

12 October 2020

Remembering in Safety and Dignity: Remembrance Sunday Events 2020

I am writing to provide some advice and guidance on Remembrance Sunday events for November 2020, mindful that guidance is still awaited from national government which may supersede the contents of this letter.

The Norfolk Approach

The Norfolk approach, overseen by the Health Protection Board in partnership with all relevant agencies is in short:

1. To enable events which are lawfully and safely planned to proceed lawfully and safely, and **event organisers must ensure** they are COVID-19 secure
2. To ensure that events can remain dignified while being safe
3. To **require** everyone organising an event to undertake a suitable COVID risk assessment, to ensure that the event happens safely
4. To maintain social distancing and hygiene for all gatherings in accordance with current government guidance, to disrupt and prevent viral transmission
5. To work cooperatively with organisers, including (i) seeking to agree any necessary measures with organisers if possible, (ii) applying restrictions rather than prohibitions where practical, and (iii) using enforcement powers only where this is necessary.

Public Acts of Remembrance

In line with this, it is our current intention to support local areas to enable some form of COVID-19 secure public act of remembrance to take place, where it is safe to do so and where government regulations still permit it. The principles to enable this to take place are:

1. The Health Protection Board and agencies will continue to do all we can to reduce and suppress spread of the virus, so while Norfolk is not currently under either any local or national restrictions, other than the general national provisions, our working assumption is that public acts of remembrance compliant with the law and covid-secure principles can occur.
2. If we enter national or local restrictions, such acts may become unlawful and it would be wise for organisers to have a contingency plan.
3. We recognise that this year, the time of remembrance will be even more poignant for our communities, and we should seek to be clear on what can be done safely, to facilitate this.

The Law on events

The law in force at the time of writing states that you must not meet in a group of more than 6, indoors or outdoors, unless you have an exception. The police have powers to enforce these legal limits, including to issue fines (fixed penalty notices) of £200, doubling for further breaches up to a maximum of £6,400 and penalties on organisers up to £10,000.

Outdoor events that are organised by businesses, charitable organisations, and public bodies, are not restricted to any number of attendees provided

- (i) they have carried out a thorough risk assessment,
- (ii) they have taken all reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of viral transmission, considering that risk assessment, in line with Covid-19 secure guidance, and
- (iii) social distancing between different households or support bubbles, and between staff and performers, is maintained at all times. In particular, those operating venues or running events following COVID-19 secure guidelines should take additional steps to ensure the safety of the public and prevent gatherings of more than six people taking place within that event, ensuring there is no intermingling between groups.

Indoor events must comply with the regulations and the usual standards of risk assessment for their premises. For example, guidance for multi-purpose community venues can be found here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

Remembrance Sunday public acts of remembrance can be planned **PROVIDED THAT**

1. they are organised either by public bodies such as Town or Parish Councils or District or Borough Councils, Charities such as the Royal British Legion, or recognised places of worship.
2. They are properly risk assessed (see guiding principles attached)
3. In Norfolk that they are notified to the District or Borough Council Safety Advisory Group (SAG) who will then pass details to their local Environmental Health Department in line with usual event notification processes. This notification from the event organiser should include a covid-secure risk assessment.

The Police have power to enforce against events which do not meet these conditions and Local Authorities have powers to issue directions to events including prohibition, restriction or the imposition of specific steps.

The Royal British Legion is advising against Remembrance Parades and physical events taking place, with the safety of their older members and veterans being their priority; their statement can be found here: <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/media/6539910/rbl-200707-covid-19-membership-notice.pdf>

Events within the context of Public Worship

Events which take place within the context of public worship (i.e. a Remembrance event at the start of a public act of worship in a recognised place of worship or outdoors) or regular acts of worship which have a remembrance theme to them should follow the guidance on public worship.

Each faith community nationally has issued its own guidance and this guidance should also be referred to. The Church of England advises that Remembrance services both

within places of worship and outdoors are possible (for more information see <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches#na>) and they advise referring to the Government guidance around safe use of places of worship (found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>)

The steps to take for your event

You should continue as usual to provide your event notification form to your local council **with the addition of a covid risk assessment for the event.**

I hope that you find this guidance helpful and that you are able to hold remembrance services in Norfolk, but in the event that the legislation changes or the levels of infection become so high that events are unlikely to happen safely, further communications will be issued.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Smith', written in a cursive style.

Dr Louise Smith
Director of Public Health
Norfolk County Council