



Janet Finch-Saunders MS|AS

Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy



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Ref: JFS/TH/RE

Re: Masks in Faith Venues - Wales

Dear Minister,

I am writing further to my recent Written Questions (WQ82812 and WQ82813) on the issue of mask wearing requirements in churches, to formally call on the Welsh Government to review its stance on the position, ensuring that its actions are guided both by the science and common sense. Indeed, given your responsibility for community safety, several constituents have written to my office in order to make clear that the devolved body risks alienating our faith communities so long as they continue to operate on more stringent rules than those scheduled to be imposed on our hospitality and certain events firms.

Given that the events research programme found that nine entertainment events produced just 28 cases of COVID-19 out of 51,319 total spectators, and the Welsh Government having announced that people visiting our pubs and restaurants will not have to wear face masks from Saturday 7th August 2021, a continuation of the mask wearing rule in such venues appears untenable. As you will be aware, there is ample space in most places of worship to allow for sufficient social distancing and these venues are often well ventilated. With the above points in mind, what specific scientific assessments have been undertaken to necessitate the wearing of masks in our churches? Can you also confirm whether a change will be implemented to let individual churches determine the risk posed to their congregation, deciding this fact through the necessary risk assessment of the venue, so that the present blanket policy may be removed? In line with your answer to WQ82812, such a change would thus bring mask wearing in line with the present rules on congregations.

Moreover, in response to my question asking what formal discussions have taken place between the Welsh Government and the Church in Wales to review the restrictions on mask wearing, you outlined that meetings have been taken place with the Faith Forum and your Covid Faith Task and Finish Group. Can you kindly confirm when these conversations have taken place? If these meetings were before the change on hospitality rules were announced, can you explain whether a meeting of these groups will be forthcoming so that the present rules of faith venues may keep apace?

I look forward to receiving your reply so that I may reassure my constituents.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS