



Dear friend,



We wrote to you on the 6th January 2021 after the Government moved the whole of the UK into a new national lockdown, because of alarming rates and COVID-19 deaths.

We told you then that we had seen 21 Covid-19 deaths from June - October 2020, 25 in November and what we now know to be 53 more deaths in December. Each death is a terrible loss, affecting families of all communities across the Borough. I regret to tell you that in January so far, our communities have seen over 150 more deaths.

Earlier in January we said we would be neglecting residents' health needs, if we didn't ask you to close places of worship until the end of January 2021, when we could review the situation.

We were extremely grateful for the support shown by places of worship across the Borough in response to that request, and the show of unity we saw at the online conference Hounslow Friends of Faith organised to support it.

We can see that sacrifices being made are having some effect. Numbers are reducing across the Borough, but not quickly enough. As we write we still have the third highest rate of infection in London with significantly over 600 cases per 100,000.

So, having reviewed the situation in light of the appalling number of deaths and current infection levels, it is with regret that we have to ask you to maintain the current closures. To those places of worship who for a number of reasons didn't feel able to close their places of worship when we first asked, you need to close now too.

You will have heard the Prime Minister further delayed the reopening of schools today. He can be only hopeful that they might start to return in early March. Similarly, we need to ask you to remain closed until the end of February, when we will review the situation again.

As previously that means:

- Weddings – should not take place until at least the next review in February 2021
- Funerals – can take place, in accordance with Gov guidelines - with no deviation from those guidelines to keep us all and our NHS safe.
- Acts of worship – should remain ceased until the next review in February 2021.

As always, we are here to listen and help where we can. We want to hear from you so please do feel free to respond to this email or call **020 7084 9697**.

Cllr Steve Curran
Leader of Hounslow Council

Kelly O'Neill
Director of Public Health,
Hounslow Council