

Email to the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government - Phase 2 Guidance (dated 17 June 2020).

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 19:15

To: First Minister; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

Cc: DG Economy; [Redacted]; SG CoronaVirus; Economy Covid-19 Hub; covid-19 Policy; Website (gov.scot); Communications Covid-19; Communications Economy; [Redacted]; Economy COVID-19 Hub Communications; SGLD Covid-19 enquiries; DL SpAds Finance and Economy; SGLD Public Health Branch; DFWES Keyworkers; [Redacted] Cabinet Secretariat inbox; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); [Redacted]; SGoRR Major Events; [Redacted]; Covid Exit Strategy; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); Maxwell S (Stewart) (Special Adviser); Ingebrigtsen R (Ross); Covid-19 Director; [Redacted]; DFWES Keyworkers; [Redacted]; Transport Scotland Covid19 Support Mailbox; Chief Executive Transport Scotland; [Redacted]; Permanent Secretary; Economy - Directors Network; Organisational Readiness; Chief Medical Officer; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); [Redacted]; Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport; Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs; Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills; DG Education, Communities & Justice; Marshall R (Robert); Burial & Cremation; [Redacted]

Subject: URGENT - Guidance on reopening places of worship for individual prayer or contemplation - phase 2

PS/ First Minister

PS/ Deputy First Minister

PS/ Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

Please find attached draft guidance on reopening places of worship for individual prayer or contemplation at phase 2.

We are anticipating publishing this guidance on Friday to support faith communities to reopen in line with the start of phase 2. We would therefore be grateful if this could be cleared by Friday 19 June.

Best wishes

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Connected Communities | Scottish Government | M: [Redacted]

[Redacted]



Phase 2 Guidance send to Ministers as attached to the email of the 17 June 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for the safe use of places of worship

Guidance to help places of worship safely open for limited permitted activities, including individual prayer or contemplation.

Overview

Places of worship in Scotland are allowed to reopen for individual prayer or contemplation, subject to physical distancing and hygiene safeguards.

We recognise the important role places of worship play in providing spiritual leadership to many people, and the difficulties experienced by faith communities in being unable to come together.

This guidance is to help places of worship who wish to reopen for individual prayer or contemplation to do so as safely as possible. It does not constitute legal advice.

It is not an instruction to reopen for individual prayer or contemplation. Each place of worship should make its own decision about when it is ready to do this.

Under the law to date, places of worship have only been permitted to open for funerals with limited attendance, broadcasting acts of worship and essential voluntary services. The permitted uses have now been extended to include individual prayer or contemplation.

It is now permitted for an individual or household group to enter a place of worship to pray or take part in religious or spiritual contemplation on their own. Praying as part of a wider group, taking part in scheduled communal acts of worship or prayer or attending pre-arranged gatherings within a place of worship (including for led prayer) is not yet allowed.

The reopening of places of worship for individual prayer or contemplation is part of [Phase 2 of Scotland's framework for easing restrictions on lockdown](#).

We will continue to consider how to allow places of worship to safely reopen for additional uses in Phase 3 of our route map, taking account of medical and scientific advice.

This guidance is based on scientific and medical advice at the time of writing. Please ensure that you are reviewing the latest version of this guidance by visiting [\[LINK\]](#).

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance has been developed by the Scottish Government following consultation with a broad range of faith and belief leaders and representatives, and is based on scientific and health advice.

Faith communities should use it as an overarching framework and tailor this guidance as appropriate for the venue and practices being carried out. This should incorporate the principles and expectations in this guidance, expanding on them where appropriate.

The guidance is not intended to provide a checklist approach. Places of worship should use their judgement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff and communities, based on relevant legislation and guidance and individual circumstances.

A 'place of worship' means all indoor and confined or enclosed outdoor spaces (including, for example, enclosed courtyards) used for religious ceremonies, collective prayer and worship or similar gatherings by faith organisations. It includes but is not limited to:

- churches
- mosques
- gurdwaras
- synagogues
- temples
- associated buildings run by a faith-based place of worship where regular worship takes place, such as prayer spaces/meeting halls

Those responsible for places of worship are those who oversee its management. This may be a faith leader, lay person or a management body or committee.

They have discretion over when they consider it safe to open one or more places of worship for the permitted purposes, and these should remain closed if they are not yet able to safely adhere to the guidelines in this document.

The following activities are examples of what is not currently permitted (not an exhaustive list) within a place of worship. Further information will be given in due course on these activities:

- pre-arranged or scheduled communal, congregational or corporate acts of worship led by a minister of religion or lay person, for example, Evensong, informal prayer meetings, Jummah, Mass or Kirtan
- services and ceremonies other than funerals, for example marriage ceremonies, baptisms or coming of age ceremonies
- study groups and out-of-school settings, including faith supplementary schools such as Sunday schools, madrassas or yeshivas
- lifestyle and leisure/recreational groups such as craft groups or exercise groups
- meetings including practices such as choir practice or bell ringing
- tourism: buildings should remain closed for tourism purposes

Many places of worship are also workplaces and should therefore be aware of their responsibilities as employers under health and safety law. Places of worship also have a duty of care to volunteers, to ensure that as far as reasonably practicable they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

Key principles for safely reopening places of worship for permitted activity

Those responsible for the management of places of worship must take action to minimise the potential for spreading [COVID-19](#) among worshippers and anyone working/volunteering within the buildings and surrounding grounds.

There should be a particular focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable and more likely to develop serious illness.

These actions should include:

- anyone who is displaying [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or is self-isolating due to [living with someone who is displaying symptoms](#) or as a result of [contact tracing](#) staying at home to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19
- anyone who is shielding continuing to follow [government advice on shielding](#)
- immediately sending anyone home who becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship, and advising them to follow [guidance on what to do if you develop symptoms](#) at NHS Inform (or call 111 if they don't have internet access and need clinical advice). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or if their life is at risk

Those responsible for places of worship should also familiarise themselves with [Test and Protect](#), which is designed to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the community. Further guidance on COVID-19 testing can be found [here](#).

If an individual who has attended a place of worship has a possible COVID-19 infection, the place of worship should temporarily close so that it can be cleaned. Guidance on environmental decontamination (cleaning and disinfection) after a possible case has left a place of worship can be found in the [COVID-19: guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) (Health Protection Scotland).

A place of worship may also wish to consider keeping a register of attendees at the place of worship for test and protect purposes.

COVID-19 risk assessment

To help decide which actions to take to ensure a safe reopening, a COVID-19 risk assessment should be carried out, in addition to any risk assessment already in place.

Physical distancing in places of worship

[Physical distancing](#) measures are actions taken to reduce how often you interact with others outside your household.

Places of worship must put in place measures to ensure that all individuals, including worshippers, staff members and volunteers, can keep 2 metres apart from other individuals not in their household group whilst they remain in any part of the place of worship's grounds or premises. This includes ensuring that the place of worship only admits people to the premises in sufficiently small numbers to make it possible to maintain that distance.

Good hand and cough hygiene should also be maintained.

To help do this places of worship should consider:

- setting out floor markings in frequently used spaces and/or removing or cordoning off furniture or fittings, such as seating
- setting out designated areas where worshippers from different households may stand or sit
- putting in place a safe queue management system to ensure the flow of people in and out of the building can be carefully controlled, including the use of separate entrance and exit points where possible (fire exits should not be used for this purpose)
- communicating clearly the rules on physical distancing, for example, by using signs
- ensuring that hand washing or sanitisation facilities with soap and water (or alcohol based hand rub if there is no access to soap and water) is available for people to use before entering (see guidance on this for [non-healthcare settings](#))
- restricting the number of people using toilets/washrooms at one time
- reviewing the availability of staff/volunteers to ensure there is enough capacity to prepare settings to reopen for permitted purposes and manage them appropriately once they are open

Whilst they should be avoided wherever possible, very brief interactions within 2 metres such as limited numbers of people passing each other in corridors, are considered to be low risk. Use of floor markings can help to minimise this.

Places of worship may also wish to consider:

- removing unnecessary items to reduce the need for cleaning
- using one-way systems to help minimise physical contact within corridors, doorways and stairs
- limiting opening times

It is important to note that the above suggestions are high-level descriptions of potential approaches, and not intended to be used as a checklist.

Face coverings

These may be worn by worshippers as a precautionary measure.

The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to other precautions including physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

Read [guidance on the use of face coverings](#).

Children

Parents or guardians should ensure children maintain physical distancing.

Any facilities for children (play corners, books, toys) should be removed, and any outdoor play equipment should remain closed.

Cleaning and hygiene

Cleaning

If a place of worship has been closed for many weeks, or parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, a health and safety check and cleaning should be carried out before reopening in line with wider health and safety considerations.

Cleaning protocols should be put in place to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in places of worship.

Objects and surfaces touched frequently, such as chairs, door handles, light switches, sinks and toilets, should be particular areas of focus for increased cleaning.

All cleaning should be carried out in line with [COVID-19: guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) (Health Protection Scotland).

In deciding what cleaning arrangements to put in place, places of worship should consider:

- how frequently cleaning should take place based on assessment of risk and use of the building
- restricting access to certain parts of the building to reduce cleaning requirements
- removing any soft furnishings or items that are hard to clean
- providing disinfectant wipes to enable worshippers to wipe down the chair/surfaces they have used before leaving the building

Hygiene

Places of worship should encourage all staff, volunteers and worshippers to maintain good hand and cough hygiene, including frequent hand washing/use of hand sanitiser. Regular reminders and signs should be used to help raise awareness of this.

Adequate hand hygiene facilities should be available at key areas such as entrances and exits.

Where possible, open doors and windows to improve ventilation. Fire doors should remain closed.

[Further information on actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19](#) is available on NHS Inform.

Individual prayer within a place of worship

Permitted use

In addition to [the existing limited purposes](#), individuals or household groups are now permitted to enter a place of worship to pray or take part in religious or spiritual contemplation on their own and not as part of a wider group. They must be physically distanced from other individuals not in their household group.

Public gatherings are still restricted. Attending pre-arranged acts of worship, including gathering for collective or communal prayer or worship or for regular scheduled services, within a place of worship is not yet permitted. This includes a minister of religion or lay person leading devotions or prayer of any sort.

It is encouraged that services continue to take place online wherever possible.

Those responsible for running a place of worship should engage and communicate with worshippers and the wider community to explain what activity is permitted and what is still prohibited.

Faith-specific practices

Faith leaders and those responsible for places of worship should consider whether it is safe to carry out certain faith-specific rites and rituals at this time in accordance with this guidance.

In addition to the [key principles](#), it is strongly advised that:

- individuals are prevented from touching or kissing devotional and other objects that are handled communally. Use barriers and signs where necessary
- individuals avoid touching property belonging to others such as shoes which, if taken off, should be handled only by their owner
- communal resources such as books, prayer mats and services sheets are removed from use. If single use alternatives are used these should be removed by the worshipper
- any personal items brought in to aid worship are removed by the user
- kitchens are closed and no food or drink is made available with the exception of water, if this is necessary for health reasons. Worshippers should be encouraged to bring their own bottled water, but where water is provided it should be in single-use cups or bottles that are disposed of immediately after use. Water taps should be wiped down after use;
- use of shared spaces such as washing/ablution areas is limited, with physical distancing observed at all times. Areas should be cleaned between each use. Wherever possible, washing/ablution rituals should be carried out at home
- cash giving is discouraged, with online giving used instead. Where cash offerings continue, gloves should be worn when handling money
- scientific and medical advice around how activities such as singing and chanting can be managed safely is still being developed. This activity should be avoided at this stage

A local policy reflecting how any such rites and rituals can be safely carried out should be developed and implemented before reopening.

Restrictions on capacity

There is no legal limit on the maximum number of people that may attend a place of worship for individual prayer or contemplation at any one time.

However, places of worship should ensure that they offer individual prayer or contemplation to their communities in as safe a manner as possible, and as appropriate to their facilities.

It is the responsibility of those responsible for a place of worship to put in place measures that will allow them to safely reopen for individual prayer or contemplation.

Restrictions must be set by individual places of worship to limit the number of people permitted to enter for individual prayer or contemplation at any one time, so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained between individuals from different household groups.

Those responsible for a place of worship should determine the maximum number of worshippers that can be accommodated based on the available space (taking into account total floor space and likely 'pinch points' and busy areas), the building design and layout, and the availability of staff/volunteers to help manage attendance.

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify points of high risk in the building and identify any mitigating action.

It is strongly recommended that places of worship close to individual prayer or contemplation during the time normal services would be taking place to avoid the potential for over-crowding.

People at higher risk/shielding

Certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19. Guidance on individuals who fall into this higher risk group can be found on the [NHS Inform website](#).

People in this higher risk group are advised to stay at home as much as possible. If they do go out they are advised to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.

Places of worship should give special consideration to worshippers, staff members and volunteers who fall within this higher risk group, or who live with people in this group. Faith leaders may wish to discourage this group from attending places of worship during this time, or set aside specific time for them to attend for individual prayer or contemplation.

It is strongly advised that those who are considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable ([shielding group](#)) do not attend places of worship to keep themselves safe. Anyone who is shielding should continue to follow [government advice](#) on this.

Travelling to/from a place of worship

The advice on physical distancing in this guidance also applies when travelling to and from a place of worship.

Any restrictions in place regarding the maximum distance people are allowed to travel should be taken account of when planning to attend a place of worship.

See [guidance for passengers who need to travel during the coronavirus outbreak](#). This is being regularly reviewed and updated.

Funerals

This guidance does not extend to cover the use of places of worship for funeral services. Separate guidance on facilitating these services is available here [[LINK](#)].

Early years and childcare use

Places of worship that provide early years and childcare services should follow the relevant guidance that sets out which children can attend and the measures and approaches that should be put in place to keep children, staff, parents and carers, and any essential visitors safe.

See:

- [childminder services reopening guidance](#)
- [physical distancing advice for education and childcare settings](#)

Use of outdoor space

Evidence suggests that outdoor environments can limit transmission, as well as more easily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Any use of outdoor space must be permitted under the Regulations.

Communicating this guidance

Those responsible for a place of worship should engage and communicate with worshippers and the wider community to explain what activity is permitted and what is still prohibited.

Places of worship and faith leaders should consider how guidance can be communicated to visitors, including before they visit. This should be done in a way that is accessible and appropriate for the cultures, languages and reading levels of communities served by the place of worship.

A range of materials to help communicate general information about COVID-19 is available on the [NHS Inform website](#).

Email to the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government - Phase 3 Guidance (dated 13 July 2020).

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 13 July 2020 11:59

To: First Minister; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

Cc: DG Economy; [Redacted] SG CoronaVirus; Economy Covid-19 Hub; covid-19 Policy; Website (gov.scot); Communications Covid-19; Communications Economy; [Redacted] Economy COVID-19 Hub Communications; SGLD Covid-19 enquiries; DL SpAds Finance and Economy; SGLD Public Health Branch; DFWES Keyworkers; [Redacted] Cabinet Secretariat inbox; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); [Redacted] SGoRR Major Events; [Redacted] Covid Exit Strategy; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); Maxwell S (Stewart) (Special Adviser); Ingebrigtsen R (Ross); Covid-19 Director; [Redacted] DFWES Keyworkers; [Redacted] Transport Scotland Covid19 Support Mailbox; Chief Executive Transport Scotland; [Redacted] Permanent Secretary; Economy - Directors Network; Organisational Readiness; Chief Medical Officer; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); Marshall R (Robert); Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport; Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs; Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills; DG Education, Communities & Justice; [Redacted]

Subject: URGENT - Guidance on reopening places of worship for congregational worship - phase 3
Importance: High

PS/ First Minister

PS/ Deputy First Minister

PS/ Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

Please find attached the draft guidance on reopening places of worship for congregational worship and prayer at phase 3. We have shared the draft with relevant colleagues across SG and this has been cleared by SGLD and HPS.

We would be grateful for a response by **midday, Tuesday 14 July** to allow time to publish in advance of reopening, starting Wednesday 15 July.

Best wishes

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Connected Communities | Scottish Government | [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Phase 3 Guidance sent to Ministers as attached to the email of the 13 July 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for the safe use of places of worship

Guidance to help places of worship safely reopen for permitted purposes.

- Overview
- Purpose of guidance
 - Definitions
- General principles for safely reopening places of worship
 - COVID-19 risk assessment
- Physical distancing
 - Children
- Cleaning and hygiene
 - Cleaning
 - Hygiene
 - Face coverings
- Individual and congregational worship
 - Faith specific practices
- Life event ceremonies
- Restrictions on capacity
- People at higher risk/shielding
- Travelling to/from places of worship
- Other permitted uses
- Communicating this guidance

Overview

We recognise the important role that places of worship play in providing spiritual leadership to many people, and acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Scotland's faith communities during these unprecedented times.

To date, places of worship have been able to open for individual prayer or contemplation, funeral services, broadcasting acts of worship and to provide essential voluntary services.

As part of [Phase 3 of Scotland's framework for easing restrictions on lockdown](#), from 15 July places of worship will be allowed to reopen for the following additional permitted purposes:

- congregational services, including pre-arranged or scheduled acts of worship and communal prayer
- marriage ceremonies and, where celebrants in a faith community undertake them, civil partnerships registrations (separate guidance is available on this, here [\[LINK\]](#))
- religious life event ceremonies, such as baptisms, christening and coming-of-age ceremonies

Opening for any of the permitted purposes remains subject to physical distancing and hygiene safeguards.

This guidance will come into force on 15 July and is published now to help places of worship who wish to reopen for these additional permitted purposes to prepare to do so as safely as possible. Until this date you should continue to refer to the current guidance on reopening [for individual prayer or contemplation only](#), which is in line with current regulations.

General guidance on staying safe and protecting others is available [here](#).

This guidance is not an instruction to reopen places of worship for any of the permitted purposes. Each place of worship should make its own decision about when it is ready to do this and should only reopen if this can be done safely.

We will consider how to allow places of worship to fully reopen within the public health requirements advised as we move through Phase 3 and into Phase 4 of our route map, taking account of medical and scientific advice.

This guidance is based on scientific and medical advice at the time of writing. It does not constitute legal advice. Please ensure that you are reviewing the latest version of this guidance by visiting [\[LINK\]](#).

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance has been developed by the Scottish Government following consultation with a broad range of faith and belief leaders and representatives, and is based on scientific and health advice. We would like to thank our faith and belief communities who have contributed to the development of this guidance.

Faith communities should use this guidance as an overarching framework and tailor it as appropriate for the venue and practices being carried out. Any faith-specific guidance should incorporate the principles and expectations in this guidance, expanding on them where appropriate. Where issued, faith-specific guidance should comply with the Equalities Act.

The guidance is not intended to provide a checklist approach. Places of worship should use their judgement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff and communities, based on relevant legislation and guidance and individual circumstances.

This guidance is intended to assist places of worship to reopen for individual and congregational worship and prayer or contemplation, and for religious 'life event' ceremonies. It does not extend to the use of places of worship for other purposes, such as community services. In these circumstances, places of worship should follow the relevant guidance for the particular use (see 'other permitted uses' [\[LINK to section\]](#)).

This guidance does not extend to funeral services within places of worship. Separate guidance on this can be found [here](#).

This guidance does not extend to marriage ceremonies or civil partnership registrations within places of worship. Separate guidance on this is available here [\[LINK\]](#).

Definitions

Place of worship

A 'place of worship' means all indoor and confined or enclosed outdoor spaces (for example, enclosed courtyards) used for religious ceremonies, collective prayer and worship or similar gatherings by faith organisations. It includes but is not limited to:

- churches
- mosques
- gurdwaras
- synagogues
- temples
- any other public space where the primary purpose is faith-based practices, such as prayer rooms within public buildings

A 'place of worship' also means any associated buildings run by a faith-based place of worship, such as meeting halls. Other guidance may be applicable to those venues depending on the function for which the venue is being used (see 'other permitted uses' below).

Person responsible for a place of worship

Those responsible for places of worship are those who oversee its management. This may be a faith leader, lay person or a management body or committee.

They have discretion over when they consider it safe to open one or more places of worship for the permitted purposes, and these should remain closed if they are not yet able to safely adhere to the guidelines in this document.

Household and extended household

A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation. An [extended household](#) is two households which have chosen to be treated as a single household, where one of those households is a person who lives alone (or a person who lives only with children).

General principles for safely reopening places of worship

Those responsible for the management of places of worship must take action to minimise the potential for [spreading COVID-19](#) among worshippers and anyone working/volunteering within the buildings and surrounding grounds.

There should be a particular focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable and more likely to develop serious illness.

These actions should include:

- anyone who is displaying [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or is self-isolating due to [living with someone who is displaying symptoms](#) or as a result of [contact tracing](#) staying at home to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19
- anyone who is shielding continuing to follow [government advice on shielding](#)
- immediately sending anyone home who becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship, and advising them to follow [guidance on what to do if you develop symptoms](#) at NHS Inform (or call 111 if they don't have internet access and need clinical advice). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or if their life is at risk

Test and Protect

Those responsible for places of worship should familiarise themselves with [Test and Protect](#), which is designed to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the community.

If an individual who has attended a place of worship has a possible COVID-19 infection, the place of worship should temporarily close so that it can be cleaned. Guidance on environmental decontamination (cleaning and disinfection) after a possible case has left a place of worship can be found in the [COVID-19: guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) (Health Protection Scotland).

In line with guidance for other venues including the hospitality sector, places of worship are asked to keep a temporary register of worshipper and staff/volunteer contact details for a period of 21 days for Test and Protect. This is to support contact tracing as part of [NHS Scotland's Test and Protect](#) system, in the event of an outbreak linked to a particular venue. Collecting contact details is voluntary, but cooperation with Test and Protect measures will be crucial to national efforts to suppress the virus.

Places of worship should collect the following information, where possible:

Staff/volunteers

- 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

Worshippers

- 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

Guidance on collection of customer and visitor details, including information on how to collect, store and securely destroy data and on how information will be shared, is available here [\[LINK\]](#).

If data is shared with NHS Scotland on the basis of individuals being identified as at risk of being close contacts by the Test and Protect service, NHS Scotland may need to retain the data for longer than the 21 day period and will hold the data in line with NHS information governance processes. Further information about the NHS Scotland information governance arrangements is available [here](#).

COVID-19 risk assessment

To help decide which actions to take to ensure a safe reopening, a COVID-19 risk assessment should be carried out, in addition to any risk assessment already in place.

You can find [guidance on carrying out a COVID-19 risk assessment](#) on the Health and Safety Executive website.

Physical distancing in places of worship

[Physical distancing](#) measures are actions taken to reduce how often you interact with others outside your household.

Places of worship must take all reasonable measures to ensure that all individuals, including worshippers, staff members and volunteers, can keep at least 2 metres apart from other individuals whilst they remain in any part of the place of worship's grounds or premises. This 2 metre distance does not need to be maintained between others in their household, extended household group or a carer and the person assisted by the carer.

Places of worship must also take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 metres is maintained between any person waiting to enter its premises, where this queue is within the grounds or premises of the place of worship.

Places of worship must also take all reasonable measures to only admit people to the premises in sufficiently small numbers to make it possible to maintain that distance. This should be up to a maximum total of 50 people.

Good hand and respiratory hygiene (e.g. for coughs or sneezing) should also be maintained at all times.

To help maintain physical distancing, places of worship should consider:

- setting out floor markings in frequently used spaces and/or removing or cordoning off furniture or fittings, such as seating
- setting out designated areas where worshippers from different households may stand or sit
- putting in place a safe queue management system to ensure the flow of people in and out of the building can be carefully controlled, including the use of separate entrance and exit points where possible (fire exits should not be used for this purpose)
- communicating clearly the rules on physical distancing, for example, by using signs
- using one-way systems to help minimise physical contact within corridors, doorways and stairs
- ensuring that hand washing or sanitisation facilities with soap and water (or alcohol based hand rub if there is no access to soap and water) is available for people to use before entering (see guidance on this for [non-healthcare settings](#))
- restricting the number of people using toilets/washrooms at one time
- reviewing the availability of staff/volunteers to ensure there is enough capacity to prepare settings to reopen for permitted purposes and manage them appropriately once they are open

Whilst they should be avoided wherever possible, very brief interactions within 2 metres such as limited numbers of people passing each other in corridors, are considered to be low risk. Use of floor markings can help to minimise this.

Where interactions within a 2 metre distance are essential for faith-specific requirements, without which practicing or taking up a position within a faith is not possible, these interactions should be brief, kept to a minimum and face-to-face interaction inside 2 metres should be avoided. These interactions should only take place when it is absolutely necessary and maintaining physical distancing in the circumstances would be unreasonable (for example, the laying on of hands in the ordination of new ministers).

It is important to note that the above suggestions are high-level descriptions of potential approaches, and not intended to be used as a checklist.

Children

Parents or guardians should ensure children maintain physical distancing and good hand and respiratory hygiene whilst they remain in any part of the place of worship's grounds or premises. General advice on physical distancing for children in wider settings can be accessed [here](#).

Any shared facilities for children (play corners, books, toys) should be removed, where possible. Outdoor play parks can open, but strict physical distancing should be followed. Children should not use a play park if it is crowded. Extra care should be taken with hand hygiene immediately before and after using play equipment.

Those responsible for the place of worship should take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of equipment and minimise the risk of transmission through users touching contaminated surfaces, including relevant signs. Guidance on [exercise and activity](#) should be followed.

Cleaning and hygiene

Cleaning

If a place of worship has been closed for many weeks, or parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, a health and safety check and cleaning should be carried out before reopening in line with wider health and safety considerations.

Cleaning protocols should be put in place to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in places of worship.

Objects and surfaces touched frequently, such as chairs, door handles, light switches, sinks and toilets, should be particular areas of focus for increased cleaning.

All cleaning should be carried out in line with [COVID-19: guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) (Health Protection Scotland).

In deciding what cleaning arrangements to put in place, places of worship should consider:

- how frequently cleaning should take place based on assessment of risk and use of the building
- restricting access to certain parts of the building to reduce cleaning requirements
- removing unnecessary items to reduce the need for cleaning
- removing hard to clean items such as any soft furnishings
- providing disinfectant wipes to enable worshippers to wipe down the chair/surfaces they have used before leaving the building

Hygiene

Places of worship should encourage all staff, volunteers and worshippers to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene (e.g. for coughs or sneezing), including frequent hand washing/use of alcohol-based hand rub to [kill viruses that may be on hands](#). Regular reminders and signs should be used to help raise awareness of this and closed bins should be made available to ensure that used tissues can be disposed of promptly and safely.

Adequate hand hygiene facilities should be available at key areas such as entrances and exits.

Where possible, open doors and windows to improve ventilation. Fire doors should remain closed.

Guidance on the opening of public toilets, including hygiene measures that should be taken, is available [here](#).

[Further information on actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19](#) is available on NHS Inform.

Face coverings

In enclosed spaces, where physical distancing is more difficult and where there is a risk of close contact with multiple people who are not members of your household, you should wear a face covering.

This will be particularly important where interactions within a 2 metre distance are essential for faith-specific requirements, although these interactions should be avoided.

The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to other precautions including physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

Read [guidance on the use of face coverings](#).

Individual and congregational worship

In addition to activity permitted within places of worship during [phases 1 and 2 of the route map](#), from 15 July individuals or household/extended household groups are allowed to enter a place of worship to take part in the following individual or congregational activities:

- Pre-arranged or scheduled acts of worship, such as regular congregational services led by a minister of religion or lay person;
- Communal prayers, devotions or contemplation led by a minister of religion or lay person

Individuals must continue to be physically distanced from others not in their household/extended household group when carrying out these activities.

Large public gatherings are still restricted. Places of worship should not admit more than 50 people in total, regardless of their size and usual capacity.

Those responsible for running a place of worship should engage and communicate with worshippers and the wider community to explain what is permitted and what is still prohibited.

Faith-specific practices

Physical distancing of 2 metres and strict hygiene safeguards should be maintained at places of worship. Where absolutely necessary for a faith-specific requirement interactions within a 2 metre distance may take place provided they are brief, kept to a minimum and face-to-face interaction is avoided. These interactions should only take place when it is absolutely essential and it would be unreasonable to maintain physical distancing in the circumstances (for example, the laying on of hands in the ordination of new ministers). Faith leaders and those responsible for places of worship must take all reasonable measures to adapt faith-specific rites and rituals in accordance with this guidance to ensure the safety of those present.

In addition to the [key principles](#), it is strongly advised that:

- services or ceremonies that would traditionally take part over a period of hours or days are adapted to reduce the time spent gathered together and therefore reduce the risk of transmission
- individuals are prevented from touching or kissing devotional and other objects that are handled communally. Use barriers and signs where necessary
- individuals avoid touching property belonging to others such as shoes which, if taken off, should be handled only by their owner
- communal resources such as books, prayer mats and services sheets are removed from use. If single use alternatives are used these should be removed by the worshipper
- any personal items brought in to aid worship are removed by the user
- scientific and medical advice around the transmission risk of activities such as singing, chanting, shouting and the playing of wind or other instruments that require breath to operate is still being developed. This activity should be avoided both in congregational worship and in rehearsal
- where essential to an act of worship, a single individual may sing or chant behind a Plexi-glass screen. Any screen used should be cleaned regularly
- other instruments that do not require breath to operate may be played (for example, organs). Communal instruments should be cleaned regularly
- the consumption of food and drink is avoided where it is not essential to the act of worship. Where it is essential to the act of worship, the use of communal vessels is avoided

- other mitigations for the preparation and handling of food which is essential to the act of worship are taken, including strict hand hygiene, pre-wrapping food items, use of face coverings and avoiding the sharing of cutlery, crockery or utensils
- speaking across food or drink is avoided. Where this is essential to the act of worship, a face covering is worn and/or the food is securely covered
- pre-requisite washing and ablution rituals are carried out at home prior to arrival at the place of worship. Where it is absolutely essential to use such facilities physical distancing and hygiene measures should be observed at all times and areas should be cleaned between each individual use. Individuals should not wash the body parts of others
- where rituals or ceremonies require water to be applied to the body, full immersion is avoided and only small volumes are splashed onto the body. Where an infant is involved a parent/guardian should hold the infant. Strict hand hygiene should be maintained throughout
- cash giving is discouraged, with online giving used instead. Where cash offerings continue, any receptacle should be set in one place and not handled communally. Any person who has handled money should wash their hands thoroughly afterwards and avoid touching their face
- once services are complete, worshippers are encouraged to move on promptly. Places of worship should put in place procedures to manage this

A local policy reflecting how any such rites and rituals can be safely carried out should be developed and implemented before reopening.

Life event ceremonies

Ceremonies that take place within places of worship to mark life events and that form part of a wider religious service (including baptisms, christenings and coming-of-age ceremonies) are now permitted to resume. These should be carried out in accordance with this guidance, including with the advice on determining capacity (up to a maximum of 50 people), physical distancing, hygiene and faith-specific practices.

Consideration should be given to how faith-specific rites and rituals during life event ceremonies can be adapted in accordance with this guidance to ensure the safety of those present.

Separate rules are applicable to marriage ceremonies [\[LINK\]](#) and funeral services [\[LINK\]](#) within places of worship.

Restrictions on capacity

Those responsible for places of worship should ensure that they only reopen to their communities for individual or congregational acts of worship and ceremonies to mark life events if it is safe to do so and in compliance with this guidance. It is their responsibility to put in place measures that will allow them to safely reopen.

Restrictions must be set by those responsible for the place of worship to limit the number of people permitted to enter at any one time, so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained between individuals from different household groups. Determination of capacity should take into account total floor space and likely 'pinch points' and busy areas, the building design and layout, and the availability of staff/volunteers to help manage attendance.

No place of worship should admit more than 50 people at any one time, regardless of its size or usual capacity.

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify points of high risk in the building and any mitigating action.

People at higher risk/shielding

Certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19. Guidance on individuals who fall into this higher risk group can be found on the [NHS Inform website](#).

People in this higher risk group are advised to stay at home as much as possible. If they do go out they are advised to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.

Places of worship should give special consideration to worshippers, staff members and volunteers who fall within this higher risk group, or who live with people in this group. Faith leaders may wish to discourage this group from attending places of worship during this time, or set aside specific time for them to attend for individual prayer or contemplation.

It is strongly advised that those who are considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable ([shielding group](#)) do not attend places of worship to keep themselves safe. Anyone who is shielding should continue to follow [government advice](#) on this.

It is recommended that places of worship continue to stream worship or prayer services to continue to reach those individuals who are self-isolating or at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19.

Travelling to/from a place of worship

The advice on physical distancing in this guidance also applies when travelling to and from a place of worship.

There is no restriction on travel within Scotland if individuals are acting in line with [all other guidance](#) which supports the [route map](#) through and out of the COVID-19 crisis. Guidance on how and when to travel within Scotland can be found [here](#).

Face coverings are now mandatory on public transport. See [advice on how to travel safely and advice on car sharing](#). This advice is being regularly reviewed and updated.

Other permitted uses

Where a place of worship is used by external groups, only those activities which are permitted to take place should be available. Businesses which cannot yet operate are listed [here](#), and activity that is still restricted includes:

- indoor fitness/exercise groups
- indoor soft play
- indoor performances in front of a live audience, including dramatic, musical or comedy performances. Guidance on preparing for reopening for performing art events when it is safe to do so is available [here](#).

Guidance on a range of activities that are permitted is [available on the Scottish Government website](#).

Place of worship as workplaces

Many places of worship are also workplaces and should therefore be aware of their responsibilities as employers under health and safety law. Places of worship also have a duty of care to volunteers, to ensure that as far as reasonably practicable they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. See guidance on [returning to work](#).

Education, early years and childcare use

Places of worship that provide educational settings (including study groups and faith supplementary schools), early years and childcare services should follow the relevant guidance that sets out which individuals can attend and the measures and approaches that should be put in place to keep people safe. See:

- [School age childcare services guidance](#)
- [childminder services reopening guidance](#)
- [physical distancing advice for education and childcare settings](#)

Non-essential voluntary services

Non-essential voluntary services can only take place within places of worship in line with the rules for other community/public spaces. Guidance on this is available here [\[LINK\]](#).

Lifestyle and recreational groups and meetings

Small meetings and gatherings are now permitted in line with the rules on [indoor gatherings](#). Groups which involve the playing of instruments that require breath to operate and singing, chanting or shouting should be avoided.

Hospitality

Hospitality spaces within places of worship, such as cafes, are permitted to open. Guidance for the [hospitality](#) sector should be followed. Informal hospitality, such as lunch clubs and coffee mornings are permitted in line with restrictions on [indoor gatherings](#).

Guidance on the opening of public toilets, including hygiene measures that should be taken, is available [here](#).

Tourism and retail

Buildings can now be opened for most [tourism](#) and [retail](#) purposes and places of worship should follow relevant guidance on managing this. People visiting places of worship for these purposes should also follow [relevant guidance](#).

Outdoor space

We know from evidence that there is less risk of transmission of COVID-19 outdoors than indoors. Any use of outdoor space must be in line with rules on [outdoor gatherings](#) and [physical distancing](#).

Communicating this guidance

Those responsible for a place of worship should engage and communicate with worshippers and the wider community to explain what activity is permitted and what is still prohibited.

Places of worship and faith leaders should consider how guidance can be communicated to visitors, including before they visit. This should be done in a way that is accessible and appropriate for the cultures, languages and reading levels of communities served by the place of worship.

A range of materials to help communicate general information about COVID-19 is available on the [NHS Inform website](#).

Phase 2: Gatherings and Occasions

Phase 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED – Out of scope] • Places of worship open for individual prayer or contemplation under physical distancing rules and hygiene safeguards. • [REDACTED – Out of scope] 	
Impact	<p>[REDACTED – Out of Scope]</p> <p>According to 2011 census data, over 2.9 million people in Scotland affiliate themselves with a religious group. Opening places of worship for individual prayer will allow more people to attend a place of worship for this purpose, and exercise their Article 9 ECHR right.</p> <p>As reopening places of worship for congregational/communal prayer or worship is still prohibited at this phase, allowing opening for individual prayer or contemplation only will still significantly limit the number of people who can attend a place of worship to exercise their religious rights.</p> <p>[REDACTED – Out of Scope]</p>
Age: Older People	<p>Those aged 70 and over are advised to stay at home and minimise contact, and people who may be shielding are strongly advised not to attend public places. This may impact on ability to attend a place of worship for individual prayer or contemplation.</p> <p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p> <p>Any increase in risk of contracting COVID-19 due to attending mass gatherings would disproportionately affect older people. Up to 7th June 2020, 76% of COVID-19 fatalities were aged 75 and over.¹</p>
Sex: Women	<p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p>
Race	<p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p>

¹ [Deaths involving coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland: Week 23 report](#)

	<p>Religion & Faith</p>	<p>Members of faith communities will be able to attend places of worship for individual prayer or contemplation for the first time since lockdown.</p> <p>Not all faith communities have a need for individual prayer or contemplation, which can be done at home, for some.</p> <p>Faith and belief communities are unable to access wider, communal ceremonies or services at their place of worship as restrictions will remain in place until later phases. The exception to this is for funeral services, where a decision to offer those is made by a place of worship.</p> <p>Persons with faith who are shielding are unable to attend places of worship, including for individual prayer or contemplation.</p> <p>Allowing marriages allows people with faith to exercise this right. In 2018, there were 2,789 Church of Scotland, 1,079 Roman Catholic, and 3,672 other religious marriage ceremonies.²</p> <p>The inability to formalise a relationship impacts particularly on those people whose faith disallows cohabitation before marriage.</p> <p>The limitation to outdoor public gatherings and to limit numbers at marriages and civil partnerships will impact on some religious and belief groups. For these groups, a marriage must or should take place in a place of worship. There are also religious or belief requirements in relation to who should attend in addition to those required for a valid ceremony or registration.</p>
	<p>Disability</p>	<p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p> <p>Any increase in risk of contracting COVID-19 due to attending mass gatherings would disproportionately affect some disabled people. Of those who died with COVID-19 in April, 91% had at least one pre-existing condition.³</p>
	<p>Socio-economic disadvantage</p>	<p>Any increase in risk of contracting COVID-19 due to attending mass gatherings would disproportionately affect people in the most deprived areas. In March and April, 3,200 deaths occurred among people living in the 20%</p>

² [Scotland's Population 2018 - The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends](#)

³ The most common pre-existing condition was dementia and Alzheimer's disease (31% of all deaths involving COVID) followed by ischaemic heart disease (13%). Source: [Deaths involving coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland: Week 19 report](#)

		<p>most deprived areas compared with 2,042 in the least deprived areas.⁴</p> <p>People have less access to devices, data and the internet to be able to utilise options to live stream of funerals or worship.</p>
<p>Mitigating actions:</p> <p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p> <p>Permitting places of worship to open for individual prayer or contemplation is considered to mitigate against some of the interference with individuals’ rights to manifest their religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. We will publish guidance in consultation with faith and belief groups to support places of worship to reopen for individual prayer or contemplation at Phase 2. We will also publish guidance to support places of worship that are considering providing funeral services, in line with attendance requirements. Both pieces of guidance will include references to guidance on physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene.</p> <p>Careful research and consultation with stakeholder groups has been undertaken, including around religious requirements for events and attendance at places of worship for individual prayer or contemplation. Continued restrictions are justified on health protection grounds.</p> <p>[REDACTED – Out of scope]</p> <p>The Scottish Government has provided funding to faith and belief organisations that has allowed equipment and software to be purchased to facilitate online worship services. This has widened access to prayer, worship, and funeral services, with persons able to attend from home.</p>		

⁴ [Deaths involving coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland: Week 19 report](#)

Gatherings and Occasions

1.1 Places of worship

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Places of worship re-opened for congregational services, communal prayer and contemplation with physical distancing and limited numbers – 15 July. 	
Policy leads(s):	
General impacts of the measure	<p>Easing of restrictions around gathering for services and ceremonies within a place of worship has enabled more individuals to exercise their religious rights within a place of worship.</p> <p>However, not all services and faith based practices have been able to resume and some restrictions have remained on higher risk activities, such as singing. Additionally, numbers have been limited to a maximum total of 50 people at one time, regardless of the size of the venue, and 2 metre physical distancing must continue to be maintained. Congregations have also been required to wear face coverings as of 8 August, though individuals leading an act of worship are exempt.</p> <p>The date for re-opening of places of worship was brought forward to 15 July, in line with other sectors. This decision was taken following further discussion with our faith communities, working with them to ensure that appropriate mitigations were in place, and was guided in particular by evolving scientific and health advice on transmission risks.</p>
Differential Impacts by Equality Group or Socio-Economic disadvantage	
Age: Older People and Children and Young People	<p>Children and young people with faith have been able to attend their place of worship for more services, including life events such as baptisms, christenings and coming of age ceremonies.</p> <p>Persons who are aged 70 and over had been advised to stay at home and minimise contact, and people who may be shielding had been strongly advised not to attend public places. However, advice to those in these high-risk groups was changed to be in line with advice to the general public on 1 August.</p>
Sex: Men and Women	<p>The Scottish Church Census 2016¹ indicated that three-fifths of churchgoers are women. We do not have similar data available for other religions.</p>

¹ See <https://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/scottish-church-census>

	<p>The Scotland Household Survey 2018² indicated that more women than men volunteered with 'religion and belief' (17 and 13 per cent respectively).</p> <p>This suggests that re-opening places of worship may have greater positive impact for women.</p>
Race	<p>We have not identified an impact from the measures in Phase 3 for people with this protected characteristic.</p>
Disability	<p>Consideration needs to be given to those disabled people who may, in line with wider public health advice, still be avoiding indoor gatherings for their safety.</p> <p>Disabled people that had been advised to shield have been able to attend places of worship, and exercise their Article 9 ECHR right to manifest their religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance, since shielding was paused on 1 August.</p> <p>Some disabled people, for example wheelchair users or those with limited mobility, may face barriers to attending services if special arrangements are not made to ensure they are able to access, circulate and use all necessary facilities while maintaining 2 metre physical distancing and hygiene requirements.</p>
Religion and Belief	<p>Members of faith communities have been able to attend places of worship for communal or congregational worship and/or prayer, and wider activities, ceremonies and services since 15 July. This change has been of particular benefit to groups for whom individual prayer or contemplation is less significant.</p> <p>There are still limits on numbers of people who can attend a place of worship to exercise their religious rights. This is currently 50 people at any one time.</p> <p>The restriction to the total number of people who can attend a place of worship at one time may have a negative impact on faiths that have larger catchment areas for an individual place of worship, which ordinarily has a high capacity, such as Muslim and Sikh communities.</p> <p>All those attending a place of worship are required to wear a face covering unless they are exempt on medical</p>

² See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/pages/12/>

	<p>grounds, with the exception of the individual leading an act of worship. This may interfere with some people's spiritual connection when practicing their faith in a place of worship.</p> <p>Additionally, some restrictions on high risk activities, such as singing, remain in place, which will have a negative impact on some faith groups.</p>
Sexual Orientation	We have not identified an impact from the measures in Phase 3 for people with this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Women who are pregnant are currently considered at higher risk of infection and have previously been advised to stay at home and minimise contact. This may have impacted on the ability of pregnant women to attend a place of worship. It may also have impacted on their Article 9 ECHR right to manifest their religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.</p> <p>However, from 24 July, people who had previously been advised to shield, have been able to attend indoor public spaces, as all shielding was paused on 1 August.</p>
Gender reassignment	We have not identified an impact from the measures in Phase 3 for people with this protected characteristic.
Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty	Essential voluntary services, such as food banks, have been able to continue within places of worship throughout the lockdown period. We have therefore not identified an impact from the measures in Phase 3 for people with this protected characteristic.
<p>Section 3 Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Scottish Government Connected Communities officials have engaged closely with faith and belief communities on reopening places of worship and on ceremonies, including around faith-specific requirements and the content of supporting guidance. This ongoing commitment to engagement with stakeholders ensures any new or emerging concerns are addressed, and communities continue to feel supported. Current arrangements are for regular engagements with leaders and representatives from Scotland's faith communities. The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government has also taken part in a number of these engagement sessions.</p> <p>Stakeholders engaged with include the principal Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish and Humanist communities and denominations, and we have consulted in writing more broadly still when appropriate and necessary.</p>	

Mitigations

Removing some restrictions on the use of places of worship to allow congregational worship, communal prayer, marriages, funerals, and some other life event ceremonies (e.g. baptisms, christenings and coming of age ceremonies) has reduced indirect discrimination for people with the protected characteristic of religion or belief. Any remaining restrictions are on the basis of public health advice.

Regarding the mandatory wearing of face coverings, an exemption to this has been agreed for the individual leading an act of worship, following discussion with stakeholders. This is to minimise interference to the spiritual connection between congregation and the person leading an act of worship.

Removing the continuing restrictions on the use of places of worship will also mitigate the interference on rights to manifest a religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (Article 9 ECHR).

Reopening places of worship has also contributed to fostering good relations between those with religion or belief and those who do not share this protected characteristic. People who have been unable to attend their place of worship while other sectors have reopened had previously felt left behind or considered less important, particularly in comparison to sectors which are considered to contribute to the economy, such as non-essential shops.

Following further discussion with our faith communities, working with them to ensure that appropriate mitigations are in place, and guided in particular by evolving scientific and health advice on transmission risks, the date that places of worship would be able to re-open for congregational worship and prayer was brought forward to 15 July.

For some faith communities, a minimum number of people are required to gather together to form a congregation, and reopening for congregational worship has allowed services to take place for these communities. In addition, the change to allow up to 50 people to attend congregational acts of worship has been of particular benefit to groups for whom individual prayer or contemplation is less significant.

Restrictions that remain for public health reasons (e.g. numbers controlled, and the need to maintain 2 metre physical distancing) have been clearly communicated in guidance. Online streaming, broadcasting or recording of services will continue to help facilitate involvement for higher risk groups, who may decide not to attend places of worship to help protect their health.

The Scottish Government has provided funding to faith and belief organisations that has allowed equipment and software to be purchased to facilitate online worship services. This has widened access to prayer, worship, and funeral services, with persons able to attend from home. Online worship will be encouraged to continue once services in places of

worship resume, particularly for higher risk groups, who may decide not to attend places of worship to help protect their health.

Comprehensive guidance has been drafted in consultation with faith and belief groups to support places of worship to reopen for congregational activities at Phase 3.³ Included within Phase 3 guidance are recommendations to undertake the following mitigating activity:

- Physical distancing through limiting capacity and the use of floor markings, cordoning off seating and the use of one-way systems, and limits to maximum number of people in attendance at any one time.
- Advice on cleaning and hygiene, including hand washing/sanitising facilities.
- Arranging layouts to reduce face-to-face time (in most places of worship, congregations face forward).
- Use of face coverings.
- Restrictions on singing/chanting. Where singing/chanting is essential to an act of worship, we suggest only one individual is permitted to sing or chant behind a plexi-glass screen which can be cleaned.
- Restrictions on use of musical instruments that are operated by breath.
- Adaptation of lengthy services to reduce time spent at a gathering.
- Avoiding touching or kissing devotional and other objects/resources.
- Avoiding food and drink where it is not essential to the act of worship. Where it is essential, avoiding the use of communal vessels.
- Taking other mitigations for the handling of food, including strict hand hygiene, pre-wrapping food items and avoiding the sharing of cutlery, crockery or utensils. Avoiding speaking/singing/chanting across food or drink and, where this is essential to the act of worship, using a face covering and securely covering the food.
- Only using shared washing/ablution areas when it is essential. Washing/ablution rituals should be carried out at home.
- Recommended keeping of register of attendees to assist test and protect.

³ See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>

Phase Three - Template for assessing options

[Redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Outline of the option

Route map description:

“Places of worship can re-open for congregational services, communal prayer and contemplation with physical distancing and limited numbers.”

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)]

The policy option for Phase 3¹ is to allow places of worship to reopen for congregational services, ceremonies and acts of worship/prayer. This would be done in line with physical distancing and hygiene safeguards, and would be supported by guidance.

Associated actions in the route map

Phase 2 and 3 also has the following actions and indicative dates that are relevant:

- People can meet in extended groups outdoors (with physical distancing) - 10 July
- Households can meet indoors with up to a maximum of two other households (with physical distancing) - 10 July
- Indoor hospitality (subject to physical distancing rules and public health advice) - 15 July
- Museums, galleries, cinemas, monuments, libraries, with physical distancing and other measures (e.g. ticketing in advance) – 15 July
- Easing of restrictions on attendance at funerals, marriages, civil partnerships, with physical distancing and limited numbers - not likely to be before 23 July

These potential changes impact indirectly on gatherings within places of worship and we anticipate that regulation or guidance changes required to support changes in these areas will impact on SG’s policy approach to permitting places of worship to reopen for congregational activities. **[Redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)]

Notes on risk

We know that there is potentially a heightened risk of transmission in certain situations, that group settings and activities such as singing may increase risk

¹ Places of worship have been able to open throughout lockdown for the limited purposes of a funeral service (with limited attendees), broadcasting acts of worship and essential voluntary services. At the start of phase 2 (22 June) this was extended to allow them to open for individual prayer or contemplation.

further and that some sections of the population are more vulnerable. We are also aware of instances abroad where spreading has been linked to religious events and/or places of worship.² However, with the right mitigations, it is anticipated that places of worship can reopen in line with other indoor venues.

We are aware that particularly high-risk activities include the consumption of food, singing or chanting and the playing instruments that require breath to operate. Suggested mitigations are in the relevant section, below.

It should be noted that this potential policy is not about permitting or encouraging large mass gatherings, or the undertaking of high-risk activity, and these issues can be dealt with via guidance as necessary and in line with health advice. The intention of this policy is to allow people to gather within a place of worship to attend congregational worship/prayer services which we know is of considerable importance to our faith communities, who seek spiritual leadership and guidance from their places of worship.

Scale

How many people might be affected by this option (eg workforce, users of service).

According to 2011 census data, over 2.9 million people in Scotland affiliate themselves with a religious group. Whilst the exact number of practicing individuals is unknown, using Census, ONS and Scottish Church Census figures we estimate that there are around 380,000 – 800,000 individuals who regularly attend places of worship across Scotland.

Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus are likely to attend religious services or meetings more regularly than other faith groups.

Relaxation of restrictions around the use of places of worship will affect all those who wish to exercise their Article 9 right to manifest their religion or belief.

We know that the restrictions on the use of places of worship has significantly affected people of faith across Scotland. The ability to attend a place of worship for spiritual leadership and guidance is vital for this community and supports their spiritual and mental health.

Equalities

What do we know about the people affected in terms of characteristics, gender, age and other characteristics?

Age

According to the 2011 census, those attending church are likely to have an older age profile than the population overall. Church of Scotland had the oldest profile,

² In South Korea, the earliest significant outbreak was linked to a large religious gathering, and in Frankfurt more than 100 infections were linked to a service within a place of worship.

with over two thirds (69%) of people aged 40 or over, and the Scottish Church Census 2016 indicated that two-fifths of churchgoers are aged 65 and over.

Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist populations showed young profiles, with the majority of people aged under 40. Hindus and Muslims have the youngest age profiles overall.

We know that persons who are aged 70 and over are advised to stay at home and minimise contact, and people who may be shielding are strongly advised not to attend public places. This may impact on ability of older people to attend a place of worship, in turn impacting on their Article 9 ECHR right to manifest their religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Sex

The Scotland Household Survey 2018 indicated that more women than men volunteered with 'religion and belief' (17 and 13 per cent respectively) and older adults were more likely to volunteer for 'religion and belief' organisations. A higher percentage of adults in accessible small towns provided unpaid help to 'religious groups' (22 per cent) compared to large urban areas (13 per cent).

The Scottish Church Census 2016 indicated that three-fifths of churchgoers are women. We do not have similar data available for other religions.

Religion

All those effected by this policy will be religious. The 2011 census indicated that the majority of religious people in Scotland identify as Christian (54% of all people), with only around 2% identifying with other religions.

The 2011 Census showed that a third identified as Church of Scotland (32%) and 16% as Roman Catholic. Around 1% of the population identified as Muslim, and another 1% as another (non-Christian) religion – this includes Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish.

Any continuing restriction limiting the uses of places of worship to individual prayer or contemplation only continues to be indirectly discriminatory to some faith groups. This is because it does not allow places of worship to open for congregational acts of worship and, as not all faith communities take part in individual prayer or contemplation, some faith groups will benefit more than others. At present this is justified and proportionate on public health grounds. This proposed policy change will remove this indirect discrimination.

Ethnicity

The Scottish Church Census 2016 found that 94% of churchgoers were white but 3% identified as black, which is a higher proportion than in the population as a whole (different categories are used in the Census, but in 2011 0.6% of the population identified as African and 0.1% as Caribbean or Black).

We do not have representative data for other religions, though it is likely that non-Christian religion will have higher BAME populations.

Occurrence

How often will this occur. Daily, weekly, periodically, on demand?

Up to daily

Places of worship can be opened 7 days a week, with some religious groups entering to pray up to 5 times a day.

Geography

Does this option affect all areas of the country? Are some areas more impacted?

All areas of the country are affected.

Mitigations

What mitigation options could be put in place to reduce the risk of the option? In particular, to what extent would physical distancing be possible, would this require indoor activity and touching communal surfaces? Has any work been done to look at mitigation?

We anticipate that with the right mitigations places of worship can reopen in line with other indoor venues (on 15 July or before). Removing the continuing restrictions on the use of places of worship will also mitigate the interference on rights to manifest a religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (Article 9 ECHR).

We will publish guidance, which has been drafted in consultation with faith and belief groups, to support places of worship to reopen for congregational activities at phase 3. This will be promoted within faith communities both by SG and by faith leaders and representatives, who we are continuing to engage with on a weekly basis. Included within phase 3 guidance will be recommendations to undertake the following mitigating activity:

- Physical distancing through limiting capacity and the use of floor markings, cordoning off seating and the use of one-way systems
- Advice on cleaning and hygiene, including hand washing/sanitising facilities
- Arranging layouts to reduce face-to-face time (in most POW congregations face forward)
- Use of face masks
- Restrictions on singing/chanting. Where singing/chanting is essential to an act of worship, we suggest only one individual is permitted to sing or chant behind a Plexi-glass screen which can be cleaned
- Restrictions on use of musical instruments that are operated by breath
- Adaptation of lengthy services to reduce time spent at a gathering
- Avoiding touching or kissing devotional and other objects/resources.

- Avoiding food and drink where it is not essential to the act of worship. Where it is essential, avoiding the use of communal vessels
- Taking other mitigations for the handling of food, including strict hand hygiene, pre-wrapping food items and avoiding the sharing of cutlery, crockery or utensils. Avoiding speaking/singing/chanting across food or drink and, where this is essential to the act of worship, using a face covering and/or securely covering the food
- Only using shared washing/ablution areas when it is essential. Washing/ablution rituals should be carried out at home.
- Recommended keeping of register of attendees to assist test and protect.

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)] We are aware that faith communities have been working hard to put in place local guidance and are preparing for reopening as safely as possible. Some examples of this are guidance documents produced by the [Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland](#), the [Church of Scotland](#), the [Scottish Episcopal Church](#) and the [Muslim Council of Britain](#) (also being used by MCS).

In addition, the Scottish Government has provided funding to faith and belief organisations that has allowed equipment and software to be purchased to facilitate online worship services. This has widened access to prayer, worship, and funeral services, with persons able to attend from home, and we will recommend this is continuing to support higher risk/ shielding individuals who may be unable to attend.

If places of worship are reopening for congregational acts of worship, we anticipate there may be issues around controlling access and preventing larger numbers from attending. The existing regulations place duties on those in control of business and other premises³ to take all reasonable measures to ensure that physical distancing is maintained and to admit people in sufficiently small numbers to make physical distancing possible. Guidance will reinforce this to faith communities.

Approaches overseas

We note that several countries have now allowed places of worship to reopen, and we can learn from the approaches taken. Examples include:

- Italy - Churches must demarcate entrances and exits, put on more services if distancing is not possible, and carry out extensive sanitisation after services. Priests must wash their hands before celebrating Communion and confession must be in large, airy spaces, while ensuring confidentiality.
- France – 1 meter distancing, hand sanitising and face coverings, while a designated person is required to regulate the flow of people entering and

³ Which duties under regulation 4(1) may already apply in respect of registration offices more generally. However, people do not appear to have a reasonable excuse under regulation 8(4) and (5) to leave the place where they live to travel to a registration office for the purpose of attending a wedding ceremony or civil partnership registration.

exiting. If a place of worship fails to respect these measures, the local Prefect has the authority to prohibit its opening.

- Quebec – Focus on good ventilation, such as keeping doors open through services, and disinfection of all contact points.
- Germany - up to 50 people are now allowed to take part in private celebrations "for compelling reasons", such as weddings, baptisms or funerals. As in many countries, indoor singing (including choirs) is not recommended, though congregations may sing outdoors. In Frankfurt, authorities are now urging churches to register all who attend.
- Switzerland – requirement for individuals to register to attend, mirroring rules in the hospitality sector.
- Japan - Taking steps to ensure safety, such as live-streaming services or holding several smaller services to avoid overcrowding.
- South Korea - Some larger places of worship require people to register online in advance so they can be allocated a designated seat to enable distancing. A few continue to run 'drive-in' services.
- New South Wales – Put in place a limit of 50 people.

Alternatives

What alternative approaches could be developed to deliver this option?

We have considered two alternative options to this approach:

- Not allowing gatherings and only permitted online services and outdoor gatherings
- Setting a limit on the number of individuals permitted to attend a place of worship at one time, to reduce the risk of crowding.

The Scottish Government has provided funding to support places of worship to broadcast acts of worship to their congregations online. However, this is not considered a viable long-term alternative to members of the faith community, particularly in light of the intention to open indoor hospitality venues on 15 July.

In relation to the use of outdoor space, this would be in line with the rules on gatherings outdoors generally. Further relaxation in this area would benefit some faith communities, particularly if health advice is that singing can take place outdoors (which is particularly important to some of our Christian communities). However, it should be noted that this is not an alternative for many faith communities, who must be within their place of worship for congregational acts to take place. It may therefore lead to further challenge in relation to indirect discrimination, as it will benefit some faith communities and not others. Faith communities have been clear that they would rather take a unified approach that will benefit all communities together.

In addition, a number of faith communities are required to gather together to form a congregation (for example, the minimum number for a congregation in the Jewish community is 10 people). This is not possible remotely.

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)]

Financial Impact
[Redacted under section 30(b)(ii)] It should be noted that the economic impact to the faith community has been severe, and communities have asked that this is also considered. They are likely to face further costs in relation to re-configuration of places of worship and implementing hygiene/ physical distancing changes. These costs do not directly arise as a result of this potential policy, but are a result of the desire to reopen such places more generally at this time.

Submission to the First Minister on reopening places of worship – Advice on the limits on attendees – 08 July 2020

From: **[Redacted]**
Connected Communities
08 July 2020

First Minister
Deputy First Minister

REOPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP – LIMITS ON ATTENDEES

Purpose

1. To provide Ministers with information on which a decision can be taken in relation to capping attendees at places of worship for congregational worship and communal prayer.

Priority

2. **Urgent.**

Background

3. FM and DFM are aware of the current position regarding reopening places of worship for congregational worship.
4. Guidance on reopening for marriages and funeral services is likely to differ to guidance on reopening for congregational worship. This is due to the specific and emotive nature of weddings and funerals, which make it more difficult for people to adhere to physical distancing rules. In addition, weddings and funerals take place in a much wider variety of venues (including hotels and hospitality venues), and consistency is required across those venues. Officials are content with the differentiation between congregational worship and these types of events.

Engagement with faith communities

5. We have engaged with faith communities over the course of this week (including with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and with Jason Leitch). Faith leaders and representatives are aware of the generality of this announcement and are supportive of it. They have welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to move the date for reopening forward in line with indoor hospitality venues. Faith communities have

expressed some concern around the safety of worshippers and are therefore prepared to move cautiously, taking all mitigations deemed necessary.

6. We therefore consider that imposing a cap on attendees will be acceptable to faith communities, and set out below a proposal to do so, highlighting also the position in the rest of the UK. We propose that any cap set be subject to review as we move through phase 3.

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)]

Position in the rest of the UK

7. We understand that:
 - a. England have not limited the number of people who can attend places of worship for congregational worship, which is to be determined by the place of worship based on physical distancing rules. They have limited the number of people who can attend marriages, funerals and other ceremonies to 30 people (this is in line with proposals for marriages and funerals in Scotland);
 - b. Wales have not yet opened for congregational worship and are only allowing places of worship to open for 'private prayer' at this time;
 - c. Northern Ireland reopened for congregational worship on 29 June. They have not published information on capacity for congregational worship, but advise that for marriages and funeral services the numbers in attendance should be decided on the basis of *"the size and circumstances of the venue... whilst observing social distancing of at least two metres"*.

[Redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Recommendation

8. Ministers are invited to:
 - Agree the approach to capping attendees at places of worship for congregational services at a maximum of 100.

[Redacted]
Connected Communities
08 July 2020

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government			X		

DG Education, Communities and Local Government
Stephen Gallagher, Local Government and Communities
Jason Leitch, Clinical Director

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Robert Marshall, Connected Communities

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Liz Lloyd, Special Advisor

Jeanette Campbell, Special Advisor

Email exchange with the First Minister's Private Office on reopening places of worship – Advice on the limits on attendees – 08 July 2020

Morning [Redacted]

The First Minister is content with your proposal below.

Thanks

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Private Office to the First Minister

[Redacted] St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [Redacted]



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Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 09 July 2020 08:42

To: First Minister; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government; DG Education, Communities & Justice; [Redacted]; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); [Redacted]

Subject: RE: Reopening places of worship - submission on capped numbers - 08 July - 2020

PS/ FM

Copy as above

[Redacted under section 30(b)(i)] That would give places of worship two weeks to operate after reopening on 15 July and to iron out any issues around the new systems they will have put in place. The relevant policy team are comfortable with this approach.

Is the First Minister content with that proposal?

[Redacted]

Exit Strategy

From: **[Redacted]** On Behalf Of First Minister

Sent: 09 July 2020 07:27

To: **[Redacted]** First Minister; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government; DG Education, Communities &

Justice; **[Redacted]**; Lloyd E (Elizabeth); Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); **[Redacted]**

Subject: RE: Reopening places of worship - submission on capped numbers - 08 July 2020

[Redacted],

[Redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Grateful for advice.

Regards

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

DPS/First Minister of Scotland

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From: **[Redacted]** >

Sent: 08 July 2020 20:03

To: First Minister; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government; DG Education, Communities & Justice ; **[Redacted]**; **[Redacted]**; Lloyd E (Elizabeth) ; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); **[Redacted]**

Subject: Reopening places of worship - submission on capped numbers - 08 July 2020

Importance: High

PS/ FM

PS/ DFM

Copy as above

Please see attached an urgent submission from colleagues in Connected Communities on the proposed “cap” on numbers of attending places of workshop for congregational services and communal prayer, ahead of the proposed restart on 15 July.

A response this evening will allow the agreed figure to be reflected in tomorrow’s announcement.

[Redacted]

Exit Strategy Team