

FAQs about Opening of Places of Worship - (updated 9 July 2020)

The key documents alongside the guidance for services and individual prayer are now:

[Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship \(version 1.2\)](#)

[Opening Cathedral and Church Buildings to the public from 4 July \(version 1\)](#)

[Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public \(version 4\)](#) - which now includes a checklist/some additional sections incl 2m or 1m+ with mitigation, and recording who attends.

And the key government publications:

<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-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

<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>

<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering>

FAQs

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a) Weddings

Any questions about banns, licences etc. for **weddings** should be directed to the Registrar, Andrew Wynne andrew.wynne@fbcmb.co.uk. See also the [Occasional Offices](#) page on our website.

b) Recording those who attend?

Every document published by the Church of England for the opening of buildings from 4 July either refers to, or links to a document that refers to, the recommendation to assist the NHS test and trace by keeping a temporary record of those who come to the premises for 21 days. ([Govt advice on 29 June, updated on 4 July](#)).

Consent should be given when information is requested and although encouraged, it is not mandatory to provide contact details. Nobody should be excluded for declining to give their consent details.

Record keeping

The opening up of public places following the COVID-19 outbreak is being supported by the NHS Test and Trace service.

In line with other government guidance for other venues including in the retail and hospitality sector, you should assist this service by keeping an accurate 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. Find [further guidance](#) 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 (copied below).

Template: consent form for places of worship and those handling sensitive information

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

QR code

A digital solution is a QR code that can be scanned – for those with a mobile phone – akin to some pubs/restaurants, with the info accessible by the NHS only on request.

One example is from members of Christ Church Bayston Hill, who have produced ChurchLog.co.uk

It is simple and free to use, stores details for 21 days and automatically deletes them. It is only accessible by authorised bodies when requested through their office SITC – Shropshire ITC <https://shropshireitc.co.uk/>

c) Holy Communion

See [Church of England guidance](#).

At present Holy Communion is distributed in one kind, with the bread distributed in silence and with no sharing of the wine (apart from the president, who should consume).

The words of distribution ('The body and blood of Christ' or 'The body and blood of Christ keep you in eternal life' or the Order Two/BCP words of distribution) are spoken once to the whole congregation, and all who intend to receive say, 'Amen' together. At the distribution, **Holy Communion is administered in silence**. The consecrated bread or wafer will need to be dropped into the hands of communicants. This links to the FAQ below on face coverings (e).

d) Who can do what? Personal Risk factors

[This set of risk factors](#) was due to be accompanied by a risk assessment template from Public Health England, but the changes for 4 July have overtaken this plan.

<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering> states:

If you are [over 70](#) or [clinically vulnerable](#) you can also volunteer outside your home if:

- the volunteering organisation [does a risk assessment](#)
- you can work in a separate area away from other people

This is now deemed to be an individual decision following a local risk assessment. This can be done by working through the issued raised in the parish risk assessment and guidance for what the individual may be involved in e.g. a funeral service, cleaning etc.

e) Face coverings

The guidance for Public Worship and also for Holy Communion includes reference to the use of face masks being one of individual choice.

Q. Should people wear face coverings? At present there is no Government requirement to wear face coverings in places where social distancing can be complied with. However, people may wish to do so, and this is a personal decision.

The [Government guidance](#) includes:

Worshippers, volunteers and staff, may choose to wear face coverings to offer protection to others and if so it is important to use them properly.

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

f) Outdoor worship

[Guidance on churchyards](#) and page 11 in the [guidance on opening church buildings](#) says:

Q. Can we have worship outside? Yes, if the churchyard or land around your church is owned or managed by you. ... then the same capacity limits apply as for internal worship. Social distancing and hygiene measures must still be maintained.

But not local fields as has been asked about *If you are worshipping in an outside space not owned or managed by the church then the relevant guidance for that place should be adhered to. (currently groups of 6).*

It is not possible to hold services in vicarage gardens as in most cases these are DBF property and not grounds of the church.

g) Use of churches/church halls by others – e.g. a school leavers' service

[Guidance on opening church buildings](#) (p8) says:

Q. Can multiple users now return to our church and/or church hall? Yes, from 4 July this is permitted for some purposes so long as it can be done safely. The government has [issued guidance](#) on this which all users should read. Note that fitness activities and indoor sports are still prohibited.

h) Meetings

Also in the above government document is:

3d: Meetings and civic functions

*We continue to recommend that where meetings can take place **digitally** without the need for face-to-face contact, **they should continue to do so**. Where community facilities need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings should be managed within the social distancing guidance and principles set out above. The principles set out in the 'Safer workplaces' guidance apply, including but not limited to: i) meetings of civic, political or community groups (e.g. parish council meeting, ward meeting of political party; **charity board of trustees**)*

i) Singing

We now have Government and Church of England guidance not to sing.

If references are needed the best two are:

The [government advice](#) under 'Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments.'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

Reflected in the C of E's [Conducting Public Worship](#) (p7)

Some crematoria have allowed singing all the way through the crisis. One chapter has agreed to follow the C of E guidance and then have been in touch with their funeral directors/crematorium.

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