

## **Emerging from Lockdown: Phase 3 Guidance**

Guidance for Scottish Episcopal Churches in respect of Phase 3 of the Scottish Government's *Route Map through and out of the Crisis*. This Version 2 is issued in the light of the Scottish Government's announcement on 9 July that places of worship may re-open for communal worship from 15 July. This guidance replaces the Version 1 guidance issued on 6 July and should be regarded as taking effect from 15 July, except where specifically provided otherwise. The Government views permission to re-open for communal worship as an exception to the general prohibition on mass gatherings, which remains in force. Consequently, it should not be assumed that permission to re-open for communal worship implies permission to resume all other activities which may previously have been undertaken in churches or church halls. Such other activities will remain subject to Government restrictions and are referred to in more detail below.

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/>

Since publication of the original route map a number of subsequent Government announcements have been made. At the time of issue of this guidance, the most recent announcement relating to Phase 3 and the expected timing of the different aspects relevant to Phase 3 was issued on 9 July and is available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-framework-decision-making-scotlands-route-map-through-out-crisis-phase-3-update/>

It should be emphasised that different elements of Phase 3 will take effect at different times. Experience of prior Phases suggests that the actual easing of lockdown restrictions may not in practice be entirely in accordance with previous Government announcements. As a result, whilst the guidance which follows below is based on information published by the Scottish Government on 9 July, and reflects additional announcements on numbers at public worship and weddings and funerals on 10 and 14 July, it may require to be updated in the light of future Government announcements. We shall issue updates as necessary and as quickly as possible.

Current public health direction is that appropriate physical distancing requires a separation of 2m. Whilst the Scottish Government has announced some mitigation of this rule for certain sectors (initially hospitality, retail and public transport) the 2m requirement remains the norm.

This guidance should be read alongside accompanying Pastoral Advice issued by the College of Bishops for Phase 3. A Version 2 of that is also being issued today. It covers a range of matters of a pastoral and liturgical nature relevant to Phase 3 and is available at: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Revised-Pastoral-Guidelines-for-Phase-3-Version-2-14.7.2020.pdf>

## **A. Introduction**

As noted above, this guidance note is to assist Diocesan Bishops, clergy and vestries in relation to Phase 3 of the Route Map. The Scottish Government's announcement of 9 July permits places of worship to reopen for congregational services, communal prayer and contemplation with physical distancing and limited numbers from 15 July. Government guidance places a maximum of 50 people on the numbers attending such worship. This means that the number of people permitted to attend is limited either by the capacity of the building allowing for the 2m physical distancing requirement (mentioned above) or 50 whichever is the lesser (The Scottish Government has indicated that the maximum of 50 will be reviewed at the end of July)

**Please note that different limits on attendance apply in the cases of funerals and weddings.** With effect from 15 July such services are subject to a maximum attendance of 20.

Whilst many will undoubtedly be keen to re-open churches and endeavour to resume some form of public worship, in Phase 3 this is unlikely to be what was considered "normal" prior to the pandemic.

This guidance for Phase 3 supersedes the guidance produced previously for Phase 2, unless in Phase 3 churches choose only to open for individual prayer and not public worship, in which case the Phase 2 guidance remains relevant.

As was the case for Phase 2, a clear plan will be required for Phase 3 as to how a church may safely re-open for public worship, having undertaken appropriate risk assessment. To the extent necessary, additional guidance will be produced in due course for use in relation to Phase 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, as noted above, 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 1.
2. The fact that opening for congregational worship, communal prayer and contemplation for limited numbers is *permitted* by the Government in Phase 3 should not be understood to imply that congregations are now *expected* to begin such public worship.

3. A decision whether or not to resume public worship 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. A variety of risk assessment templates have been produced by other churches and in case they are helpful to vestries, they can be accessed at:-

<https://churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/advice-for-churches-covid-19-coronavirus>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

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. If, having undertaken a risk assessment, the vestry wishes to proceed to restart any activities, it should first approach the Diocesan Bishop for consent. A pro forma Phase 3 Plan has been developed for use by vestries in seeking such consent and is available at: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Plan-for-Reopening-for-Communal-Worship-Phase-3-Version-2-14.7.20.docx>
5. The role of the Bishop is to respond to an approach by a vestry and in considering whether to give consent is one of oversight and care in relation to both clergy and congregation. No Bishop will encourage the reopening of a church in Phase 3 unless the vestry and cleric wish to do so and any reopening will be the outcome of a dialogue between cleric/vestry and Bishop.
6. Any steps taken by churches whether under Phase 3 or subsequently 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 (see: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice>) 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. 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 B.3 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 3, 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.
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. It is also the case that, in the light of appropriate risk assessment, activities which it may be possible to resume in one location cannot be resumed in another (for example, because of constraints imposed by the building).
10. Until the commencement of Phase 4, or at least until most Episcopal churches are able to resume public worship, it is expected that provincially-provided online worship will continue to be available (and which can also be accessed by telephone). That may help to reduce the pressure on any one individual church to reopen before it is ready to do so and provide a continuity of worship during the planning stage for reopening in Phase 3.
11. Any gathering carries risk, and everyone should consider their own vulnerabilities and those for whom they are responsible and think through the risks they deem acceptable to themselves and others. 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 physical 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. No-one should feel pressure to return to church until they feel comfortable to do so.
12. 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 resumption of public worship**

1. Your church building may have reopened for individual prayer in Phase 2, in which case the following steps may already have been undertaken. However, if that is not the case and the church has been completely closed during the period of lockdown, there are certain initial matters which should be considered (items a.-g. below) in advance of any use being made of the building under Phase 3. The following initial actions are recommended:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Air the building by opening doors and any openable windows.
  - c. 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 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.)
  - d. 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](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/biological_agents/specific_biological_agents_infections/legionellosis/covid-19_legionella_information_note.pdf)
  - e. Consider whether you need to turn on electrical or heating systems where these have been turned off.
  - f. 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.
  - g. Ensure that the font and any holy water stoups are empty.
2. Consult with staff on plans to resume public worship and other church activities. If staff have been furloughed or working from home, ask them to complete a “return to work” form prior to their return to ensure that they can

properly return to work. A useful template has been produced by the Church of Ireland in Appendix 2 of its guidance document available at:-

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/PeopleCommunity/Return-to-In-Church-Worship-Protocols-04.06.20.pdf>

3. Communicate with staff/members prior to reopening on a specific date and explain how services will be conducted and what will be expected of those attending. In particular, provide guidance on who should not attend. 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 where individuals are being advised to remain at home (see B.7 above for such categories). Similarly, no one should be made to feel that they should attend a service if they are unhappy to do so.
4. Consider resilience planning and develop appropriate contingency measures to address situations such as key personnel catching the virus or having to self-isolate or shield. In the event of an outbreak of Covid-19 in the congregation, anyone affected should follow the 'Test and Protect' protocol immediately (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/>) and the Rector/vestry should seek guidance from the local public health authority.
5. Calculate 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. As noted above, in addition to restrictions on capacity arising because of physical distancing requirements, public worship is subject to the number of attendees being no greater than 50. In other words, even if the building is large enough with physical distancing to accommodate more than 50 people no more than 50 may attend. Where the church building will not be able to accommodate the likely size of the congregation (allowing for the possibility of unexpected visitors), it will be necessary to consider alternatives. That may include the provision of a blend of online and in-church worship, the ticketing of services to ensure capacity is not exceeded, simultaneous video relay to other premises (eg a church hall – but in such cases the limit of 50 still applies to the aggregate of the whole worshipping community ie church and church hall combined), the holding of extra services, or dividing the congregations into smaller groupings so that members might, for example, attend only once every two or three weeks. Each of such alternatives has its own implications, not least for those responsible for organising services or ministering at them, and vestries should be conscious of the additional burden which that might impose. Equally, consideration should be given to the fact that the church community may inevitably have to be divided, rather than being able to meet as a whole.
6. 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. A safe "queue management" system should be put in place to ensure that the flow of people both in and out of the building can be carefully

controlled (including queuing outside the building on arrival), having regard to the capacity of the building and to reduce the risk of congestion or contact. The congregating in groups of people in church car parks or at the entrance to the church should be discouraged. Anyone managing queues or flows of congregants should follow physical distance guidance.

7. In order to minimise physical contact, consideration should be given to hygiene and the use of handrails and door handles on entry. Leaving a door open would minimise physical contact.
8. Welcomers/sidespeople should help to inform and reassure the congregation as they arrive (or queue) regarding the way to safely enter and be seated in the building. Our welcome should be demonstrated by appropriate gestures and not handshakes or hugs. Welcomers should wear face coverings.
9. A procedure should be developed for the filling of pews or seating as people arrive at church, starting with the pews or seating furthest from the entrance. Similarly, on leaving at the end of the service, those nearest the exit should leave first. Seating should be clearly marked to ensure distancing of at least 2m between individuals or between households and it should be made clear to those attending services that they must maintain a distance of at least 2m from each other.
10. Public health signage should be prominently displayed to emphasise the need for ensuring appropriate hygiene on the part of those attending. Sample materials can be viewed at the following (some materials are for purchase):- <https://www.cpo.org.uk/catalogue.aspx?cat=630>
11. Hand sanitiser, with an alcohol content in excess of 60% in the case of an ethanol based product, or in excess of 70% in the case of one using isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol), should be available at or near the church entrance and those attending should be asked to use it on arrival and departure. Adequate supplies of tissues should be available and bins, ideally pedal operated bins, should be provided for their disposal.
12. Whilst not mandatory, Scottish Government guidance recommends that, for the sole purpose of enabling contact tracing in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak, places of worship maintain limited records of those working there or attending public worship. More detailed information regarding this is set out in Appendix 2.
13. 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 or be available for picking up on arrival to minimise unnecessary physical contact. Those distributing such materials should wash or sanitise their hands beforehand and also after collecting up any spares left over at the end of the service. An alternative may be for orders of service to be made available electronically and accessed on worshippers' devices. Where

those attending public worship bring their own bibles or prayer books, they should not share them during worship and should take them home again afterwards.

14. Because of the potential for the virus to remain on surfaces, church prayer books, hymn books and Bibles should not be available and should therefore not be stored in a place to which people have easy access. Similarly, consideration should be given to removing any soft furnishings (such as kneelers or hassocks) or other items that are difficult to clean.
15. Face coverings should be worn if the 2m physical distancing is likely to be compromised. Churches should encourage those attending to bring and wear their own face coverings and additionally should make face coverings available on arrival at the church building for any person who does not have their own. Hands should be washed or sanitised before putting on and after taking off a face covering. In services of the Eucharist, worshippers should sanitise their hands before removing their face covering to receive Communion and should sanitise again afterwards, before putting a face covering back on. All such coverings should be taken home or disposed of after use. Certain categories of individual are legally excused from wearing face coverings, including children under 5 and those who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or disability without severe distress.

#### **D. Matters arising during worship services**

Worship in the Scottish Episcopal Church covers a wide range of different styles and practice. The guidance below is broad in scope but it is recognised that some aspects will not be relevant in every congregation (for example, not all congregations will have a tradition of processions at the beginning or end of services). It should be read in conjunction with the Pastoral Advice from the College of Bishops available at:- <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Revised-Pastoral-Guidelines-for-Phase-3-Version-2-14.7.2020.pdf>

1. Processions may take place if 2m physical distancing is not compromised. However, no server should assist at the altar.
2. The reading of scripture and Intercessions may be undertaken from a fixed lectern or any other position in the church that does not compromise the 2m physical distancing requirement. Similarly, the sermon or other exposition of scripture needs to be delivered in the same manner. Handrails to a lectern or pulpit should be wiped down between use if touched by different individuals during the service.
3. The minister presiding at the service should avoid unnecessary movement within the congregation and ensure a distance of greater than 2m.
4. Liturgical and related matters concerning services are dealt with in detail in the Pastoral Advice from the College of Bishops. That includes a Protocol in

relation to eucharistic worship and comments on matters such as the Peace, use of incense and the administration of Holy Communion. It will be important that clear instructions are given to the congregation on how such a protocol is to be observed (for example, in relation to the Peace or queuing for Communion).

5. Singing: current advice is that singing, chanting or shouting should be avoided but that where it is essential to an act of worship, a single individual may sing or chant behind a plexi-glass screen, in which case any screen used should be cleaned regularly. Singing or chanting over the Communion elements should be avoided.
6. Use of microphones: consider having sufficient microphones so that they do not need to be shared. If that is not possible use individual foam coverings for each speaker and wash in soap and water after use.
7. To reduce the risk of infection it is recommended that vestments are not shared. Where possible, the use of vestments should be kept to a minimum.
8. Use of incense poses risks because it may cause some people to cough and thus potentially increase the risk of transmission of the virus. Consideration should be given to whether the risks associated this can be reduced, in particular so as to reduce the risk of coughing. The incense load in the thurible can be reduced and thuribles should not be carried into the congregation. If the building size permits, censuring may be carried out at distance from the main congregation with reduced or minimal incense loads.
9. Congregational giving should be encouraged to be by way of standing order or other electronic means. If an offering is to be taken in church, the collection plate should not be circulated but could be by arrival or retiring offering. Guidance on the counting of any collection is set out in section E below.
10. Worship bands: members of worship bands should observe appropriate physical distancing and avoid sharing instruments or other equipment during the course of the service. Instruments which require breath to operate should not be used. All instruments which are used should be cleaned appropriately before subsequent use. As noted above, current advice is that singing should be avoided unless essential to an act of worship. It is suggested that any singing be restricted to one member of the band who may sing behind a screen and who should maintain physical distance of 2m from other worship group members and not face in their direction when singing.
11. Prayer/healing ministry, laying on of hands: pastoral guidance on these matters is contained in the Phase 3 Pastoral Guidance from the College of Bishops.

## **E. Post-service issues**

1. Refreshments should not be offered before or after the service. We will need to rely on our warmth of verbal and non-verbal communication, whilst maintaining a 2m physical distance, to convey our hospitality of welcome and community.
2. Those attending services should be encouraged to bring their own bottles of water or other refreshments if they wish. Otherwise, in emergency, drinking water could be made available in a disposable cup. Those handling any such cup should wash hands or sanitise before and after making contact with it.
3. Those responsible for counting the collection (if any) should ensure handwashing/sanitising before and after doing so. Disposable gloves should be worn for counting and banking.

## **F. Cleaning**

1. After any service, the areas to which those attending the service have had access should be cleaned and disinfected, before the building is required for its next use. Where possible, to reduce risk to those undertaking cleaning, cleaning should be deferred until shortly before the next use of the building, since Covid-19 persistence and infectivity on surfaces diminishes over time.
2. Handles, rails, light switches or other areas with which physical contact is likely should be cleaned and disinfected. 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>
3. 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.
4. Church toilets may be used provided physical distancing and good hygiene practices can be implemented. Depending on the specific circumstances, it may be that use needs to be restricted to one person at a time, with a physically distanced queuing system being operated. Since toilet facilities may create additional infection risks, careful consideration must be given as to how regular cleaning can be undertaken. There is evidence that the virus can be transmitted by intestinal infection which means that toilet seats, handles, doorknobs and locks should be cleaned regularly. Paper towels rather than hand dryers, and liquid soap should be provided, and an individual should be appointed to be responsible for ensuring appropriate cleaning.

## **G. Other Matters**

1. **Outdoor worship:** any outdoor worship in Phase 3 must be subject to Scottish Government requirements limiting outdoor gatherings and must also comply with the same requirements for physical distancing as apply inside, as well as the guidance about eucharistic services in the Bishops' Pastoral

Advice referred to above. As with indoor worship, it should be subject to appropriate risk assessment.

2. **Baptisms and other services:** guidance is provided in the Pastoral Advice from the College of Bishops referred to above.
3. **Children's and youth activities:** activities for children and young people are permitted under Phase 3 but must operate under the accepted procedures for physical distancing and good hygiene. As in relation to church services, consideration will require to be given to the capacity of spaces used for children's and young people's groups. Where children are part of the worshipping community in Phase 3, children should sit in family groups and young children should remain close to their parent or guardian to ensure that physical distancing is maintained or, separate children's activities may be offered provided that appropriate risk assessment and planning has been undertaken and approved by the Diocesan Bishop. Toys or games used during children's activities should be washed before next use. Government guidance for use in educational and child minding settings may also be of assistance in planning children's and young people's activities:-  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-physical-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/pages/overview/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-childminder-services-guidance/pages/summary/>

General guidance on youth activities is available at:-  
<https://youthworksupport.co.uk/>

4. **Church events:** events such as congregational picnics, outings, fundraising activities, fetes, car boot sales, should follow Government restrictions on outdoor social gatherings. At present such gatherings are limited to maximum of five households in total and to there being no more than 15 people in attendance. In practice, therefore, most such events will not be possible. If any such small events do take place they must be conducted in accordance with continued physical distancing requirements and good hygiene practice.
5. **Kitchens:** since refreshments will not be provided in connection with worship, church kitchens are unlikely to be used for church events. However when it becomes possible to make use of kitchen premises, guidance on the handling of food is from Food Standards Scotland may be of assistance:-  
<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety/coronavirus>

Where a church runs a café, it will be subject to the Government regulations regarding the hospitality sector.

6. **Church halls:** use by a church of its own church hall in Phase 3 should be done in accordance with the guidance outlined above in relation to services in churches – the same general provisions will apply. In Phase 3 it is likely that some external groups, and in some cases other denominations or faiths, may be permitted to and wish to restart using church buildings or other facilities

such as halls. Various kinds of activities remain prohibited by the Scottish Government. These include: indoor fitness/exercise groups, indoor soft play, large indoor gatherings, such as congregational meetings, informal hospitality, such as lunch clubs and coffee mornings, and indoor performances in front of a live audience, including dramatic, musical or comedy performances.

7. Vestries will need to consider carefully the implications of allowing such external groups to resume use of church facilities. Any group may function only to the extent that Government regulations permit the resumption of activity of the kind in question. For example, if a church hall is to be used for education purposes, the Government guidance for educational settings must be followed.
8. Vestries' consideration of permitting use by external groups should include
  - a. the physical capacity of the accommodation,
  - b. the need to adhere to physical distancing and good hygiene practice and
  - c. use of facilities such as toilets and kitchens.
  - d. consideration as to whether the same premises can be made available to a number of different users during the week.
9. When permitted, arrangements for the hire of church premises by external groups should ensure that such external users are responsible for adhering to guidance on physical distancing and hygiene and should clearly set out responsibility for cleaning. It is also recommended that both the church and the external user ensure that the arrangements are adequately catered for under their insurance policies. If there is any doubt as to whether an external user can adequately clean premises after use, consideration will need to be given to the church itself ensuring appropriate cleaning and disinfection.
10. **Meetings:** any indoor meeting of vestries or other groups, whether in the church building or not, is subject to the Government restrictions on number of households meeting inside or applicable guidance in relation to office premises depending on the venue. That would include for example, house groups or other meetings which normally take place in homes. A vestry meeting on church premises should be regarded as falling under the Government's category of "non-essential business" which under the Route Map is unlikely to be permitted before 31 July 2020. Any outdoor meeting of any such groups should observe Government restrictions on outdoor gatherings. A meeting taking place in a church or church hall, such as an annual meeting, should observe the same principles set out above in relation to worship (eg physical distancing, good hygiene etc).
11. **Safeguarding matters:** existing safeguarding policy should continue to be adhered to in Phase 3. It is possible that as lockdown eases, churches may encounter a higher incidence of reporting of issues of abuse which may have taken place during lockdown. The provincial Safeguarding Officers are available should advice be required in relation to this. There may be stories of individual or family trauma, as well as pastoral support in relation to issues of

ill-health, bereavement, and for those on furlough or facing redundancy or financial difficulties. Similarly, pastoral care for those experiencing the effects of isolation, separation and fractured relationships may be needed. For some, continuing pastoral support may require to be on a remote basis.

12. **Bellringing:** bellringing activities may resume in Phase 3 but subject to physical distancing, the observance of good hygiene practice and the Scottish Government restrictions on the number of households permitted to meet indoors. General guidance on bellringing developed south of the border is available at:-

<https://cccbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guidance-Notes-23.6.20-complete-set.pdf>

Please note that that guidance has been developed in England in the light of the UK Government's approach to lockdown easing in England. In Scotland the Scottish Association of Change Ringers has issued advice in May to its members on safety and maintenance regarding bell towers. Any further advice issued by SACR should be available from its website: <https://www.sacr.org/>

Should any queries arise in connection with the application of this Guidance they should be raised in the first instance with your Diocesan Bishop.

Scottish Episcopal Church Advisory Group on Re-opening of Churches

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **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.

The Government has encapsulated its key guidance as **FACTS**

- **Face coverings** should be worn in enclosed spaces
- **Avoid crowded areas**
- **Clean your hands** regularly and thoroughly, and clean hard surfaces after touching them.
- **Two metre distancing** remains the clear advice.
- **Self-isolate**, and book a test immediately, if you have symptoms of COVID - a new cough; a fever, or a loss of, or change in, your sense of taste or smell.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Keeping a Register of Contact Details**

Whilst not mandatory, the Scottish Government guidance recommends that, for the sole purpose of enabling contact tracing in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak, places of worship maintain limited records of those working there or attending public worship. Specifically, it recommends that in relation to staff/volunteers the following information should be collected

- the names of individuals who work or volunteer at the place of worship
- a contact phone number for each member of staff/volunteer
- the dates and times that individuals are at work/volunteering

and that in relation to worshippers, the following be collected

- the name of each worshipper, or when worshippers are attending as a small household group, the contact details for one member of that group – a ‘lead member’
- a contact phone number for each worshipper, or for the ‘lead member’ of a small household group
- date of visit and arrival and, wherever possible, departure time

Any such records will require to comply with data protection principles, should be held confidentially and, ideally, by the rector and should be destroyed securely after 21 days (for example by shredding, or if any such data is held electronically, it should be permanently erased).

Wider guidance on this (written for the hospitality sector), including information on how to collect, store and securely destroy data and on how information will be shared, is available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tourism-and-hospitality-sector-guidance/pages/collecting-customer-contact-details/>

However, the collection of such information in places of worship carries additional implications. Because attendance at church may be regarded as an indication of religious belief, which is regarded for data protection purposes as “sensitive personal data”, it is recommended that consent is sought from those providing their personal data.

In many cases, contact details for congregational members will already be held in records such as the Communicants or Adherents Rolls but such records will not cover other worshippers, nor will they envisage the sharing of information with NHS Scotland. It is recognised that many individuals make feel sensitively about their attendance at worship being recorded and such information should not be collected without their consent. It can be emphasised that the collection of such data is in large part for the benefit of the person whose data is being collected so that they can subsequently be contacted in the event of an outbreak.

### **Version 3, Issue Date 4 August 2020**

A template Privacy Notice and Consent Form is available at:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Data-Protection-Privacy-Notice-and-Consent-Form-Version-2-4.8.2020.docx>

It is accepted that maintaining records as the Government recommends will not be straightforward for congregations. One possibility, in relation to regular worshippers, would be for prior notification to be given by email or other communication informing them of the Government recommendation that records be held. Such communication could usefully draw on the information and explanations set out in the template referred to above. Such prior communication could be reinforced by similar information on signage at arrival at church and/or in orders of service or notice sheets. On arrival, worshippers could be asked whether they are willing for a note of their attendance and contact details to be stored for the specific purpose of enabling contact tracing and, if so, their names could, for example, be recorded against a church address list. In all cases such records must be held confidentially and destroyed after 21 days.

Alternatively, copies of Privacy Notice/Consent forms could be made available for completion in church. In the case of visitors whose names are not already held on a church membership list, such a form would need to be used, provided that the visitor is content to complete it. Care should be taken not to share the use of pens, unless users have sanitised their hands immediately before use.

Churches do not have to verify the information provided. Many churches will already benefit from the “not for profit” exemption in relation to the annual fee payable to the Information Commissioner. The Commissioner’s Office has confirmed that collection of data for contact tracing purposes may be regarded as still falling within the benefit of that exemption. If any congregation has concerns about that, an alternative exemption is available if the contact tracing data is processed only in manual and not electronic form.

Further information and guidance on this topic can be found on the website of the Information Commissioner at:

<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-recovery-data-protection-advice-for-organisations/collecting-customer-and-visitor-details-for-contact-tracing/>