



ENFIELD COUNCIL

# GUIDANCE FOR THE SAFE USE OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

4TH JULY 2020



## PLEASE NOTE

- This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide.
- This guidance is national guidance that applies across England. Please consider if local restrictions are in place when reading and implementing this guidance
- The government frequently amends guidance, so this may be subject to change

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

- This guidance is designed to assist places of worship in England to prepare to open for a broad range of worship activities.
- The guidance sets out how this can be done in a manner that is COVID-19 secure and in line with social distancing guidelines, in order to minimise the risk of exposure to infection.

## CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS GUIDANCE

- Gatherings of more than 30 people will be permitted. This will include places of worship and their surrounding premises.
- Whilst engaging in an activity in the place of worship or surrounding grounds, all parties should **adhere to social distancing guidelines**. From 4th July, 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable) between households are acceptable.

### THE FOLLOWING TABLE SETS OUT WHERE IT IS ADVISABLE TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITHIN A PLACE OF WORSHIP DUE TO THE POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED SPREAD OF COVID-19.

Activity	Advised gathering limit
Communal worship, including led prayers, devotions or meditations 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 a risk assessment (see <a href="#">Section 5 'Restrictions on capacity'</a> ).  Social distancing should be strictly adhered to (see <a href="#">Section 5 'Social distancing'</a> ).
Marriage ceremonies	Marriage ceremonies should have no more than 30 people in attendance, and social distancing should be strictly adhered to. See more detail in the <a href="#">Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic</a> .
Funerals	Funerals should have no more than 30 people in attendance, and social distancing should be strictly adhered to. See more detail in the <a href="#">COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic</a> .
Other life cycle ceremonies (definition in Table 2).	Other life cycle ceremonies should have no more than 30 people present, unless the life cycle rite takes place during routine communal worship.  Social distancing should be strictly adhered to (see <a href="#">Section 5 'Social distancing'</a> ).

# KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SAFELY OPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP

- A COVID-19 **risk assessment should be completed** by each place of worship. This will be in addition to any risk assessment already in place.
- This link provides generic guidance on completing a risk assessment. Assessments should be done in consultation with unions or workers (including volunteers and contractors) if relevant.

## ADAPTING PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

- Places of worship and faith communities should adapt religious services, especially where ceremonies would otherwise have taken place over a number of hours or days, to ensure the safety of those present and minimise spread of infection
- It is recommended that, where possible, places of worship 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.

### 1. THE USE OF SHARED ITEMS

- Individuals should be prevented from touching or kissing objects that are handled communally
- 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.
- Places of worship should keep a selection of clean books for individuals to use which should **be quarantined for 48 hours** after each use.

### 2. FOOD AND DRINK

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

used, however the sharing of food should be avoided, as should the use of communal vessels.

- If it is necessary to handle consumables as a part of a faith practice, those giving and receiving food items should wash their hands thoroughly before and after consumption, or wear gloves.
- Speaking, singing and chanting should not happen across uncovered consumables

### 3. SINGING, CHANTING AND THE USE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

- **People should avoid singing, shouting, raising voices** and/or playing music at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult or that may encourage shouting.
- Activities such as singing, chanting, shouting and/or playing of instruments that are blown into should be specifically avoided in worship or devotions and in rehearsals
- Organs can be played for faith practices, but should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

### 4. WEDDINGS AND OTHER LIFECYCLE EVENTS

- No food or drink should be consumed as a part of the event unless required for the purposes of solemnisation.
- As stated in Table 1, weddings should have no more than 30 people present. Other life cycle ceremonies should also have no more than 30 people present, unless the event is part of a routine communal worship



service. Worshippers should maintain social distancing.

- Large wedding receptions or parties should not take place after life cycle events.

## 5. USE OF WATER

- Any pre-requisite washing/ablution rituals should not be done at the place of worship but carried out prior to arrival.
- 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, small volumes can be splashed onto the body, but **full immersion should be avoided**.

## 6. 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 container 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.

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN ATTENDING PLACES OF WORSHIP

- **Young children should be supervised by the parent or guardian.** They should wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use hand sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
- 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.

# GENERAL ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

## 1. TEST AND TRACE

The government has launched an NHS Test and Trace service to manage the risk of the virus re-emerging. The service:

- provides testing for anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 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; and
- alerts those contacts, where necessary, and notifies them they need to self-isolate to help stop the spread of the virus.

## 2. RESTRICTIONS TO CAPACITY

- The number of people permitted to enter the place of worship at any one time should be limited, so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable) between households.
- The size and circumstance (including ventilation) of the premises will determine the maximum number of people that can be accommodated whilst also facilitating social distancing; this may therefore be lower than the maximum 30 people who can attend life-cycle events such as weddings.

## 3. SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Where possible, **adhere to social distancing of at least 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation** (where 2 metres is not viable) between households. For frequently used places, mark areas using floor tape or paint to help people maintain social distance.
- Additional mitigations could include, for instance, avoiding any face-to-face seating

by changing layouts, reducing the number of people in enclosed spaces, improving ventilation.

## 4. 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.

## 5. 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 so by NHS Test and Trace, they should participate remotely.

## 6. 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. Download a Public Health England poster.
- 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 no tissue available.

## 7. TOILETS

- Toilets inside or linked to places of worship should be kept open and carefully managed. To make the use of toilets as safe as possible:
- **Using social distancing** marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out
- **Make hand sanitiser available on entry** to toilets and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including **running water and liquid soap** and either paper towels or hand dryers. **Communal towels should be removed** and replaced with single use paper towels.

## 8. CLEANING

- All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched such as door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned using standard cleaning products. See guidance.
- Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before reopening for the first time.

## 9. FACE COVERINGS

- Face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including social distancing, minimising time spent in contact, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in a place of worship. 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.
- Thoroughly wash hands before putting them on and taking them off.
- The key thing is they should cover the mouth and nose and fit well around the face. See guidance on making face coverings at home.

- Face coverings should not be used by young children or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. For example, primary age children unassisted, or those with respiratory conditions.

## 10. PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

- Individuals who are shielding should continue to follow the government's advice on shielding.
- If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship they should go home immediately and be advised to follow the stay at home guidance which covers NHS Test and Trace

## 11. INDIVIDUALS AGED 70 YEARS AND OVER ATTENDING THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

- Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions.
- Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household.

## 12. INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE EXTREMELY CLINICALLY VULNERABLE/SHIELDING

- From Monday 6 July, those shielding individuals may choose to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a support bubble with another household, they will therefore still be advised not to attend places of worship indoors.

## 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 to ensure that visitors comply with government's guidance, and any risk assessments completed for the venue, for the safety of all those who visit and work there.
- You may wish to make the government's information on COVID-19 available to your faith community and others, in order to challenge misinformation.

### PROTECTIVE SECURITY

- 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.

### ENFORCEMENT

- Where the enforcing authority (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.

