



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus

Guidance for managing the safe opening of places of worship and prayer during the coronavirus pandemic.

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Purpose

This guidance has been written specifically with places of worship and gatherings of faith and belief groups in mind in alert level 4. It is of a general nature and should be considered alongside other specific guidance to ensure that places of worship can offer COVID-19 secure environments. It aims to provide useful information, links and practical advice to support those responsible for opening places of worship (should they wish) for communal worship and religious ceremonies in accordance with **Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations 2020**, which have allowed places of worship to reopen, following the requirement for them to close during the firebreak which finished at the end of the day on 8 November 2020.

Should any doubt arise between provisions in this guidance, and the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers the statutory guidance shall prevail. Additionally, this guidance does not constitute legal advice, those responsible for places of worship should seek their own independent legal advice where necessary.

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Each individual place of worship should consider this guidance within the context of its own specific circumstances, including consideration of the size of the building, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated. This guidance does not impose a duty or requirement on places of worship to open. The persons responsible for the place of worship will have the freedom to decide when they consider it is safe to open. They should remain closed if they are not satisfied they are able to take **reasonable measures** to minimise the risk of exposure to, or spread of, coronavirus, as required under regulation 15.

Some places of worship may choose not to reopen until a later date, open at a slower pace and/or continue to use online technology to carry out faith and pastoral activities. In managing risk the first question should always be can I avoid the risky activity. Wherever practical and reasonable, alternatives to face to face meeting should be employed to reduce the risk of transmission. The safest option is to stay home and not socially mix with people who they do not live with. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.

The Welsh Government is grateful to the Wales Faith Communities Forum and the Re-opening Places of Worship Task and Finish group for their advice and support in preparing this guidance. The Welsh Government will continue to work with the Wales Faith Communities Forum and belief groups to develop and plan for a phased and safe reopening of places of worship and the organisation of outdoor gatherings. This guidance will be reviewed and amended as the situation and scientific advice around risks of transmission changes and further amendments to the Regulations made.

Introduction

Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 impose restrictions on gatherings and movement of people into and out of

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Wales, the Regulations set out restrictions which apply to four different Alert Levels, Alert Level 4 apply in the most serious situations. This has been done to control the spread of coronavirus in Wales and to help protect the public from the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Wales was placed in **alert level 4** from 6pm on 19 December, this was in the light of the health advice pointing to the very serious risks posed by the new variant of coronavirus. This new variant poses a much greater risk of transmission and it is particularly important that places of worship take all the steps they can to avoid any risks of people being exposed to the virus or spreading the virus. The safest option is to stay home and not socially mix at all and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.

Anyone responsible for a place of worship which opens will be subject to the duty to:

- take all reasonable **measures** to ensure 2 metres distance is kept between persons on, or waiting to enter, the premises (other than members of the same household or extended household, or persons providing care to a person within the household)
- take other reasonable measures **to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus** (such as measures which limit face to face interaction or maintain cleaning, handwashing and respiratory hygiene)
- provide relevant information for those entering or **working at the premises** on how to minimise that risk.

Definitions

The term “place of worship” is not defined in the Regulations. For the purposes of this guidance, the term includes a confined or enclosed space, within buildings or outdoors, which is used for religious or belief ceremonies, collective prayer and worship or similar gatherings, such as a church, gurdwara, mosque, temple, synagogue, prayer rooms, meeting houses, vestries and halls where worship may be carried out. This can include buildings or rooms which are not exclusively used as a place of worship. For example, community centres, halls

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or venues hired by a religious or belief body for the purpose.

In this guidance, the term a “religious or belief body” refers to an organised group of people who regularly meet for religious worship or to uphold and promote philosophical beliefs and meet regularly for the purpose.

For the purposes of this guidance, the term “worshippers” is used to describe individuals or members of individual households who engage in a permitted activity. The same definition also applies to participants who engage as part of their non-religious belief structure.

Worship includes gatherings for religious and belief ceremonies including funerals, the solemnisation of marriages, and the formation of civil partnerships, baptisms (see further advice below) and other ceremonies that celebrate rites of passage. These may be part of a communal services or an event in their own right.

Alert levels

In December 2020 the [Coronavirus control plan: alert levels in Wales](#) was published which sets out the restrictions that will be introduced in each of the four alert levels described in the document.

Places of worship are able to open for communal worship in all four alert levels. While we recognise the importance of communal worship, the advice, particularly in [alert level 4](#), is for people not to congregate whenever possible. The safest option is to stay home and not socially mix at all and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.

Alert level 4 is the highest and most severe alert level therefore those who are responsible for places of worship should consider whether there are alternative ways of holding worship services and providing support for each other whilst they are in this alert level. For example, faith leaders may choose to broadcast services without a congregation.

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Similarly for life event ceremonies consideration should be given to whether these events can be postponed until the alert level has been lowered or if the numbers that would normally attend can be reduced and if any other additional precautions can be taken to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. The number who can attend should be calculated according to the size of the building, allowing for 2m physical distancing between each person.

Marriages, civil partnerships, alternative wedding ceremonies and funerals are permitted. At all four alert levels the number who can attend continues to be guided by the size and layout of the building.

Other life events (baptism, bar mitzvah) are permitted. Again at all levels the number who can attend is guided by the size of the building.

To make sure that the numbers are adhered to attendance at all these events should be by invitation only.

In **alert level 4** supervised children's activities such as Sunday schools and madrassas are prohibited. However, childcare providers can continue to provide their usual services in a place of worship.

Permitted use: Communal worship and religious ceremonies including led prayers, devotions or meditations by a Minister of Religion or lay person

Places of worship may open for communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person.

Religious ceremonies can be held as part of communal worship or as an event in their own right, such as a funeral or wedding, such ceremonies that do not form part of communal worship should continue to be by invitation only as described in the guidance for **funerals** and **weddings**.

Worship and belief ceremonies cannot be held outdoors in alert level 4.

Places of worship and faith and belief communities should adapt their services and ceremonies, especially where they would otherwise have taken place over a number of hours or days, to ensure the safety of those present and minimise the spread of infection.

Once completed, participants should be told to leave the premises promptly and to maintain 2 metres distance from members of other households, to minimise the risk of contact and spread of infection. The rules on gathering allow attendance at a place of worship as a reasonable excuse, however that must not be for a social purpose and it is important to ensure that people do not congregate at the entrance of a place of worship before or after the service. If appropriate, you should reconfigure spaces to enable those in attendance to be seated rather than standing which reduces the risk of contact.

It is recommended that, where possible, places of worship continue to broadcast worship or other events to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are **self-isolating** or **vulnerable** to COVID-19.

Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments

We recognise the importance of music, singing and chanting in worship, religious and belief ceremonies. However, there are significant risks associated with playing wind instruments and with singing or chanting at louder volumes. The risks are associated with the increased spread of droplets or aerosol which rise alongside volume. For this reason activities such as congregational singing, chanting, or shouting should be specifically avoided indoors.

The new variant of the virus poses a much greater risk of transmission and it is particularly important that places of worship take all the steps they can to avoid any risk of people being exposed to the virus or spreading the virus. In alert level 4 the safest option is to stay home and not socially mix at with people they do not live with. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.

It is possible for an organised group or groups of musicians or singers to play a

part in worship, but a specific risk assessment and mitigating actions should be put in place to provide a COVID-19 safe environment. Singing or playing in groups should be limited in line with the capacity of the space given appropriate physical distancing requirements.

If singing or the playing of music is to happen it should be accompanied by clear messages that those not in an organised group of musicians or singers should not join in. Organised singing can be facilitated by establishing fixed groups of up to six people who can remain consistent and rehearse and perform together, whilst generally maintaining physical distancing amongst themselves. These groups should prepare for participation in worship by ensuring they understand the importance of keeping volumes low. Only where physical distancing and other mitigations allow, a fixed team of six may perform with other fixed teams to create a larger group but action should be taken to create barriers to transmission between the fixed teams. This approach recognises that for organised groups interaction will be necessary outside the context of the act of worship (for example in rehearsal) and consistent teams of six will allow the whole team to isolate themselves should a positive COVID-19 test necessitate this. In this way, the mitigations that will still be necessary to reduce the chance of transmission to a congregation, will be more effective. If the physical distancing and other mitigations cannot be achieved in this circumstance, a larger group of this kind cannot be formed. All performers should be instructed in the use of planned mitigating actions and reminded of the role of volume in increasing transmission risk both for themselves and in creating a risk that congregations will sing, shout or chant at volume alongside the performance.

The number of children aged under 11 who can gather outside the home is not limited in law. However, as young children can still transmit the virus, they should be encouraged to follow hand hygiene measures and keep close contact to a minimum wherever possible. Even with children it is safer to meet in smaller numbers, and to meet the same people regularly rather than a range of different people. Therefore the number of children under 11 in an organised groups should be kept as low as possible.

In some cases congregations might be small and could be accommodated as a single organised group. This is permissible but the same requirements for preparation to sing at low volumes and mitigating actions, including collective

exclusion from performing if a positive test is received in the group. Where, all the participants in worship are part of an organised singing group the number should not exceed six. It would not be appropriate for larger congregations to utilise the ability to add fixed groups together to circumvent the restrictions on gatherings. It is important that places of worship ensure that they maintain a barrier to transmission by making sure that singers are well prepared to sing safely. No gathering of these groups of six should exceed 15 indoors except where the performers are all professional. All rehearsal and performance should be based on a risk assessment. Outdoor gatherings of this kind are not permitted.

Specific risk assessments for organised groups who are singing or playing musical instruments should consider:

- Whether the activity is essential
- Physical distancing between individuals
- Physical distancing between fixed groups
- Physical distancing between performers and congregations
- The size and layout of the space
- The ventilation available to prevent the accumulation of aerosol.
- The use of screens or other barriers between individuals and fixed groups
- The positioning of singers and instrumentalists to favour back to back or side to side and reduce face to face performance.
- Reference should be made to the [guidance on performing arts](#), which deals with safe performance for singers, musicians and other performers.

Wind instruments should not be played indoors. The decision whether to play an organ that requires air to be pushed through the mechanism should be based on a specific risk assessment and adherence with hand hygiene and [cleaning guidance](#) and physical distancing, for example from the remainder of the congregation and avoiding use of a registrant. It is advised that you use alternative instruments such as a piano, electronic instruments or recordings.

This guidance relates to musicians playing as part of worship. Other circumstances, such as concerts given to the public should follow the [guidance made available to the performing arts sector](#).

Music should not be played at levels that make normal conversations difficult. This is particularly important before the start or at the end of any service, where people may need to ask members of staff or others helping at the place of worship questions. This is because raised voices or shouting significantly increase the risk of transmission through aerosol and droplets, and even more so with the increased risks of transmission through the new variant. Where a band or recorded music is playing it is advisable to stress to those in attendance the importance of avoiding singing and organisers should consider the impact of the volume or sustained length of music on the likelihood that people will converse with raised voices.

Congregational singing should not occur indoors. If appropriate worshippers can read hymns, songs, prayers or other texts in a lowered voice. Spoken responses should also be made quietly.

Ringling of bells, or similar, may take place. The risk assessment should consider the number of people attending to peal the bells; how they will enter and leave the building, room or bell tower; how they will maintain 2 metre distance between individual bell ringers and if this is not possible what other mitigations will be put in place; the protocols for hand hygiene while pealing the bells and how they will maintain physical distancing between other members of the congregation.

Ventilation

Ventilation is a key mitigation measure to control the far-field (>2m) transmission of SARSCoV-2 by aerosols between people who share the same indoor space. Ventilation is not likely to have significant impacts on close range transmission by droplets and aerosols (within 1-2m) or transmission via contact with surfaces (high confidence).

Higher viral load associated with people who have the new variant could have significant implications for transmission via the air, as previous scientific modelling suggests that viral load is a major determinant of airborne transmission risks. SAGE before the introduction of the new variant stated; for most workplaces and public environments adequate ventilation equates to a flow rate of 8-10 l/s/person based on design occupancy, although guidance for some

environments allows for lower flow rates of 5 l/s/person. Since the introduction of the new variant, SAGE has recommended where possible, increasing ventilation flow rates mentioned above by a factor of 1.7 (70%) to account for the increase in transmissibility.

For some existing and older buildings, ventilation systems may not have been designed to meet current standards and additional mitigations may be needed. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that ventilation is included as part of any workplace or public indoor environment COVID secure risk assessment, and the necessary mitigation measures are adopted.

In most buildings, maintaining comfortable temperatures and humidity above 40-60% relative humidity is likely to be beneficial to reducing the survivability of the virus. However, this is likely to be less important than the ventilation rate mentioned above (medium confidence).

Whilst physical distancing is an important part of preventing transmission of Coronavirus it is not enough alone to prevent all forms of airborne transmission. The virus is spread by aerosol which is the fine mist (as opposed to larger droplets) containing infectious particles that an infected person exhales. Without ventilation, this aerosol can concentrate in indoor areas. Two factors are key to this concentration, one is the rate at which aerosol is emitted and the other is time over which the activity takes place. Emissions are significantly affected by the volume at which an infected person might sing or speak. Evidence suggests that we emit 50 times more virus laden particles when we speak in a loud voice than when we don't speak at all.

These emissions will remain airborne in aerosol and concentrate over time. Face coverings will reduce but not eradicate the emission of infected aerosol so the longer the period spend together with an infected person in a poorly ventilated space the more the risk of transmission increases.

Planning for good ventilation should therefore form part of an effective risk assessment. Reducing the time over which an activity takes place as well as mechanical ventilation and utilising natural ventilation such as keeping doors and windows open are all mitigations to manage the risk posed by aerosol in places of worship. It is recognised that weather can make natural ventilation

uncomfortable but even in winter the need for ventilation remains an important strategy for reducing our risk of exposure to the virus. It will be important to maximise airflow through the use of vents, windows and doors whilst maintaining a comfortable indoor environment. Opening windows/doors for at least five minutes before worshippers arrive and when everyone has gone home, and again between services if there is more than one scheduled will allow air to circulate. If at all possible, you should open all windows/doors for a few minutes in the day to allow for cross ventilation – that is for stale air to flow out and fresh air to come in.

However, in managing the transmission of the virus during the pandemic it might be appropriate to ask worshippers to dress so that windows and doors can be kept open during the service to maximise the airflow. Where it is not possible to maximise natural ventilation places of worship should consider shortening activities.

Natural ventilation via windows, doors or vents should therefore be used as far as possible. Where centralised or mechanical ventilation is present, re-circulatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air, if this is not possible systems can be operated as normal, but should be supported by natural ventilation to avoid recirculating infected air. Where ventilation units have filters present ensure enhanced precautions are taken when changing filters.

Further guidance on risk assessing ventilation and the use of mechanical ventilation [can be found here](#). Other guidance can be [found here](#).

Food and drink

The distribution of food or drink (consumables) should be avoided except where they are integral to the worship or religious or belief ceremony.

If it is necessary to handle consumables during a ceremony then those giving and receiving the item should wash their hands before and after exchange and avoid contact. Where possible a distance of 2 metres should be maintained. Utensils must not be shared between people.

In circumstances when it is not possible to maintain a 2 metre distance the person distributing the consumable should release it into the hand only, in such a way as to avoid any contact between them and those receiving it. If accidental contact does occur, both people should cleanse their hands immediately.

Other mitigations should also be considered, for example, foodstuffs should be prewrapped, and a system should be in place to prevent individuals from coming into contact with consumables and any dishes and/ or cutlery other than their own (for example bowls or cups should not be shared). Consumables should only be shared within household groups. Wherever possible ceremonial consumables should not be consumed at the time but taken away for later.

Speaking, singing and chanting should not happen across uncovered consumables (other than consumables to be used by the individual alone). Instead consumables should be securely covered, and prior to the receptacle being opened, surfaces should be cleaned, hands must be washed or gloves worn.

Preparation of foodstuffs may take place on the premises, but where it does, [relevant guidance](#) and [social distancing measures](#) should be observed.

Handwashing and use of water

Practicing good hand hygiene is important. Wherever possible, everyone should wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water as they enter and leave the building and after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose

The water should not be shared and liquid soap should be used. Others present should move out of range of any potential splashing. Communal towels should not be used. If paper towels are used they should be in a dispenser as sharing a packet could spread infection. They should also be disposed of carefully.

If hand washing with soap and water is not practical, hand sanitisers should be used.

Any pre-requisite washing/ablution rituals should not be done at the place of

worship but carried out prior to arrival.

In rare circumstances where it is necessary, washing facilities within the place of worship should be used in line with **social distancing** guidelines and hand washing and respiratory hygiene measures applied.

People should not wash the body parts of others.

Where rituals or ceremonies require water to be applied to the body, small volumes can be splashed onto the body. Where practical others present should move out of range of any potential splashing.

Where an infant is involved a parent/guardian or other member of the infant's regular household should hold the infant. All individuals involved should thoroughly wash their hands before and after and ensure good hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

A baptistery used for full immersion baptisms should follow the same guidance as swimming pools. Welsh Government guidance can be found here (**sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return**) and guidance has also been prepared by **UK Active** and **Swim Wales**. Only one baptism should be allowed per session. To comply with physical distancing guidance, a full immersion baptism may only be undertaken by a member of the candidate's own household. Anyone else present should stay out of range of any potential splashing. Following the rules for physical distancing a full immersion baptism in a safe external space designated for swimming such as a lido or beach that is patrolled by lifeguards is allowed. Again the baptism may only be undertaken by a member of the candidate's own household.

Toilets

Toilets can be opened providing that **social distancing** and hand hygiene guidance is followed. Guidance: **providing safer toilets for public use**.

Broadcasting

Places of worship can continue to broadcast their services and religious ceremonies. Those who wish to do this should be helped to do so where reasonably practicable. Recordings may also be made with the consent of those involved.

If this requires additional people to set up and operate equipment the number should be kept to an absolute minimum and should be included in the calculation of how many can use the building at any one time. They should also observe the **social distancing**, hand hygiene, **cleaning** of equipment, singing and playing musical instruments advice.

Pastoral Care

Faith leaders should avoid entering another household to provide pastoral care unless reasonably necessary and should consider alternative ways of providing support such as over the telephone or virtual meetings, meeting someone outdoors or in a COVID-19 secure setting.

However if an individual is in need of pastoral support it is reasonable for a faith leader to meet with that individual indoors for **compassionate reason**. This may be because a person is struggling with restrictions on meeting others generally or they may be suffering from a physical or mental illness, have suffered a bereavement or you may be concerned about their general wellbeing or welfare.

Risk assessment

Many places of worship are also workplaces and should therefore consider the **Welsh Government's guidance for employers** as part of their decision to reopen their place of worship. To help decide which actions to take to ensure a safe opening, a COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed by each place of worship. Read the **risk assessment tool guidance**. Those responsible for

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places of worship that belong to a denomination or grouping at regional or national level should contact their representative body for further guidance.

This risk assessment should take place in addition to any risk or health and safety assessments already in place. The risk assessment should be done in consultation with unions or workers (including volunteers and contractors) as relevant. It may also be beneficial to include worshippers or other stakeholders in this process.

As the number and variety of activities within the place of worship increases, independent risk assessment should be prepared for the different uses. Careful consideration should be given to whether it is practical to allow different uses to happen concurrently and to ensure that the arrangements put in place for one use does not undermine the COVID-19 secure environment being created by the other arrangements.

You should consider using the [COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool](#) with all staff and volunteers to ensure that personal risk to these personnel is mitigated.

Preparing the building for opening

It is important that, prior to opening, all the usual checks are undertaken to make sure the building is safe. If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. [HSE guidance covering water management and legionella is available.](#)

Drinking Water Inspectorate's guidance on bringing buildings back into use after a period of disuse may be helpful. The guidance covers a range of quality issues that should be considered. The guidance is available on the [DWIs general web page.](#)

In order to ensure good practice is adhered to by those attending, including hand and respiratory hygiene, those managing the building may wish to consider introducing some or all of the following measures as appropriate:

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- taking the necessary actions to mitigate any risks identified in any risk assessment (this is something that should be done)
- informing your worshippers of the changes introduced and when the building will be available
- using a notification or organised process to manage attendance at the place of worship such as asking people to notify you of their intention to attend will assist with managing the flow of people in the building, with keeping records of who has attended and ensuring that the maximum capacity of the building is not breached
- working with other places of worship to stagger opening times to reduce the pressure on one building
- deciding whether you will need people to manage the entrances, exits and the main body of the building when it is open
- taking measures to avoid people congregating in confined spaces, such as introducing a one-way-system within the building identifying separate entry and exit points and systems to manage people who are waiting to enter the building such as a 2 metre physically distanced queuing system
- making sure that any changes take into account reasonable adjustments to accommodate those who need them, such as disabled worshippers
- ensuring that access to the building is not determined or prioritised by gender
- closing off unused areas, removing non-essential furniture, displays, play equipment, literature etc. from the areas that are open to worshippers
- avoiding sharing articles such as prayer mats, hymn books and religious texts and individuals should be encouraged to bring their own where relevant. These should be removed by the individual and not left in the place of worship. Wherever possible orders of service should be made available online or via QR codes
- using barriers or screens or other rooms to separate worshippers and different activities
- introduce signage and floor markings to guide worshippers, and where possible to introduce one way systems. **Display posters** to build awareness of social distancing and good hand hygiene
- places of worship who belong to a denomination or grouping at regional or national level should contact their representative body for further guidance on how to reopen safely.

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Communication

Those in charge of running a place of worship should ensure they engage with their worshippers and with the wider community to explain what activity is permitted and what is still prohibited. They should communicate the practises and procedures that have been put in place to manage worship, and should seek to maintain alternative ways to access worship or support so that those who should **be self-isolating** or are vulnerable can limit exposure to the virus.

Faith leaders should provide reassurance to any member who is worried about letting their faith community down by not returning. Alternatives to physical attendance should remain in place in addition to individual access. People should only attend if **they are well and have no symptoms**.

Using the building

- Individuals should be prevented from touching or kissing devotional and other objects that are handled communally. Barriers and/or clear signage should be put in place where necessary
- Where practical, non-fire doors should be kept open to prevent people from touching handles
- Hand rails should be regularly cleaned
- Individuals should avoid touching property belonging to others such as shoes, which, if removed, should be placed and collected by their owner while adhering to social distancing principles
- Books, reusable and communal resources e.g. prayer mats, service sheets, cups or plates should be removed from use
- No food or drink should be made available except if they are an essential part of the worship or ceremony
- Faith leaders should discourage cash giving and continue to use online giving and resources where possible minimising contact around transactions. Regular **cleaning (on GOV.UK)** and hand hygiene should be maintained, and gloves worn to handle cash offerings where giving in this way continues

Taking all reasonable measures to maintain 2 metre distance

Guidance on [social distancing can be found here](#). Additionally, separate guidance states that, whilst the rules on children under 11 having to maintain physical distancing has been relaxed, this age group must still observe the social restrictions on meeting others indoors who are not part of their household. Everyone should practise good hand and respiratory hygiene.

The number who can attend at one time will depend on the size and the layout of the building. The legal requirement is that all reasonable measures are taken to ensure a distance of 2 metres is kept between those attending. For the purposes of this guidance attendees should maintain 2 metre distance except where usual practices require less than 2 metres is maintained and practices cannot be reasonably adapted. This means a distance of 2 metres between members of different households, not necessarily between each individual person (as members of the same household can safely sit together, this would include a carer and the person assisted by the carer). In defining the number of people that can reasonably attend whilst still adhering to 2 metres distancing, the total floor space as well as likely pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (e.g. entrances, exits, corridors, aisles) to calculate capacity within each place of worship. All possible actions should be taken to avoid queues and to ensure that those waiting to enter or leave a place of worship do not inadvertently gather.

The more space that can be kept between those attending will help reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. The fewer people who attend will also make it easier to manage the flow of people especially when entering and leaving the building and in corridors.

If the number of people who wish to enter the building exceeds the number who can attend at one time (the capacity after taking into account the need to keep 2m distance) those responsible for the building should be prepared to turn people away and take measures to avoid people congregating outside the building.

The other elements of the [social distancing guidance](#) such as hand washing and respiratory hygiene practices should also be followed.

Cleaning

COVID-19 is mainly spread between people who are in close contact with one another and by droplets or aerosol produced when an infected person exhales, coughs or sneezes. It can also spread through contact with a surface or object that has the virus on it

Wear washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning of premises, use disposable cloths and ordinary household cleaning products. Wash your hands for 20 seconds after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning.

Dispose of any items used for cleaning carefully, they should be double-bagged, then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.

First clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water, then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as toilets, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles.

Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before opening and in-between use. A decision should be made locally on how frequently cleaning should take place based on an assessment of risk and use of the building.

al may have suspected coronavirus you should follow this [guidance about cleaning non-healthcare settings \(on GOV.UK\)](#).

Historic England has also produced [guidance on cleaning historic surfaces](#).

Who can attend

In alert level 4 the general guidance is for people to stay at home except for very

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limited purposes and not mix with people they do not live with. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.

Those experiencing coronavirus symptoms listed below should not attend a place of worship.

- new continuous cough
- high temperature
- loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia)

Any individuals who are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the household or extended household; or if they are a contact of a The Regulations require any person who has tested positive for coronavirus, or who has been notified by a contact tracer to self-isolate. Any person self-isolating must not attend a place of worship. Anyone who has symptoms but has not yet had a test, is awaiting a test result, is part of a household of someone with symptoms or who has had a positive test result should also self-isolate and not attend. Read the [guidance on self-isolation](#).

The advice for those who are extremely vulnerable ([formerly shielding](#)) continues to be to minimise their contact with others and to be particularly stringent in following social and physical distancing measures for their personal protection.

No one should feel obligated to return to a place of worship, even if they have a volunteering role that they would normally fulfil.

Those wishing to attend a place of worship should consider how far they need to travel and how they will travel to and from the building safely. Members of the same household or extended household may travel together. Read the Welsh Government's [advice on travelling safely](#).

If anyone, including religious leaders and volunteers, becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship, they should be sent home and advised to follow the [self-isolation guidance](#) and to [apply for a coronavirus test](#).

If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 Wales (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves. If they develop symptoms they should follow the [self-isolation guidance](#) and [apply for a coronavirus test](#).

The areas used by these individuals should be thoroughly cleaned according to the guidance referenced above.

Test, Trace, Protect

The [Welsh Government Test, Trace, Protect](#) strategy sets out the approach to tackling coronavirus, testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 requires [reasonable measures](#) to be taken to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus on premises open to the public and on any premises where work takes place, as well as to minimise the spread of coronavirus by those who have been on the premises.

One reasonable measure is:

Collecting contact information from each person at the premises or, in relation to persons from the same household, from one of them, and retaining it for 21 days for the purpose of providing it to any of the following, upon their request

- the Welsh Ministers
- a contact tracer

and taking reasonable measures to ensure that such contact information is correct. This should be managed in a way so as to avoid the possibility of people being in close proximity when they enter the place of worship and waiting to fill in forms. Pre-booking is recommended in order to avoid risks and to ensure that numbers can be managed and the maximum capacity of the building is not breached.

'Contact information', in relation to a person at the premises, means the person's name and information sufficient to enable the person to be contacted, to inform them that they may have been exposed to coronavirus at the premises (including a telephone number and the date and time at which the person was at the premises).

Whether this measure is one that is “reasonable” and is, therefore, one that **must** be taken depends on the extent to which people who don't know each other may interact on the premises and whether there is a risk of close interaction. More guidance [is provided here](#).

By adhering to these Regulations by undertaking **reasonable measures** to maintain records of staff, customers and visitors, and sharing these with the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service when requested, you will help to identify people who may have been exposed to the virus and are asymptomatic (i.e. are not yet displaying **symptoms**). Containing outbreaks is crucial to reducing the spread of coronavirus, protecting the NHS in Wales and saving lives. This will support the country in returning to, and maintaining, a more normal way of life.

Face coverings

Everyone over the age of 11 attending a place of worship is required to wear a face covering, as it is an indoor public place. There are some limited exceptions to this requirement. The wearing of visors does not meet this requirement. The Regulations require the face covering to cover the nose and mouth. Those leading worship need not wear a face covering if it impractical to do so. However they should consider a range of other mitigations to ensure they can provide a barrier to transmission such as distancing, screens, visors and additional hygiene measures. Information about the use of face coverings can be found

here: [Face coverings - guidance for the public](#)

Those responsible for places of worship should also refer to the [guidance on face coverings for employers and managers of premises](#), which gives more information on places that allow access to the public.

Provision of other services

There is still a prohibition on people from different households gathering indoors (that is being in the same place to do something together) without a reasonable excuse. Attending a place of worship is one such reason. The Welsh Government's '[frequently asked questions](#)' about the Regulations is regularly updated to provide advice about what people and businesses can and cannot do during the outbreak.

Supervised children's activities such as Sunday schools and madrassas are prohibited in alert level 4.

Read further [guidance on providing childcare](#).

In alert level 4 places of worship may open to provide essential voluntary services and public services at the request of the local authority or the Welsh Ministers. [Further guidance is available here](#).

As the range and frequency of activities increase, places of worship should carefully consider whether it is practical to allow different uses to happen concurrently. Independent risk assessments should be carried out for the different uses and appropriate arrangements should be put in place to ensure the arrangements for the one use does not undermine the COVID-19 secure environment being created for the other. This could include the requirement to close parts or all of the building during individual uses including entrances, exits and toilets.

About this document

This document is a copy of the web page [Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus](#) downloaded.

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