

Covid -19

Update 11 November 20

As you know we are now into our second lockdown period from 5 November until 2 December, whilst it is disappointing given all the effort that has been put into opening churches for worship, and restarting community groups in the halls we need to remember the reason the government has taken this step.

If we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we reduce the spread of the infection.

Who should close?

- **Places of worship**, apart from for the purposes of independent prayer, and service broadcasting and funerals see table below
- **Community centres and halls** must close except for a limited number of exempt activities as set out below

Are there any exceptions?

Community centres will be permitted to be open for a small number of exempt activities, including:

- education and training (including for schools to use sports and leisure facilities where that is part of their normal provision)
- childcare purposes and supervised activities for children
- blood donation and food banks
- to provide medical treatment

What about specific events?

Weddings, civil partnerships, and funerals

- Funerals can be attended by a maximum of 30 people.
- Linked ceremonial events such as stone settings and ash scatterings can also continue with up to 15 people in attendance.
- Anyone working is not counted in the 15 or 30.
- Social distancing should be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support bubble.
- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies will not be permitted to take place except in exceptional circumstances; they will be limited to 6 people.

What if we provide space for educational groups?

Schools, colleges and universities remain open. The Government has committed to prioritising the wellbeing and long-term futures of young people and will therefore not be closing core educational facilities, like early year's settings, schools, colleges, universities and vocational training centres.

Facilitated activities for children where these provide a childcare function for working parents or parents provide other essential purposes are allowed to continue

Respite care including vulnerable children may continue

All other out of school activities should not take place in church or community buildings

The URC have issued the following guidelines for churches

Reg 18 (8) A place of worship may be used -	Reg 18 (9) A person who is responsible for a community centre or hall must ensure that the community centre or hall is closed except where it is used -
(a) for funerals NB No more than 30 people are allowed to attend	(a) to provide essential voluntary activities or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency)
(b) for commemorative events celebrating the life of a person who has died NB No more than 15 people are allowed to attend	(b) for the purposes of education or training
(c) to broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast NB Only those who are essential for the content of the service and those filming are	(c) for the purposes of support groups

<p>allowed to attend</p>	
<p>(d) to provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency)</p> <p>NB No more than 15 people are allowed to attend, does not include children under 5 with a parent or guardian</p>	<p>(d) for the purposes of -</p> <p>(i) childcare provided by a person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006 or</p> <p>(ii) supervised activities for children</p>
<p>(e) for childcare provided by a person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006</p> <p>NB Numbers should be limited to the number of people who can socially distance in accordance with the guidance</p>	
<p>(f) for individual prayer, and for these purposes, “individual prayer” means prayer by individuals which does not form part of communal worship</p> <p>NB individual is defined as a person or household to prayer on their own</p> <p>Private prayer should only take place if there are no other permitted activities taking place</p>	

Please ensure that you maintain your Covid secure guidelines including keeping a record of all those using church to support NHS Test and Trace

Remember face coverings are a legal requirement when in church

What is not allowed?

The Government guidelines have provided examples of what is not allowed (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Communal worship
- Weddings with very specific exemptions for those who are seriously ill
- Baptism or ceremonies marking significant life cycle moments
- Study groups
- Lifestyle, leisure and recreational groups i.e. craft or exercise groups
- Food that is served to be consumed on the premises
- Amateur choir or group bell ringing
- Shops contained within church

What Action should be taken?

Document your decision to close as per the guidelines or decide to remain open as per the guidelines

Inform the insurers if you decide to close

Should you open for any of the reasons above remember to maintain your cleaning routines, social distance and wear a face covering.

Considering reopening

When permitted to reopen, you will need to revisit the Risk Assessments and ensure that they are up to date with the prevailing guidance.

One thing to note is that *Public Health England has revised the quarantine period after known exposure to Corona virus from 72 hours down to 48 hours.* This means that the period between uses of a building without the need to clean is reduced, so churches that have been using that method to ensure the safety of their buildings may be able to open more often.