

Emerging from Lockdown: Phase 2 Guidance

Guidance for Scottish Episcopal Churches in respect of Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's *Route Map through and out of the Crisis*.

The Scottish Government's *Route Map through and out of the Crisis* outlines four phases in relation to the easing of the coronavirus lockdown restrictions. It is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-framework-decision-making-scotlands-route-map-through-out-crisis/>

A. Introduction

This guidance note has been produced for use within the Scottish Episcopal Church to assist Diocesan Bishops, clergy and vestries in relation to Phase 2, which envisages the possibility of places of worship being open for individual (private) prayer, funerals and, in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the Bishop, of marriages to take place with minimal numbers of attendees. Whilst many will undoubtedly be keen to re-open churches and endeavour to resume some form of public worship, any such resumption is not expected to be possible until Phase 3 and 4. In Phase 3 in particular, this is unlikely to be what was considered "normal" prior to the pandemic. In the meantime, a wide variety of online worship offerings continue to be available from the province and many of our individual churches and elsewhere, some of which can also be accessed by telephone.

Activities which are not permitted in Phase 2 include communal worship, services other than funerals, study groups, children's or youth meetings, meetings for choir practice or bell ringing, access for tourism purposes or the use of halls for lifestyle or leisure/recreational activities such as craft or exercise groups.

Additional guidance will be produced in due course for use in relation to Phases 3 and 4 respectively. As is the case for Phase 2, a clear plan will be required for such subsequent phases as to how a church may safely re-open for public worship, having undertaken appropriate risk assessment. Future guidance will address this in more detail for Phases 3 and 4.

B. Principles

The Advisory Group responsible for preparing this note offers the following general principles to assist churches throughout the process of emerging from lockdown.

1. The intention of these and any other guidelines produced internally within the Church is to support and enable clergy and congregations to operate within the terms of published Government and Public Health guidance. To the extent that such official guidance becomes more prescriptive at any point over time, it should be regarded as taking precedence over any internal church guidance if there is any conflict. It is also our intention to update these guidelines as swiftly as possible to bring them into line with any changes in Government and Public Health guidance. Key current Government messages are summarised in the Appendix.

2. The fact that opening for individual (ie private) prayer or other small ceremonies is *permitted* by the Government in Phase 2 should not be understood to imply that congregations are now *expected* to begin to do such things.
3. A decision whether or not to restart any activities should be considered initially by the vestry, as the charity trustees for the charge. No resumption of activity can be entirely risk-free and any consideration of restarting activity will involve the vestry undertaking a Covid-19 risk assessment to consider and address the implications of such restarting. If, having done that, the vestry wishes to proceed to restart any activities, it should first approach the Diocesan Bishop for consent. A pro forma Phase 2 Plan has been developed for use by vestries in seeking such consent and is available at:
<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Pro-forma-Plan-for-Reopening-for-Individual-Prayer-Version-1-12.6.20.docx>

General advice on risk management (not specifically related to Covid-19) is also available at:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/vestry-resources/vestry-responsibilities/risk-management/>

4. The role of the Bishop is to respond to an approach by a vestry and in considering whether to give consent it is one of oversight and care in relation to both clergy and congregation. No Bishop will encourage the reopening of a church in Phase 2 unless the vestry and cleric wish to do so and any reopening will be the outcome of a dialogue between cleric/vestry and Bishop.
5. No church should feel under any obligation to act otherwise than in accordance with its own tradition. If, for example, prior to lockdown, a church had no tradition of being open for individual prayer, there is no implication that it should now open for such a purpose, just because it is permitted.
6. Any steps taken by churches whether under Phase 2, or in subsequent phases are likely to involve, to a greater or lesser extent, volunteers or church staff. In considering how the church emerges from lockdown, it will be important for vestries to be conscious of their duty of care to volunteers and staff and, likewise, for bishops in relation to clergy and other authorised ministers.
7. Any person who is self-isolating or shielding or is in a vulnerable category should not be invited to undertake functions which would be contrary to their duty to self-isolate, shield or stay at home. Such matters are part of the church's safeguarding duties to the vulnerable. Similarly, no such person should be put in a position of feeling under pressure to undertake such functions. Also, any person who becomes unwell with symptoms of Covid-19 should immediately return home and follow public health advice to self-isolate. In an emergency a 999 call should be made if they are seriously ill or their life is at risk.

8. In relation to volunteers and staff who are able to undertake functions, it will be important that each individual is given a clear explanation of what is required of them, has been given training and resources appropriate to the task in question and knows to whom to refer any problems. Where a health and safety risk exists, the risk assessment referred to in paragraph 2 above should address these issues. Churches with employees should follow any Government or Public Health guidance applicable to employees and, whilst volunteers and clergy are not employees, it is suggested that they should be afforded the same level of protection as paid staff. Also, when planning any activities which are permitted under Phase 2, consideration should be given to appropriate contingency planning to address the situation where an individual (clergy, staff or volunteer) ceases to be available to undertake a task or function if they are required at short notice to self-isolate under the Government's test and protect policy. This could be the case in relation to clergy, staff or volunteers.
9. Different congregations will move at different speeds as they emerge from lockdown and just because one congregation is in a position to undertake some resumption of activity in their church building does not mean that others should feel any pressure to do likewise.
10. It is expected that individual church members will act responsibly and in accordance with public guidance applicable to the population as a whole on matters such as social distancing, self-isolating, wearing of face coverings (where physical distancing of 2m is compromised or as Public Health guidance dictates) etc. Parents or guardians should ensure that children observe such requirements.
11. The Advisory Group in producing this guidance has proceeded on the basis of the precautionary principle. In short, in areas where there are elements of doubt, as is inevitably the case in relation to Covid-19, the guidance errs on the side of caution.

C. Preliminary matters to be addressed prior to any reopening of a church building

If your church building has been completely closed during the period of lockdown, there are certain initial matters which should be considered in advance of any use being made of the building under Phase 2. The following are recommended:

1. If your insurers have previously been advised that the building has been closed, notify them that it is now being reopened and follow any guidance which they might provide.
2. Air the building by opening doors and any openable windows.
3. Check the building for cleanliness. If there are bird droppings or other animal waste be sure not to touch or go near it until proper cleaning can be arranged. If the building has been unoccupied, then cleaning at this stage can be of the

routine kind. If some use has been made of the building - for example the rector streaming services – then all surfaces which might have been touched in the 72 hours prior to reopening should be thoroughly cleaned. (A link to guidance on Covid-specific cleaning is provided below, for use in situations where the building is in use once again.)

4. If you are going to use the water system or toilets, flush all toilets and run the water from all taps and other hot and cold water-outlets for at least five minutes to ensure the water system has been thoroughly flushed through to reduce the risk of legionella and Weil's disease. If you have any concerns seek appropriate professional help/advice. Specific advice from the Health and Safety Executive is available at:
https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/biological_agents/specific_biological_agents_infections/legionellosis/covid-19_legionella_information_note.pdf
5. Consider whether you need to turn on electrical or heating systems where these have been turned off.
6. Undertake a simple visual check of general maintenance items such as electrical systems, emergency lighting and other lighting, fire alarm systems, heating systems, fridges, security monitoring and access systems, water systems and toilets. (Seek professional help/advice if necessary. In Phase 2 contractors and tradespeople will be able to enter premises to undertake repair and maintenance tasks subject to physical distancing and other precautions, such as the kind of measures referred to below for cleaning, use of toilets etc. Further comment on repair and maintenance is set out in section G below.)
7. Ensure that the font and any holy water stoups are empty.
8. Before opening for individual prayer or a funeral, consideration should be given to the capacity of the building and the number of people who can be accommodated at any one time, so that physical distancing of at least 2m can be maintained between individuals and households. (The capacity of the building may not be a key issue in Phase 2 - given numbers of visitors in most settings - but is likely to become critical in Phases 3 and 4.)

D. Opening a church building for individual (private) prayer

Churches which have, prior to lockdown, had a tradition of being open for individual prayer may wish to consider reopening for that purpose in Phase 2. There are of course, a number of implications, unrelated to the Covid-19, which any church open to the public needs to consider – not least those of security and insurance. It is assumed that such matters will already have been considered by any such church and therefore are not covered in this guidance. However, any reopening for individual prayer will now need to take account of a range of additional measures arising because of the risks associated with Covid-19. The following matters will require to be considered and addressed: –

1. Individual prayer should be understood to be just that. It is not an opportunity for a collective gathering. A church open for individual prayer may not be used for public prayer. Consequently, it would be inappropriate in Phase 2 for Morning or Evening Prayer to be said, or a Eucharist celebrated, in a manner which encourages visitors present in the church building to participate, nor is it an opportunity for an organ recital to be given. Only one approved activity should take place at any one time: e.g. organ practice should not happen, neither should clergy livestream or record worship whilst the church is open for individual prayer. Further comment regarding livestreaming and recording of worship is set out on section G below.
2. Whilst, in the past, some church buildings may have been open to the public without any church representative being present on the premises, it is required that there should be a designated presence in the building at all times while it is open. That is for the purpose of ensuring that the requirements of this guidance are complied with. At a minimum, such presence should comprise one individual but vestries will need to consider whether the presence of just one individual will be sufficient. If opening for individual prayer may result in more than minimal numbers of visitors, or for personal security/safety considerations, vestries may take the view that more than one person is needed. A church's experience of being open for individual prayer in the past may be helpful in gauging this. The vestry will also need to consider whether it can maintain such a capability from within its staff or volunteers. Clearly, as mentioned above, any person who is self-isolating or shielding or is in a vulnerable category advised to stay at home should not be invited to undertake such a task. Consideration should be given to how long, at any one time, the church may be open for, given for the need for constant supervision. A record should be kept of the rota of staff or volunteers present in church to oversee opening for individual prayer.
3. Visitors will need to act in a way which is consistent with this guidance. That should be made clear to them on arrival at the church building. That might be done by appropriate signage by the entrance, the provision of a sheet containing written guidance (which should be left in a prominent position, without having to be handed to the visitor) or verbally by the church representative(s).
4. Hand sanitiser, with an alcohol content in excess of 70%, should be available at the church entrance and visitors should be asked to use it on arrival and departure.
5. In order to minimise physical contact, consideration should be given to handrails and door handles on entry. Leaving a door open would minimise physical contact but otherwise handles, rails, light switches or other areas with which contact is likely to be undertaken should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Guidance on cleaning surfaces is available at: [COVID-19: Guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) and also at <https://www.scdc.org.uk/supporting-communities-safely>

6. Those responsible for cleaning should be provided with disposable gloves to protect their hands from corrosive cleaning substances. Cleaning materials should be appropriate to the surfaces to be cleaned (especially any historic surfaces). Gloves should be disposed of and not reused.
7. In some churches, aisles or other parts of the church building may mean that ensuring social distancing of at least 2m is difficult or impossible. In such cases, the Scottish Government has advised the wearing of face coverings. Churches should therefore consider (in publicising the opening of the building for individual prayer) encouraging visitors to bring their own face coverings and additionally should make face coverings available on arrival at the church building for any visitor who does not have their own. Hands should be washed or sanitised before putting on or taking off a face covering. Any such covering supplied should be taken away by the visitor after their visit and disposed of at home.
8. To reduce the risk of infection, where it is possible within the constraints of the building, it is recommended that a “one-way” system be introduced and made clear by appropriate floor markings or other signage so that physical distance between people can be maintained. Where significant numbers of visitors are expected, a safe “queue management” system should be put in place to ensure that the flow of people in and out of the building can be carefully controlled, having regard to the capacity of the building and to reduce the risk of congestion or contact.
9. Social distancing of at least 2m should be observed in all cases (except for individuals who are part of the same household or who are accompanied by a carer). In order to ensure such distancing, prior consideration must be given to where visitors are permitted to sit within the church building. That may require cordoning off of pews or areas of seating to ensure the necessary distancing. Also, within a single pew, indication should be given as to where people may sit, so as to ensure appropriate distancing. Since it is clear that the virus can remain on surfaces for some time, it is recommended that the pew/seating where the visitor has sat, and the immediately surrounding area, should be closed off after their visit until the area has been cleaned and disinfected. Where possible, and provided such areas have been cordoned off to prevent use by others, consider waiting 72 hours before cleaning so as to prevent infection of those undertaking cleaning or wait and carry out the cleaning shortly before the next time the building is to be used. If there are other high-risk parts of the building such as kitchens or small spaces where individuals are unlikely to be able to physically distance, consider marking these as “off limits”.
10. Because of the potential for the virus to remain on surfaces, prayer books, hymn books and Bibles should not be available for visitors and should therefore not be stored in a place to which a visitor has access. Similarly, consideration should be given to removing any soft furnishings (such as kneelers or hassocks) or other items that are difficult to clean.

11. It is recommended that visitors should not have access to church toilets, unless procedures have been put in place locally to ensure that toilets can safely be operated in the current environment, in which case use of toilets should be for emergencies only, with a restriction on numbers to ensure physical distancing and a physically distanced queue being operated as necessary. There is evidence that the virus can be transmitted by intestinal infection which means that toilet seats, handles, doorknobs and locks should be cleaned after every use if toilet facilities are to be available. In such cases, paper towels rather than hand dryers, and liquid soap should be provided and the person responsible for cleaning should be someone other than the church representative(s) supervising the premises so that the latter can be in continuous visible attendance in the church to receive any other visitors.

E. Opening a church for funerals with minimal attendance

Under Phase 2, marriages and other types of ceremonies may take place with minimal attendance. Funerals with minimal attendance in churches have been permissible during lockdown but the College of Bishops issued guidance at the outset of lockdown indicating that they should not take place in SEC churches. Under Phase 2, the College is willing to permit the holding of funeral services where a vestry decides it wishes to open its building for this purpose and has agreed a plan with its Bishop, and subject to tight restrictions: –

1. Government guidance indicates that attendance at funerals should be limited to close family only or, where no close family are attending, a friend of the deceased, and, in appropriate cases, a carer of such attendees.
2. Measures must be put in place in the church building to ensure that a distance of 2m is maintained between attendees at all times for the duration of a service (except where they are from the same household, or a carer and the person being assisted by the carer). As mentioned above, this may involve the cordoning off of certain pews or areas of seating. It should be noted that owing to the need for physical distancing, churches will be unable to operate at their normal capacity. Whilst this is unlikely to be an issue during Phase 2 during which there are significant restrictions on numbers attending, churches should start considering what the new capacity of their building will be in the light of social distancing requirements, as restrictions are lifted for future Phases 3 and 4
3. It should be made clear to all those arriving for any such service that they must maintain a distance of at least 2m from each other. As mentioned above a one-way system for movement within the building should be established where possible.
4. Any prior communication in advance of the service should make clear the restrictions to which attendees will be subject. Any person who is showing symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend a service. The same applies to any person who is self-isolating, shielding or in any other categories of individual being advised to remain at home.

5. As mentioned above, those attending the service should be expected to use hand sanitiser on arrival (to be provided by the church) and wear face coverings. Sanitiser should also be used on departure. Supplies of tissues should also be available.
6. In the light of Government guidance, singing will not be permitted during any service owing to the elevated risks of aerosol generation.
7. The minister presiding at the service should ensure a distance of greater than 2m since increased voice volume increases the size and quantity of aerosol droplets. The use of a microphone should reduce the need to increase natural voice volume.
8. Ideally liturgy should be displayed digitally so as to avoid physical contact with paper-based material. If that is not possible, single use orders of service should be used rather than prayer books or other liturgy books, so as to avoid multiple handling. Orders of service should be distributed on seating in advance of any service to minimise unnecessary physical contact. Those distributing such materials should wash or sanitise their hands beforehand.
9. It is not expected that the taking of offerings is likely to be an issue needing to be addressed during Phase 2 except possibly in relation to funerals. If an offering is to be taken in such circumstances, the collection plate should not be circulated. Offerings can be taken by retiring collection but those responsible for counting the collection should ensure handwashing/sanitising before and after doing so. Disposable gloves should be worn for counting and banking. However, the preferable and safer way of dealing with offerings is for such giving to be done online where at all possible - details of the beneficiary of such offering could be printed on the order of service to enable that.
10. Church toilets should not be available unless procedures, as mentioned above, are in place for cleaning and disinfecting after each use.
11. Refreshments should not be offered before or after the service.
12. After any service, the areas to which those attending the service have had access should be cleaned and disinfected, as mentioned above before the building is required for its next use.

F. Weddings

The College of Bishops has indicated that weddings should be permitted only in exceptional circumstances in Phase 2 and subject to the agreement of the vestry and approval by the Bishop on a case by case basis. The general provisions above in relation to funerals would likewise apply but there would be further requirements in the case of weddings.

G. Other Matters

Maintenance, repairs, organ practice etc: Entry to a church building for the purposes of maintenance and repair to the fabric of the building or organ and for private organ practice is permissible, provided that the number of people present is limited to the minimum necessary, provided physical distancing is observed and provided cleaning is undertaken of all areas affected prior to any subsequent next use of the church or other person entering it. A record should be kept of those accessing the building for any of these purposes.

Worship recording by groups: In Phase 2, following Government guidance, members of two households (who need not be from the cleric's or lay reader's household) can be present in church buildings for example to record or livestream worship, subject to the requirements regarding hygiene and physical distancing but it is not appropriate for a group of individuals from more than two households to meet in church for the purpose of recording worship for live or later streaming, notwithstanding that physical distancing may be observed. Health risks are increased in circumstances where a group of people operate together, where voices may be projected or where singing is undertaken.

Vestments: to reduce the risk of infection it is recommended that vestments are not shared. In Phase 2 it is likely that in any event the use of vestments can be kept to a minimum.

Outdoor worship: such worship is not permitted under Phase 2, as there is as yet no clear indication from the Government as to how many people may meet outdoors for social reasons. The Advisory Group intends to consider this in more detail for Phase 3.

APPENDIX

Key Government Messages

Any local policy within a place of worship should be clear that:

- If a person is symptomatic (showing [symptoms of COVID-19 infection](#)) or has tested positive for COVID-19 they must not attend a place of worship during the period they are required to [self-isolate](#) due to the risk that they pose to others. This includes individuals who work at the place of worship;
- If a person is not symptomatic or a confirmed COVID-19 case, but is self-isolating due to another member of their household either showing symptoms of COVID-19 or their household member has tested positive for COVID-19, that person must not attend a place of worship. They should instead continue to follow household [self-isolation advice](#);
- If person is not symptomatic or a confirmed COVID-19 case, but is self-isolating as a result of other contact (identified through contact tracing), they must not attend a place of worship. This person should instead follow all [contact tracing](#) and [self-isolation](#) advice provided to them.

Places of worship should encourage all staff, volunteers and worshippers to maintain personal hygiene. This includes:

- Frequent washing of hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and drying thoroughly, particularly when entering/leaving the building;
- Use of hand sanitiser where hand washing facilities are not available;
- Encouraging staff, volunteers and members to avoid touching their faces including mouth, eyes and nose; and
- Using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins that are emptied regularly for tissue waste.