Coronavirus (COVID-19): calculating physical distancing capacity in public settings

1. Overview

New elements of this guidance are effective from 17 May 2021 and covers

- physical distance based capacity for non-domestic premises
- physical distance based capacity for life events
- physical distance based capacity for events

This guidance is designed to support safer reopening of premises. It highlights the importance of, and supports, the implementation of physical distancing in order to suppress the virus. It is supplementary to existing guidance. Existing sectoral guidance can be found at: Coronavirus (COVID-19): creating and maintaining safer workplaces - gov.scot (www.gov.scot). Premises may want to refer to specific sectoral guidance in the first instance.

This guidance is based on physical distancing standards which have been in place since summer 2020 and the guidance in this document does not change the policy or regulatory position on physical distancing requirements. This guidance is designed to support public settings to consider their capacity taking into account these existing requirements. Where premises have fully considered physical distancing rules in line with their sectoral guidance and taking account of their unique business layouts and flows we do not expect premises to adjust these calculations.

2. Physical distance based capacity for non-domestic premises

- current position
- what our ask is now
- how you measure physical distance based capacity
- additional COVID mitigation measures to consider
- displaying capacity
- help and support
3. Current position

Physical distancing is a key measure alongside ventilation, face coverings, enhanced hygiene and self-isolation if experiencing symptoms, to help us reduce transmission of the virus. We recognise that many premises have already worked hard to ensure appropriate distancing is in place. Indeed many are already working closely with local regulators to ensure that their premises are adjusted as effectively as possible to manage the risk posed by COVID. There is no change to the requirements within the regulations for businesses and service providers to take measures making it possible to maintain physical distancing. Appropriate distancing has always been required since the beginning of the pandemic and where premises have fully considered distancing in line with their sectoral guidance, taking into account their unique situation, this guidance is not designed to supersede this.

The progress being made in the vaccination programme and measures taken to suppress the virus are allowing some restrictions to be removed. However the virus is still prevalent and much of the population, including our workforce, has yet to be fully vaccinated. It is also important to note that vaccination does not provide 100% protection and people may still transmit the virus, this means that appropriate physical distancing continues to be a key element to reopening safely.

The requirement for physical distancing continues to be reviewed and at the earliest opportunity where it is safe to do so this requirement will be relaxed.

4. What our ask is now

This guidance aims is to support

- public confidence that public spaces have considered physical distancing
- consistency so that all public settings are considering physical distancing in the same way
- additional clarity on the physical distancing requirement

While the rules on physical distancing have not changed, many premises may have been closed for some time and in some cases may
have previously operated under number caps. Our aim is to promote safer venues and workplaces and a sustainable reopening so that we lower the risk of outbreaks which could mean that additional protective measures may become necessary.

To do that we are asking all non-domestic* premises:

1. To consider what their maximum physical distance based capacity (PDBC) limits are for their premises.
2. To take reasonable steps to manage the capacity to avoid breaching appropriate physical distancing rules.
3. To display this maximum capacity at their entrance to help manage public confidence and to help manage compliance with guidance; and
4. Where appropriate, to complete additional steps prior to opening but no later than May 17 when, if the data allows, we move to Level 2.

*Non-domestic premises, for the purposes of this guidance, are defined as public buildings (non-private dwellings) with the exceptions of those used to deliver essential public services (e.g. education settings, hospitals, courts, prisons, local authority offices; child contact centres etc. where separate guidance applies)

5. How you measure physical distance based capacity

There is sectoral guidance which should be referred to, to support premises to calculate their PDBC and reopen safely.

Getting your facilities fit for sport (sportscotland.org.uk) guidance should be referred to for indoor sports facilities, while the Scottish Government stadia guidance should be used for events in these setting.

Performing arts venues, concert halls, theatres, music venues, comedy clubs, sports stadiums and grounds, museums and galleries and conference centres will have to seek additional approval to operate at a capacity above the advised maximum limits for small events. See physical distance based capacity in events.
For premises hosting or delivering community learning and development, there are limits at each level for these settings. Any premises hosting CLD settings must adhere to these limits.

The current standard requirement for premises is two metres. Some sectors such as transport and hospitality may instead have one metre requirements subject to additional mitigations. As noted previously most premises have already calculated their capacity limits and this is not designed to supersede this calculation where it is in line with existing guidance.

There are no prescribed methodologies for calculating the PDBC. Premises can use any appropriate calculation provided that they can demonstrate that they have fully considered the physical distancing requirements to reduce the risk of transmission.

To aid these considerations an illustrative methodology has been set out to help calculate a rudimentary PDBC limit at section 9. This PDBC calculation is based on the fire safety occupancy capacity formula. However, this does not take account of fixed seating and furniture and other relevant variables therefore can only provide an estimation. The PDBC limit for the premises may increase or decrease after due consideration has been given to the factors set out below.

For outdoor settings which do not have a fire safety occupancy capacity, it may be helpful to refer to existing publications such as the Purple Guide or Green Guide as a starting point.

When calculating the PDBC limit, premises should take account of the following factors, most of which will be familiar:

- the layout of the premises inside and outside, considering pinch points such as exits and entrances, corridors and toilets and how people will move around the premises safely. Consideration should be given to access requirements and the safe usage of any provided facilities (such as restrooms)
- the number of staff on duty, as well as the number of household groups and individuals needs to be considered.
- where customers or attendees are seated, the possible configurations that maintain the distancing requirements and the furniture will influence available capacity.
account should be taken of the fact that individual household groups do not need to physically distance. Planning the seating of households may help maximise capacity within the premises.

consideration should be given to what activity the space is being used for, space requirements will change dependent on the activity.

children under 5 need not be counted in the number of people admitted to the venue. However, where seating is provided for children this should be included for space measurements, even where the children using the seating are expected to be under 5.

engaging with the public should take place at designated points which have been risk assessed, or where physical distancing can be observed and where queues are avoided

there is an increased risk that physical distancing will not be observed in queues, and that this can lead to people crowding together, which must be avoided as much as possible. There should be no queueing inside licensed hospitality settings, such as at bars, where table service is a requirement. Elsewhere, queueing will need careful management ensuring requisite spacing, using physical separators/screens where necessary or possible to provide a barrier between people, and/or one-way systems.

steps should be taken to avoid queues outside premises as much as possible but where unavoidable for safety reasons due to the business model measures should be taken to manage queuing through booking systems and if queues occur, ensure physical distancing is maintained.

systems should be in place to safely manage capacity to avoid overcrowding. It is essential that crowding in general is not permitted. This is an identified risk and must be avoided at all times.

The above factors should be considered by premises when calculating their maximum PDBC as part of their ongoing risk assessments to ensure they are in compliance with the requirements in the Coronavirus regulations and the associated guidance.

The requirement in brief is that persons responsible for businesses, places of worship or providing a service, take measures which ensure that physical distancing can be maintained. This, along with measures to limit close face-to-face interaction and maintain hygiene, will help to minimise the risks of exposure to coronavirus. As noted there is no prescribed methodology which is possible to fit all premises, people
responsible for operating these premises should take consideration of this guidance when assessing and setting their own PDBC limits.

6. Additional COVID mitigation measures to consider

Limiting overall capacity to ensure that physical distancing is possible is a requirement to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus, but on its own it is not sufficient. Premises should therefore ensure that other relevant safety measures are in place no matter how many attendees are present on the setting. Examples of the types of measures are:

- maximising ventilation in the setting in line with guidance
- controlling the use of entrances, passageways, stairs and lifts
- controlling the use of shared facilities such as toilets and kitchens
- providing, or requiring the use of, personal protective equipment where appropriate
- providing information to those entering or working at the setting about how to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, for example having hand sanitiser available, ensuring touchpoints are cleaned.
- there are also requirements on staff, suppliers and members of the public to wear face coverings (with some exceptions such as when they are seated and eating) and around good hand and respiratory hygiene. Premises should ensure they support staff, suppliers and members of the public in meeting these requirements via signage and providing hand washing facilities.
- in certain settings, you must collect and record the details of customers, staff and anyone else who visits the venue, this includes pubs, bars, restaurants or cafes that may be part of another business, such as a hotel, visitor attraction or club. We'd also ask owners or managers of other businesses and services to collect and record the details of visitors, if possible. One way of making sure you collect people's details is by displaying a Check In Scotland QR code poster at your venue, and asking anyone who visits to scan this QR code when they arrive.
- premises may wish to use the Coronavirus (COVID-19): compliance self-assessment tool - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) to help assess the measures in place.
Relevant sectoral guidance noted earlier should be consulted when considering the points above.

7. Displaying capacity

Premises are expected to publicly display their maximum capacity for the premises with physical distancing taken into account. It may help manage customer expectations and boost consumer confidence. The sign displaying the capacity should be large enough and clear enough for people to read easily (A4 sized). The maximum PDBC limit should not be breached as it is based on the maximum amount of people who can be accommodated in a setting with appropriate physical distancing, taking account of the critical points of layout and how people will move around the premises.

Some settings (for example conference centres) may operate multiple discrete public spaces, where that is the case a PDBC should be calculated for each separate space and displayed appropriately. If spaces are mixed use the PDBC may differ substantively depending on the physical set up, where this is the case it should also be reflected in the signage.

In line with other guidance there should also be clear signage throughout the setting to inform people if they are within a one metre or a two metre physical distancing zone and, most importantly, that everyone is reminded to observe the requirement to distance. The setting should seek to challenge any occurrence of crowding and remind staff, attendees and suppliers of their duty of care when within the setting and to each other by observing physical distancing.

8. Help and support

Local Authorities will continue to engage with premises to support compliance with coronavirus regulations and guidance. Local Authority regulators are working to the 4 E’s approach, by engaging, explaining, encouraging and, as a last resort, enforcing. During their routine compliance checks on premises where there has been a reported concern, Local Authority officers will, as previously, consider the distancing in place and capacity limits of the premises, including asking questions about how the capacity limits have been determined. If the
local authority have any concerns they will support the premises to work out a safer maximum capacity.

9. **Methodology**

A simple way to calculate a rudimentary physical distance based capacity (PDBC) limit for the space (without taking account of fixtures and fittings) would be to:

- divide the available floor space by the space required by each individual (as worked out via one of the methods later in this guidance)

However, this will only provide a starting point as there are many considerations which could increase or decrease this figure, including bringing fixtures and fittings into the mix. Some key considerations are set out below, including:

- the ability to maximise the capacity by optimising the allocation of seats without breaching physical distancing, for example how you seat household groups could provide more capacity
- where applicable, the ability to monitor and manage people standing/walking who may cluster or migrate in such a way as to breach physical distancing
- the capacity of toilet facilities, concourses/corridors/walkways, which despite the overall reduction in numbers, might require yet further capacity reductions to be made in order to avoid breaches
- the capacity required to ensure access requirements for wheelchair users/those with accessibility needs

**Working out the space requirement for an individual**

There are two methodologies which can help work out the physically distanced space per person to aid with the calculation. These calculations are based on 2 metre distancing. Premises which are able to use 1 metre should substitute relevant figures into the calculation.
Method 1

This method may be used in areas with good ventilation where people are seated for the most part of their stay on the premises, with additional mitigations in place such as check-in requirements. This method is based upon a 2 metre diameter circle, centred on the head.

- For a person seated, the calculation would be the area of a circle with a 2 metre diameter: $\text{Area} = \pi r^2$  \(\text{Area} = 3.14 \times 1^2 \text{ Area} = 3.14\text{m}^2\)
- For a person in a standing or walking area using method 1, a square should be used rather than a circle to take account of natural side-to-side movements made while walking/standing. The calculation would be the area of a 2 metre square: $\text{Area} = A^2$ $\text{Area} = 2^2 \text{ Area} = 4\text{m}^2$

Method 2

Method 2 is recommended in premises where good ventilation and other key mitigations are difficult to achieve, or where people are standing or walking. This method takes into account the width and depth of an individual's body, so that, when positioned next to another individual, the distance between the two in all directions measures approximately 2 metres.

- for people seated: a 2.5m diameter circle would be used (this is to allow for a typical width of 0.5m for an individual who is seated)
- for people walking or standing: a 2.6m diameter square would be used (this is to allow for the typical width of 0.6m for an individual who is walking or standing, accounting for side-to-side movement)

You may choose to use method 1 in one section and method 2 in another, provided that the sections are separate.

This will allow premises to work out a basic physical distanced based capacity for their seated and standing/walking areas, before taking further necessary considerations as set out in the guidance like seating arrangements, to help set the maximum capacity for the premises.

For more detailed guidance on handling of seated and standing spaces, spectator events and sports grounds, you may wish to see the Supplementary Guidance 02: Planning for Social Distancing at Sports Grounds (sgsa.org.uk) guidance. This provides more detailed
guidance for larger arenas. Please note this guidance is set at 1 metre, however you can request a 2 metre version via the Sports Ground Safety Authority website.

10. Physical distance based capacity for life events

Life events are defined, for the purpose of this guidance, as:
- marriages/civil partnerships
- wedding/civil partnership receptions
- funerals
- post-funeral gatherings such as wakes

They do not include other milestone events such as birthdays and other celebrations. For prescribed life events (including wedding receptions) specific limits are set out in Coronavirus (COVID-19): local protection levels - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) guidance these limits are set out Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Maximum attendees</th>
<th>Expected timing (subject to supportive data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>20 (no post-funeral gatherings or wedding receptions)</td>
<td>Funerals now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marriages now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>50 (alcohol permitted)</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>50 (alcohol permitted)</td>
<td>17 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>100 (alcohol permitted)</td>
<td>Likely from early June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 0</td>
<td>200 (alcohol permitted)</td>
<td>Likely from end June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Premises can host life events attended by the maximum number of attendees, if this is within their calculated PDBC. Otherwise the number of attendees should be reduced accordingly, to accommodate physical distancing requirements.

11. Physical distance based capacity in events

This guidance does not cover:

- mass participation sports (marathons, triathlons etc.) There is separate sector guidance available.
- cinemas, Bingo halls, snooker halls or casinos which are not considered to be events, for which separate sector guidance is available and PDBC non-domestic premises guidance applies.
- static demonstrations which are covered by separate guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): protests and demonstrations - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- marches and parades which will be covered by separate guidance at the point they are allowed to resume
- picketing which is exempt through the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No.18) Regulations 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)
- flagship events which are identified through the Scottish Government Events Gateway Process

Events are defined as activities that take place whether indoors or outdoors, that are an organised gathering or activity, limited in duration, that bring people together in significant numbers for culture, sport, recreation, entertainment, art or business.

All event organisers/those responsible for any premises hosting events, with the exception of those organising drive-in events, but including those organising events in premises which habitually host events such as concert halls, theatres, music venues, comedy clubs, sports stadiums and grounds, and conference centres, should calculate their PDBC to work out a safe maximum capacity for the premises and event. The capacity of theatres, concert halls, music venues, comedy clubs, sports stadiums and grounds, museums and galleries and conference centres is subject to two metre physical distancing requirements.

Discussions on capacity numbers should take place between the local authority and venue. Matters such as ventilation system, pinch points,
transport, performance type, local circumstances and length of performance, match or meeting should be taken into account to determine appropriate maximum capacity number.

There is a standard capacity limit on small events as set out in Table 2 below.

Events can happen in hospitality settings or with alcohol and food at level 2 with 2 metres physical distancing. Where an event is planned for a hospitality space usually subject to hospitality guidance, the events guidance should be followed.

Table 2: Standard attendance limits for small events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Indoor standard limit</th>
<th>Outdoor standard limit</th>
<th>Expected timing (subject to supportive data)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>100 seated or standing</td>
<td>500 seated event</td>
<td>17 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>250 standing event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>200 seated or standing</td>
<td>1000 seated event</td>
<td>Likely 7 June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The process for approving attendance capacity at an event or an event within the premises set out above will depend on the number of people that assessment would support:

- **Small Events**

  Events with attendance up to the limits identified in the levels table at that point in time. These can proceed on the basis of self-assessment per the physical distancing capacities guidance; subject to meeting any normal or existing requirements of the local authority.

- **Medium Events**

  Events with attendance up to the capacity limits identified at Level 0 in the levels table. If event organisers want to organise an event when their area is in Level 1 or 2 in excess of the relevant capacity limits, they must apply for approval to the local authority, who will consider the application drawing on existing procedures and processes.

- **Large Events**

  Events with attendance above the limits identified at Level 0 in the levels table, and which may take place after Scotland moves to Level 0 (planned for 28th June). These will be subject to additional...
consideration by the local authority, drawing on existing procedures and processes. Scottish Government will also have the power to call in certain applications or application types within this category. Whether this power will be used will be dependent on an assessment of risk prior to Scotland moving to Level 1.

- **Flagship Events**

Please note that internationally significant Flagship Events will fall under the Scottish Government Events Gateway Process and are dealt with separately from this guidance.

Drive-in events can resume in Level 3 and are not subject to the attendance capacity process set out above. Organisers should consider the facilities required for attendees such as toilets when calculating their capacity and how any queuing for facilities will be managed to ensure physical distancing is maintained. Face covering requirements (subject to exemptions) will apply in any indoor areas. Organisers should be clear to attendees that only one household (or extended household) may be present in a vehicle.

Small outdoor and indoor events can resume subject to capacity constraints and gathering restrictions at Level 2 providing that the event takes forward a self-assessment process and:

- utilises outside space wherever possible
- organisers carry out a risk assessment, including assessing the indoor and outdoor space available to adhere to distancing requirements and have calculated the maximum capacity for the event to support physical distancing.
- organisers have followed events guidance and checklist and any other relevant sectoral guidance
- organisers can assure that attendees arrive and leave the event in a staggered manner where possible before / after the event or throughout the day, ensuring gathering rules are adhered to.
- organisers can assure that attendees will be dispersed across a sufficiently large geographic area or will be sufficiently distributed throughout the day, so as to mitigate the risk of crowding at the venue (including entry and exit points; toilet facilities; and food and drink facilities) and on public transport
- organisers and attendees maintain group sizes permitted by gathering restrictions and have processes in place to help prevent mixing between groups
organisers and attendees use face coverings in indoor areas where required noting face covering exemptions.
- is ticketed, where possible, to monitor capacity
- has all permits/licenses required and reasonable action has been taken by the event organiser to mitigate risk to public health

Where planning a small scale indoor sporting competition, organisers must ensure they abide by the guidance for indoor sports facilities: Getting your facilities fit for sport (sportscotland.org.uk).

Organisers of outdoor sports participation events where there are multiple sporting bubbles (or waves) of participants, should refer to sportscotland’s Return to Sport and Physical Activity guidance.

Where the self-assessment supports the staging of events above the capacities identified in the protection levels table, an application can made to the local authority as set out in Coronavirus (COVID-19) stadia and live events guidance.

12. Version Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Summary of changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.1.0</td>
<td>20 April</td>
<td>First consultative draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.2.0</td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>Second significant redraft taking account of stakeholder feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.2.1</td>
<td>12 May</td>
<td>Updated suggested methodology following stakeholder feedback, updated dates in</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.2.2</td>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>levels tables and including CLD information linking to the relevant guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.2.3</td>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Updated definition of events. Updated limits in indoor events. Linking to stadia</td>
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<td>V.2.4</td>
<td>15 June</td>
<td>and live events guidance. Updated clarifying PD requirement for events with hospitality</td>
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