiqh • Maximum numbers assessed and defined • Stagger the jumuahs over a long period
	29	Operationally managing it safely	Controlled trial run	Trial run of jumuah with only staff and volunteers Agreement on maximum numbers Clear restrictions on type of attendees
	30	Unable to distance in the mosque	Consider outdoor jumuah	Investigate open areas or parks

This is an example of a high level risk assessment which has been modified from the one developed courtesy of Green Lane Masjid and Community Centre (GLMCC). A more thorough and robust risk assessment to identify touch points and other transmitting risks may be required. Not all actions will be applicable to all mosques.

Appendix 2: Key Decisions for Re-Opening the Mosque

1. **What date to open from?**

2. **Opening for jumuah?**

3. **Opening for 5 daily prayers?**

4. **Use of car park or outdoor spaces?**

5. **Maximum capacity in mosque?**

6. **Multiple congregations?**

7. **How long before prayer will mosque open?**

8. **How long after prayer will the mosque close?**

9. **Which services will still be provided by the mosque?**

10. **Will we keep register of attendees?**

11. **How will we keep the mosque financially stable?**

12. **How will we communicate with our congregation?**

13. **What alternatives will we offer to those who cannot find space?**

14. **How will we handle complaints or disagreements?**

15. **How will we review our plans?**

16. **Who will be our COVID safety officer?**

17. **Who will be our deputy COVID safety officer?**

18. **What will the rota for each prayer for the COVID safety officer look like?**

19. **How will we provide staff with correct PPE?**

Appendix 3: Plan the Prayer Space

In some countries abroad, photos of worshippers praying without proper social distancing have emerged. The below graphics demonstrate what maintaining the required 2 metre distance between worshippers should and should not look like.
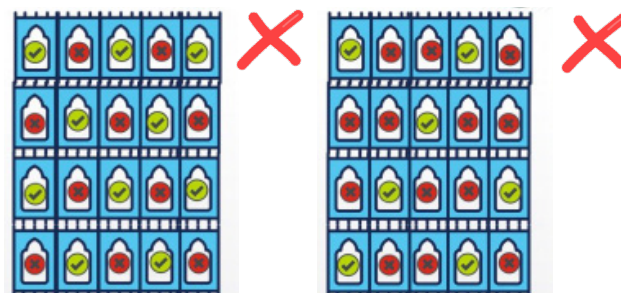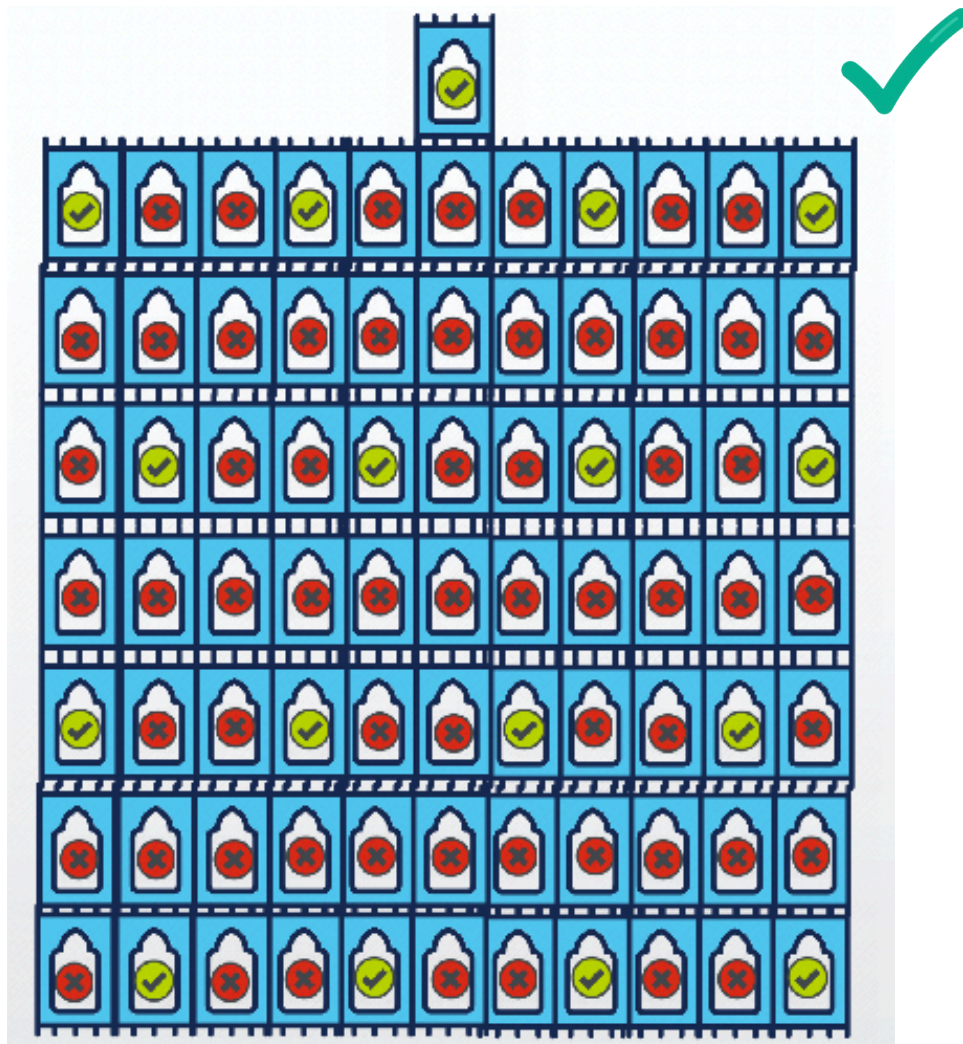
In order to maintain 2 metre social distancing in all directions, a layout like the one above is an option. This is general advice. It needs to be implemented according to local context and with input from local medical experts and scholars.

Appendix 4: Communication Plan

Community Education Plan

Pre-COVID lockdown, your community members will have never used your mosque in the way you will be asking them to use it now. Therefore, it is important you invest in an effective Communication Plan to:

- educate your community members before, during and after attending the mosque about the new rules they must follow

- follow-up this up with regular reminders

A suggested Mosque Re-Opening Communication Plan is provided below:

1 - Seek feedback early

Engage your community members early to inform them of your plans for how and when you are re-opening/ what new rules will be in place, and seek their feedback. For example:

- Online survey sent by email/social Media

- Personal 1-to-1 phone calls to regular worshippers

- Ask your volunteers to get feedback from at least 5 family/ friends each and share centrally

Once you've decided your new rules:

2 - Use BIMA poster

"Thinking about coming to the mosque...?" is a graphic produced by Muslim medical professionals in BIMA (British Islamic Medical Association)

It outlines to community members what types of people should remain praying at home, to educate community members about the risks

It is important to educate community members that they also have a responsibility for keeping themselves and other community members safe

3 - Explain new rules: Written/Graphics

Summarise your new rules in an A4 letter, email or social media message to community members

Use graphics such as the BIMA poster with your message

Ask your staff/volunteers to send to their personal contacts

Print and display your new rules on your noticeboards/entrances

Provide a printed flyer/leaflet with your new rules to each worshippers when they attend the mosque for the first time

4. Explain new rules: Verbal/Video

Record a short video by your Imam(s) or other mosque representative, explaining the new rules

Record an audio message for your mosque's ansaphone service, phone line on-hold message or local radio station/receiver

Ensure the Imam gives a short reminder of the new rules before/ after daily prayer services and/ or play a pre-recorded message on mosque's internal speaker system.

5. Signposting

1. Queries - provide the COVID safety officer's contact details so they can respond to any queries from community members about the new rules

2. Testing - have a list and contact details on how community members can access local COVID testing centres

3. Advice - similarly for welfare, financial, medical, mental health, bereavement, domestic abuse or other advice, you can signpost community members to local services where they can access help

Appendix 5: 5 Steps For Screening At Mosque Entrance

1 Ask whether the person is at high risk from COVID-19 or has someone at home who is

2 Check they are using a face mask or covering their face appropriately

3 Check Temperature is < 37.8c and has no overt symptoms of COVID-19*

4 Check that they have a prayer mat from home to pray on

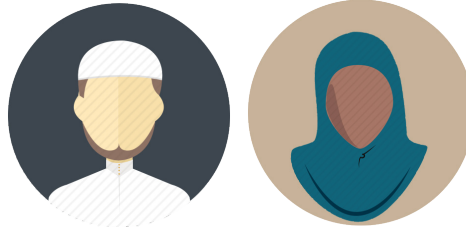**5** Make sure they have done wudhu at home & remind of how to exit

*The inclusion of checking temperature is not only due to medical reasons, but also to help with queue management and acting as a virtual barrier between the outside world and inside the mosque. This can be done by asking if someone has a high temperature or using a non-contact thermometer.

This is general advice based on public health and government guidance. It needs to be implemented according to local context with local scholars and medical input.

Appendix 6: Should I Pray in the Mosque?

		Home	Mosque
Are you a high risk person or living with anyone at higher risk?	70 years, eligible for the flu vaccine, frail or condition set as high risk by NHS (e.g. chronic respiratory, heart, kidney, neurological or liver diseases, diabetes, problem with immune system, immunosuppressant drugs, any cancer or solid organ transplant).	✔	✘
Do you have any COVID symptoms?	Temp > 37.8c, a dry cough, loss of smell or taste, cold or flu like symptoms.	✔	✘
Are you frontline staff in contact with patients?	Doctors, nurses & staff working in clinical settings. Evidence shows that many of them may have COVID-19 without realising it due to increased exposure.	✔	✘
Are you unable to socially distance?	Young children, for example under 10 years old, may struggle to maintain social distancing.	✔	✘
Do you not fall into any of the above categories?	Also, has the mosque undertaken a risk assessment, have plans in place and a COVID safety officer?	✔	✔

This is general advice based on public health and government guidance. It needs to be implemented according to local context with local scholars and medical input.

Appendix 7: What to do if an Attendee Develops COVID-19

Have Medical Contact
Each mosque should have a medical contact to help with this. If not available, please ask BIMA.

Refer to Test
Those who are required to do so.

Notify Imam
So that they can inform the committee, COVID safety officer or medical team

Self-isolate
The contacts will need to consider self-isolating.

Close Off
The area involved or the mosque itself.

COVID-19

Message to Contacts
Send WhatsApp message to all contacts who may be exposed.

Review Contacts
Any information collection must be GDPR compliant.

Decision to be Taken
By the medical team of the mosque on actions to take.

This is general advice based on public health and government guidance. It needs to be Implemented according to local context with local scholars and medical input.

mcb.org.uk/coronavirus   **covid@mcb.org.uk**