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- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>)

Guidance

COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship

Updated 24 May 2021

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This publication is available at <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-from-2-december>

This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

This guidance is national guidance that applies across England.

This guidance is only applicable in England. For guidance in Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>), Wales (<https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus>) or Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-and-what-they-mean-you>), please refer to guidance from the relevant national governments.

We have also published guidance on Celebrating religious festivals during coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/celebrating-religious-festivals-during-coronavirus-covid-19>).

Introduction

The UK is experiencing a public health emergency as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The transmission of COVID-19 occurs mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated surfaces.

Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities and generations together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus.

The government continues to work with its Places of Worship Taskforce and faith leaders to review and amend this guidance, as necessary, in line with the changing situation and to enable the safe opening of places of worship for as broad a range of activities as possible when it is safe to do so.

This guidance applies in England alongside the relevant associated changes to the law. It applies to places of worship only. It does not apply to private dwellings.

COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021

The government has published the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>) setting out how restrictions will be eased over time, including any restrictions on places of worship and faith activities. The decision to proceed with each step in the roadmap will be guided by data not dates and the four tests set out in the roadmap. A week's notice will be provided before any step is taken.

This guidance has been published alongside industry or venue specific guidance, therefore you should refer to the guidance below for the specific restrictions that apply at each Step, and to ensure public safety. These include:

- Guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>)
- Guidance for wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations>)
- Guidance on performing arts (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>)
- Guidance for working safely in the visitor economy (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy>)
- Current stay alert and social distancing guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>)

A new COVID-19 variant is spreading in some parts of England. There may be additional advice for your area. Find out what you need to do (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>).

Step 3

For places of worship, the key changes are that:

- Most other significant life events can resume, limited to no more than 30 people. This will include events such as bar/bat mitzvahs and private baptisms, and naming ceremonies. Limits at weddings, wedding receptions, wakes and other commemorative events will be increased to 30 people.
- Funerals will have no legal cap on the number of people who can attend. The number of attendees will be determined by how many people the venue can safely accommodate with social distancing measures in place.
- Outdoors most legal restrictions on meeting others will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal unless otherwise exempt.
- Support groups and parent and child group gathering limits will increase to 30 people (not including under 5s).

COVID Secure rules, including social distancing requirements, continue to apply in the workplace, and in businesses and public venues.

At Step 4, which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the government aims to remove all limits on life cycle events and other gatherings. This will be subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme, which will include a series of pilots using enhanced testing approaches and other measures to run events of larger sizes. The pilots have been selected to

examine a range of settings, venue types, and activity types (e.g. seated or not, indoor/outdoor etc) so that the data is generalisable and findings can inform thinking on the reopening of similar settings across multiple sectors.

This guidance will be updated in line with the changing situation ahead of that Step.

Definitions

“Place of worship”

A place of worship refers to a building used for regular religious ceremonies, communal worship or similar gatherings by religious organisations. It includes the use of surrounding grounds, for example, adjoining car parks, courtyards or gardens for which the venue managers are also responsible.

The guidance also covers premises when being used for religious gatherings, even when their primary purpose is not for religious gatherings, such as a community centre. These premises will only be able to be used where they are permitted to be open and additional guidance may be applicable.

This guidance does not cover educational establishments, public parks, private homes, cultural sites or other open spaces, such as woodlands which may be used for religious purposes. If people do want to engage in worship in these spaces, then the guidance relevant to that place should be adhered to.

“Significant life events”

A ceremony, rite or ritual to mark or celebrate a significant milestone in a person’s life, according to their religion or belief, such as events to celebrate a person’s birth (other than a birthday) or coming of age. Examples would include a christening, or a naming ceremony. They do not include ‘celebrations’ or parties to mark these events.

“Worshippers” or “Visitors”

Those entering the place of worship to engage in worship or other activity for which the place of worship may be used.

“Venue managers”

The person or persons responsible for the management of an individual place of worship, including assessment of compliance with the following guidelines and relevant law. This may be a religious leader or volunteer.

“Household” and “Support bubble”

A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation.

A support bubble is a support network which links two households. You have to meet certain eligibility rules to form a support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>).

The 2 households that form a support bubble count as one household for the purposes of this guidance.

“Must”

Where the guidance states that an activity must or must not take place this is because it is a requirement under the law.

“Should”

Where the guidance that an activity should or should not take place this is not a legal requirement under law. However, it is strongly advised that consideration is given to following the advice being given to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Capacity limits for different activities at Step 3

Places of worship in England may open for the following purposes:

Private prayer

From Step 3, in line with indoor social contact limits individuals, groups of 6, or larger groups where everyone present is from the same two households may attend. A ‘household’ can include a linked support bubble, where eligible.

The number of individuals or groups permitted in a place of worship at any one time will be dependent on the size of the building and ability to socially distance therein.

Communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person.

Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk. From Step 3, in line with indoor social contact limits, individuals may attend communal worship in groups of 6, or larger groups where everyone present is from the same 2 households.

Funerals

From Step 3, there will be no set numerical limit on the number of people who can attend a funeral. Instead, the number of attendees at a funeral will be determined by how many people the venue can safely accommodate with social distancing measures in place.

Please refer to [COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>).

Commemorative events to celebrate the life of a person who has died

These are events which commemorate or mark the deceased’s passing. Examples include the scattering of ashes and stone setting ceremonies. Such events must have no more than 30 people in attendance. Anyone working is not included as part of the 30 person limit. These limits on

attendance do not typically apply to communal worship services, where prayers for the deceased may be said.

Please refer to COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>).

Significant life events, outside of marriage ceremonies and funerals

Where such events are an element of communal worship, they are subject to the requirements for communal worship set out above. When not taking place as part of regular communal worship, from Step 3 standalone life events can take place with up to 30 people. Anyone working is not included as part of the 30 person limit.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies; wedding receptions and civil partnership ceremonies

Weddings, civil partnerships, wedding receptions and civil partnership ceremonies must have no more than 30 people present. Anyone working is not included. Please refer to the guidance for weddings and civil partnerships (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations>).

Broadcasting or filming an act of worship

Broadcasting or filming an act of worship should only involve those people essential for the content of the service, and for technical support to enable people to watch and worship online or via a television or radio.

If musicians or singers usually form part of the act of worship, they may participate.

Essential voluntary and public services

These will include the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions, or support in an emergency. See COVID-19 guidance for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-organisations>).

Support groups

Support groups can take place in gatherings of up to 30 (subject to capacity) in a COVID-19 secure community facility if organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to its members or those who attend its meetings.

Examples include support to:

- victims of crime (including domestic abuse)
- those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour

- those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness or terminal condition or who are vulnerable (including those with a mental health condition)
- those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- those who have suffered bereavement
- vulnerable young people, including to enable them to meet youth workers

The limit of 30 does not include children under 5 who are accompanying a parent or guardian. Where a person has a clear and formal role (paid or voluntary) to run the group or help it operate, rather than only attending as a member of the group to obtain support, they do not have to be counted as part of the gatherings limit.

The police will have the powers to enforce these restrictions, including to issue fines (fixed penalty notices) of £100 for a first offence, doubling for further breaches up to a maximum of £6,400.

More information about how to run or attend a support group safely is available in the guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities (<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>).

Adapting practices to reduce the spread of infection

Religious leaders should adopt the guidance below and seek to include additional changes that could be made to rituals that usually involve close contact and the use of shared items.

If appropriate, you should reconfigure spaces to enable worshippers to be seated rather than standing which reduces the risk of contact. Ceremonies and services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time. Once completed, participants should be encouraged to move on promptly.

Religious practices should be carried out in such a way which ensures social distancing can be maintained between different households. There should only be a closer distance when essential to enable a faith practice to be carried out (for example contact with the faith leader). Time spent in contact should be kept to a minimum.

Where possible, places of worship should continue to stream worship or other events to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are self-isolating or particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable

If people are clinically extremely vulnerable, they will have received a letter (a formal NHS notification) to inform them of this and they may have been advised to shield in the past.

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are able to attend places of worship, but are advised to consider taking extra precautions to reduce risk of exposure to the virus and to follow the guidance for them.

Those who are managing places of worship should:

- Facilitate the option of remote participation where this is possible
- Encourage other attendees to remember that some people are more vulnerable than others. The risks from COVID-19 and therefore of close contact are greater for some people than others, for example because they are clinically extremely vulnerable, pregnant or older.
- Ensure attendees are aware of the need to respect others wanting to avoid close contact

Social distancing at weddings, funerals, significant life events and commemorative events

From Step 3, the guidance on meeting family and friends will change, with a greater emphasis on personal responsibility and close contact with friends and family will be a personal choice, but you are encouraged to exercise caution.

In some settings, such as a place of worship or funeral, there will be specific guidance that you will need to follow even when you are with friends and family. This is important to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to other people. You should always follow guidance associated with the setting, for further information please see:

- Guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic
- Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships
- Guidance for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations

Social distancing (staying at least 2m away from others) helps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. The further away you can keep from other people, and the less time you spend in close contact with them, the less likely you are to catch COVID-19 and pass it on to others. Close contact, including hugging, increases the risk of spreading COVID-19.

You should consider the guidance on risks associated with COVID-19 and actions you can take to help keep you and your loved ones safe. Please refer to the guidance on meeting friends and family for further information and the actions to take to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19.

The use of shared items

Individuals should be prevented from touching or kissing objects that are handled communally. Barriers and/or clear signage should be put in place where necessary to avoid this taking place.

Individuals should also 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.

Reusable and communal resources such as prayer mats, service sheets, religious texts or devotional material should be removed from use. Single use alternatives should be provided as long as they are removed and disposed of by the worshipper.

Please also refer to specific cleaning advice below.

Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Singing, playing some musical instruments, shouting and physical activity increases the risk of transmission through small droplets and aerosols.

Where singing takes place, it should follow the principles of safer singing.

- Indoors: a group of up to 6 amateur singers can perform, or rehearse for performance with social distancing being maintained at all times. There is no limit on the number of professional singers but they should follow guidance on performing arts. Performances should take place at the front of the place of worship to a seated audience. Indoor communal singing should not take place.
- Outdoors: When worship takes place outdoors, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups of up to 30. Congregation members should continue to follow social distancing rules. For guidance on singing outdoors outside of acts of communal worship, please refer to the performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).

Singing should follow the principles of safer singing (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing>) and the principles set out in the performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>). In particular:

- Where music plays a big part in worship, and recordings are available, we suggest you consider using these as an alternative to live singing or performing.
- Any instrument played during worship should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.
- Any performers should be positioned in a way that avoids face-to-face performance, as far as possible.
- Limit the duration of any singing, as far as possible.
- Do what you can to improve ventilation to ensure plenty of fresh air whenever possible, including opening windows.
- Always ensuring there is a gap of at least 2m between any performers and the first row of worshippers. Further mitigations like screens or other barriers between the performers and worshipper may also be considered.
- If worship takes place inside, the congregation should not participate in any activity that can create aerosols, including communal singing, shouting and chanting.

Outdoor worship

The law allows for multiple groups, each consisting of up to 30 people, to pray in a place of worship or its grounds. Participants should continue to follow wider social distancing guidance.

A risk assessment must be undertaken and COVID-19 Secure measures implemented. The number of people able to gather will therefore be dependent on the size of the space available.

A risk assessment should also consider the security of worshippers. This may require involving local partners such as the police.

Food and drink

Where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used.

Consumables can be served to congregants, following guidance around hand hygiene and general cleanliness.

The use of communal vessels should be avoided.

From 17 May, hospitality spaces within a place of worship, such as cafes, are permitted to open both inside and outside and managers should follow hospitality guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>). People may also provide their own food and drink at a place of worship but should ensure actions are taken to reduce the risk of transmission.

When consuming food and drink people should remain seated and take steps to minimise any risk of infection. People should not touch communal or shared objects, or handle items other than their own (for example, avoid the use of shared cutlery, dishes or service sheets).

As long as a hospitality space or caterer does not serve alcohol, people can order and collect food and drink from a counter, but they should consume food and drink while seated.

If a hospitality space or caterer does serve alcohol, table service is required by law, meaning that people must order, be served and eat/drink while seated, even if no alcohol is ordered. If people are providing their own alcohol at an event, for example, this should also be consumed while seated.

Use of water

Any pre-requisite washing/ablution rituals should ideally be carried out prior to arrival, and worshippers should be actively encouraged to do this.

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

People should not wash the body parts of others. Where rituals or ceremonies require water to be applied to the body 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 hygiene.

Full immersion

Where full immersion in water is necessary as part of a ritual or ceremony, this should be very carefully planned following the rules below:

- Those being immersed should be at least 2 metres away from the congregation and officiants at all times, except while they are being immersed.

- Only one person should be immersed at any time and they should only be attended by a single officiant/clergy member.
- During the immersion, clergy/the officiant can place their hands on the head of the person being immersed, but they should not ‘cradle’ the person or touch them in any other way
- Clergy/the officiant should wash their hands after each person is immersed, or if this isn’t possible they should use hand sanitiser.

Cash donations

Where possible faith leaders should discourage cash donations and continue to use online or contactless giving and resources.

Where this is not an option, cash should be collected in a receptacle that is set in one place and handled by one individual, as opposed to being passed around. Regular cleaning and hygiene should be maintained, and gloves worn to handle cash offerings where giving continues.

Essential voluntary and public services

A place of worship may continue to provide food to the homeless or vulnerable.

All reasonable steps should be taken to minimise risks around transmission by cleaning equipment and utensils thoroughly between uses and avoiding the use of shared items. For further information on food preparation, please refer to the guidance for food businesses (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>).

A place of worship may be used for essential voluntary and public services such as the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions, or support in an emergency. See COVID-19 guidance for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-organisations>).

Places of worship and young people

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers can offer provisions to all children, without restriction on the reason for which they may attend, both indoor and outdoor.

Out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers operating from a place of worship should follow the protective measures outlined in this guidance, as well as the guidance on holiday or after-school clubs.

Places of worship can help remind children and young people, and their parents and guardians, of the important actions they should take during the COVID-19 outbreak to help prevent the spread of the virus. Posters on general hand hygiene can be found on the eBug website. Please follow guidance for actions for schools and guidance for early years and childcare providers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>) for more information.

Parent and child groups

Parent and child groups can take place indoors as well as outdoors (other than in private homes or gardens) if they are for the benefit of children aged under 5 and organised by a business, charity or public body. This includes groups that are primarily focused on social and developmental activities.

From 17 May, parent and child group gathering limits can increase to 30 people. Children under five and anyone working as part of the group are not counted in this number.

General actions to reduce the spread of infection

NHS England provides a summary of social distancing measures to reduce transmission of the virus (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/>) and how to avoid spreading infection. You should follow this advice throughout your daily activities, including at places of worship.

You should consider and set out the additional actions you will take to reduce the risk of transmission in your risk assessment. These could include, for instance, avoiding any face-to-face seating by changing layouts, reducing the number of people in enclosed spaces, improving ventilation, using protective screens and face coverings, and closing non-essential social spaces, as outlined throughout this guidance.

Queue management is important so that the flow of groups in and out of the premises can be carefully controlled in a socially distanced way, reducing the risk of congestion or contact. You should consider how to manage those waiting outside a place of worship, including the introduction of socially distanced queuing systems.

Test and trace

The NHS Test and Trace service (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>):

- provides testing for anyone to find out if they have the virus
- gets in touch with anyone who has had a positive test result to help them share information about any close recent contacts they have had
- alerts those contacts, where necessary, and notifies them they need to self-isolate to help stop the spread of the virus

Further information can be found online including for contacts of people with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection who do not live with the person, and for places of work (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-workplace-guidance#about-the-nhs-test-and-trace-service>).

Venues should assist this service by keeping a temporary record of visitors for 21 days, in a way that is manageable for your place of worship, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed for contact tracing and the investigation of local outbreaks. You should also display official NHS QR code posters so that those with the app can scan in.

Find further information (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>) on maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace.

When collecting the names and contact details of people attending your place of worship, you should ask for their consent. This is because of the potentially sensitive nature of the data collected in these circumstances, which is protected by law. Guidance on collecting visitor details for Test and Trace, including issues around consent, is provided by the Information Commissioner's Office. You should make clear that giving contact details is optional and is not a condition of attending your place of worship. We have created a template form for collecting consent at places of worship, available in Annex B.

On Sunday 28 March, the government announced that, from 6 April, the workplace testing programme will supply home test kits to companies with over ten workers where it is not possible to set up testing on-site. This could be due to a lack of space or because a company operates across multiple sites.

Over 60,000 businesses across the country have already registered their interest to provide rapid tests to key workers. Businesses are encouraged to register before 12 April in order to access free tests until the end of June, even if they're not yet open or are not able to start using the tests straight away.

Face coverings

In England, face coverings are required by law to be worn in places of worship.

There are valid exemptions for some individuals and groups to not wear a face covering in these settings. In particular, those who are leading permitted services or events in a place of worship, and those who assist them.

See guidance on the wearing of face coverings at a place of work (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>). For more information please see guidance on face coverings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).

People who are symptomatic

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) should not attend the place of worship due to the risk that they pose to others; they should self-isolate at home immediately with other members of their household. Remote participation should be considered, for example by live streaming. This applies equally to individuals who work at the place of worship.

Individuals who are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household

Where individuals are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household, or because they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace, they should only participate remotely.

For a funeral, if you are a close family member of the deceased, we strongly recommend that you attend remotely, if possible, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread to other mourners. However, if after careful consideration of the risk, you choose to attend in person, it is essential that you follow

the precautions outlined in the guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>).

Hygiene

On entering and leaving a place of worship, everyone, including staff, should be asked to wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or to use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.

There should be signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into the crook of your sleeved arm if a tissue is not available.

You should provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to toilet facilities.

Toilets

Toilets inside or linked to places of worship should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Steps that will usually be needed to make the use of toilets as safe as possible:

- using signs and posters (see Hygiene above)
- using social distancing marking in areas where queues may form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks)
- to enable good hand-hygiene make hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical. And ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand dryers) are available. Communal towels should be removed and replaced with single use paper towels.
- set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider the use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces
- keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate and safe to do so
- special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks
- putting up a visible cleaning schedule that is kept up to date
- providing more waste facilities and more frequent refuse collection

Cleaning

All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched such as door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned using standard cleaning products. See guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>). Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before reopening for

the first time or between different types of permitted activities. Frequently used objects, surfaces or spaces, including for example doorways between outside and inside spaces should be given particular attention when cleaning.

Historic England has also produced guidance on cleaning historic surfaces (<https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/historic-places/cleaning-historic-surfaces/>), which might not be suitable for cleaning using standard cleaning products.

A decision should be made locally on how frequently cleaning should take place based on an assessment of risk and use of the building.

See guidance on waste disposal in non-healthcare settings (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste#cleaning-waste>).

How can places of worship communicate this guidance to visitors?

Each place of worship is strongly advised to implement the measures set out in this guidance and complete any recommended risk assessments for the safety of all those who visit and work there. The government strongly advises each place of worship to ensure that visitors follow social distancing guidelines.

Many faiths have issued specific guidance to their faith communities about some of these issues. You may wish to make the government's information on COVID-19 available to your faith community and others, in order to challenge misinformation.

You should consider informing those who are clinically extremely vulnerable that, while they are able to attend places of worship, they are advised to consider taking extra precautions to reduce risk of exposure to the virus and to follow the relevant guidance.

Places of worship and faith leaders should consider how guidance can be communicated to visitors, including before they visit, in a way that is accessible and appropriate for the cultures, languages and reading levels of communities served by the place of worship.

Protective security

Adapting a place of worship to COVID-19 measures will inevitably result in changes to operating policies, processes and procedures at the place of worship. Any changes to these should always be considered with regard to security implications.

In implementing this guidance, places of worship should continue to take account of protective security considerations to maintain effective security of the premises, all staff and visitors, especially around entry and exit procedures, and any queueing or crowding outside the building where people can be more exposed.

Individuals with responsibility for the security of the venue should be consulted and involved throughout to help ensure good security is maintained as far as possible and that there are not any unintended security consequences as a result of any changes that are made. An assessment of risk should be undertaken on any new measures or changes in operation to ensure risks have been considered and all practical actions taken to reduce the risk of transmission identified and put in place.

It is up to each place of worship to assess the level of risk, and places of worship may choose to delay opening if they do not feel they are able to safely do so under current social distancing measures.

In the process of completing a risk assessment you should consider the security factors at Annex A.

Enforcement

It is important to be aware of the enforcement provisions, as is the case for other sectors.

Where the enforcing authority (usually your local authority), identifies responsible individuals who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks (including this guidance), they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to ensure social distancing, where possible.

Under existing Health & Safety legislation (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm>), failure to complete a risk assessment that accounts for COVID-19 could constitute a breach of that legislation, as could having a risk assessment with insufficient measure.

The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices are against the law with serious fines and even imprisonment for up to 2 years.

Employers are expected to respond to such actions or any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authority. The vast majority of employers are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the Government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers are taking the necessary steps.

Annex A: Risk assessment for protective security - factors to consider

A risk assessment that considers protective security should be conducted in addition to, or as part of, any health and safety/ fire safety or other broader assessment of the hazards and threats to the people in and around the place of worship as a result of changes made to how that place of worship functions.

Queues, social distancing and security

Whilst busy crowding is unlikely if social distancing is operating correctly, the revised layout of spaces could present new security risks, particularly where multiple queues are created. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Venue managers should wherever possible, and in line with social distancing, organise queuing within existing protected areas; venue managers should not remove any security features or useful street furniture items without considering protective security in the round.

- If queuing is only possible outside of protected areas then venue managers should consider and mitigate any vulnerabilities by: routing queues behind permanent physical structures (such as street furniture, bollards, trolley parks & bike racks) to provide a visual deterrent and delay; closing off vehicle access to shared spaces; adjusting servicing and delivery times; reducing the opportunities for vehicles to interact with pedestrians; erecting robust barriers; introducing a reduced speed limit mandated using traffic calming.
- Venue managers should avoid making public at the site or online, detailed information about queue locations, times and number of people or removal of security features such as street furniture and bollards.

Staff, security officers/ volunteers and stewarding

It is vital for staff to remain vigilant and act on potential security threats including terrorism and wider criminality. They should:

- Continue to ensure that awareness of security threats is raised alongside health and safety risks through staff briefings.
- Whilst stewards, and in some cases security officers, may be focussed on managing people and queues for COVID-19 safety reasons, they should continue to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity as soon as possible.
- Ideally consider having separate stewarding for managing social distancing and health and safety aspects, and for security as this will allow proper due attention to be given to keeping the site safe from threats.
- Ensure there is a good communication system in place to inform people of any incident. Carry out a short exercise or test to check procedures and equipment for this are working correctly.

For further information see the Centre for Protection National Infrastructure (CPNI) and National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) for specific security advice related to COVID-19.

Helpful information can also be found at the following websites:

CPNI advice:

- All COVID-19 security advice (<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0>)
- Advice on protecting queues from hostile vehicles
(<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/cd/fa/The%20risk%20to%20pedestrians%20from%20Vehi cle.pdf>)
- Advice on hostile reconnaissance
(<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/23/de/understanding-hostile-reconnaissance-understanding-and-counteracting-the-threat.pdf>)
- COVID-19 workplace actions campaign (messaging about distancing and hygiene)
(<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/covid-19-workplace-actions-0>)

NaCTSO advice:

- General Security advice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>)
- Sector Specific Crowded Places Guidance (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820082/170614_crowded-places-guidance_v1b.pdf)
- Action Counters Terrorism e-learning (<https://ct.highfieldelearning.com/>)
- Action Counters Terrorism Mobile App - Available at Download the Urim app in Google Play (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.app.urim&hl=en>) or App Store (<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/urim/id1310305478>). Then email ct@highfieldelearning.com to request a user name and password. Please note access is for business/professional use only.

Annex B: Template form for collecting consent and contact details for attendees at places of worship

In order to support the NHS Test and Trace programme, we are taking contact details (name and telephone number) for all visitors, as well as recording times entering and leaving [name of place of worship].

In line with guidance issued by the Department for Health and Social Care, we will keep your details safely and in compliance with GDPR legislation for 21 days before securely disposing of or deleting them. We will only share your details with NHS Test and Trace, if asked, in the event that it is needed to help stop the spread of coronavirus. We will not use your details for any other purposes or pass them on to anyone else.

Thank you for your understanding.

If you agree to providing your information for this reason, please complete the following form:

Name	
Tel. No	
Signature	
Date	

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