**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**

**CORONAVIRUS FIREBREAK LOCKDOWN**

**RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL CHURCHES**

**23 October 2020**

***Introduction***

This guidance sets out the specific risk management measures you need to consider in opening your building (church or church halls) during the Firebreak lockdown. If you haven’t previously opened the building under Covid-19 restrictions, it is suggested that you should not seek to do so now during this temporary closure period. The risk control measures you will need to consider to open your church are substantial. Consider if the activity can be postponed until after the 9th November. Is there an alternative location for the activity or another way of delivering it without opening the building? You should discuss any proposed opening with your Archdeacon.

The local trustee body (PCC, MAC, LMAC), responsible for each place of worship or church hall, has a legal responsibility to do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent people from coming to harm from Covid-19 (or any other hazard). This includes the preparation of a written risk assessment.

***Risk Assessment:***

In opening buildings for these very limited purposes, those responsible are required to prepare a written risk assessment setting out the risk management measures that will be put in place. The most important measure is to ensure that a 2-metre distance is maintained between persons on the premises. Physical distancing is the most fundamental principle in opening any church building. Other risk management measures relate to hygiene (hand washing, sanitising, personal protective equipment) and premises and equipment cleaning.

A proforma risk assessment form is available at Appendix A. Your risk assessment must be approved by your Archdeacon.

If you have previously opened your building, your approved risk assessment is likely to be adequate during this lockdown period. However, it is worth reviewing it again.

Set out below are the main considerations when opening a building even for these limited purposes to help inform any risk assessment.

***Physical/Social Distancing:***

You must make every reasonable effort to encourage strict adherence with physical distancing from the moment people arrive on your grounds including car parks.

Clearly, you cannot completely prevent people from deciding to get closer than 2 metres apart but you must use reasonable endeavours to do so. Reasonable measures might include:

* Clear signage on arrival into the grounds and around the building that two-metre distancing must be maintained. A standard template sign is available from the Church in Wales [website](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/administration-and-business/COVID-19/).
* Signage reminding people who are symptomatic or have a member of their household who is symptomatic, to stay at home. A standard template sign is available from the Church in Wales [website](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/administration-and-business/COVID-19/).
* The entrance/porch and exit doors are likely to be ‘pinch’ points. You might need stewards stationed at the entrance/exit to encourage compliance.
* Can you use different doors to enter and exit? Consider access for disabled people alongside this.
* Direct people to use different paths through the churchyard for entry and exit (if reasonably safe and accessible)
* A one-way system around the church is a good way to help maintain distancing
* Use floor tape or simple barriers to keep people apart where they may be passing each other
* Create waiting areas (with floor tape) where people can stand to wait whilst others pass
* Restrict access to smaller or unused areas of the church so you don’t create bottle-necks or dead-ends

Seating is likely to be a challenging area for many churches.

* 2 metre distancing is necessary in all directions around someone.
* For a church with pews, this could mean one person in every three or so rows. You will need to carefully measure your church’s layout to plan where people sit and the numbers of people your church can hold accordingly.
* It is worth stating the maximum seating capacity on a sign at the entrance to a church to remind everybody. Entrance stewards should keep count (use a clicker) of how many people enter/exit the building.
* Households can, of course, sit together. A pew or row of seats filled by a household may throw out your calculations over distance to other seat places.
* Seating positions will need to be clearly marked. You could place signs on pews, use labels or perhaps space hassocks on pews to mark where not to sit
* If you have moveable chairs, it will be easier to plan positioning of seats to maintain distancing. Consideration needs to be given if a household wishes to sit together and making sure seats don’t get moved as they are used.
* In placing seats or marking pew seat positions, you will need to think about how people will move to and from the seat.

**Hygiene:**

It is vital that all people entering and leaving the building should wash/sanitise their hands.

* Provide hand sanitiser stations for all people entering the building.
* Toilets are a particular challenge and will need detailed planning. WG guidance is that toilets can be opened providing that physical distancing and hand hygiene guidance is followed. These areas should be cleaned regularly using normal cleaning products with particular attention to areas that are frequently touched such as door handles and taps. Suitable handwashing facilities should be available including running water and liquid soap. Drying should be by paper towels or hand dryers (not communal towels). Paper towels should be in a dispenser and disposed of carefully. Specific guidance is available at:

<https://gov.wales/providing-safer-toilets-public-use-coronavirus-html>

* Clear signage instructing people to sanitise their hands-on entry and exit should be erected. A standard template sign is available from the Church in Wales [website](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/administration-and-business/COVID-19/).
* *Face coverings*: it is a requirement that all persons aged over 11 gathering indoors should wear a face covering. This applies to all activities and services within the church. Attendees should be reminded of the requirement to wear a face covering and a standard sign is available on the Church in Wales website

There are exceptions to the requirement to wear a face covering for medical reasons, and it is permitted to remove the covering “to communicate with another person who has difficulty communicating (in relation to speech, language or otherwise)”.

Further guidance for the public is available at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>

and for premises managers at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-measures-be-taken-employers-and-managers-premises>

Those leading a ceremony may have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering if they cannot effectively do so while wearing one, as long as they have taken other sufficient mitigations such as staying continually over 2 metres away from others and/or wearing a visor.

At a marriage ceremony, it is reasonable for the couple to remove their coverings for a kiss, for taking vows or to walk ‘down the aisle’ as long as other measures are in place to protect people attending the ceremony from the risk of contracting coronavirus, for example, guests staying 2m away from the couple at all times.

* Books, reusable or communal resources should be removed from use. Provide single-use sheets of paper or specially printed service sheets located after the hand sanitising area. If you have projection facilities, this could be a good alternative.
* Votive candles, devotional or similar communally handled objects should be removed
* No food or drink should be made available during or after any activity.
* Cash giving is discouraged at this time. Use online giving (Gift Direct) see <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/gift-direct/> where possible.

Consider contactless card readers. See <https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/giving-and-payments>

* If cash payments are made, they should be handled wearing gloves and regular cleaning and hygiene maintained.
* Heating and Ventilation: Where practicable, non-fire doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation. Aire the building fully before and after use and try to ensure a good flow of air during use. Heating can generally be used. Types of heating that present a Covid-19 risk are those that take air from one occupied space in a building and move it into another occupied space, i.e. from one room to another. If your heating or ventilation system has this feature is must be turned off so that air is not moved from one space to another. The system can be used with the feature turned off. It is extremely unlikely that a traditional church building will have such a system, but if in doubt ask the company that services your heating. They will know what, if any, adaptation is needed to operate in a Covid-secure way.
* Music: Singing or chanting should not take place given the increased risk of infection from these activities. Recorded music may be appropriate as an alternative to hymn singing.  Music should not be at a volume that makes normal conversations difficult.
	+ You should not play musical instruments that are physically blown into e.g wind or brass instruments. However, a pipe organ can be played as part of a worship, funeral or wedding service.
	+ It is permissible for an individual to sing at a marriage or funeral service. Such a singer should sing behind a plexi-glass screen to protect guests. Physical distancing should be observed at all times. It is possible for more than one individual to sing over the course of the service, but this should not be more than one at a particular time and there should be separate arrangements to protect from transmission e.g separate plexi screens or cleaning of screens between each use.

**Cleaning:**

* Cleaning helps minimise the spread of Coronavirus Covid-19 so frequent cleaning of all surfaces especially those most frequently touched is important. Cleaning helps minimise the spread of Coronavirus Covid-19 so frequent cleaning of all surfaces especially those most frequently touched is important.

Government guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

The guidance describes the cleaning required, the appropriate disposal of materials, the cleaning of equipment and hard surfaces and the PPE that should be worn.

* Cleaning should take place after each occasion the church is opened. Focus should be on hard surfaces where people might make contact particularly door handles. Soft furnishings should be minimised where possible as these are more challenging to clean.
* If there is a clear gap of 72 hours between events then cleaning may not be necessary.
* Your cleaning is likely to be undertaken by volunteers. You will need to check that none of your team are in a vulnerable group or are self-isolating.

Follow the Government guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

The minimum Personal Protective Equipment requirement for cleaners is disposable gloves and an apron but the guidance should be carefully considered especially where there may be a greater risk of contamination. Face coverings must be worn when people are indoors.

Suitable cleaning materials should be provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.

Welsh Government recommend the following guidance on the cleaning of historic surfaces and materials at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/historic-places/cleaning-historic-surfaces/?dm_t=0,0,0,0,0>

* How should we clean if a confirmed Covid-19 case has visited? The building should be closed for at least 72 hours after which the building should be thoroughly cleaned in accordance with government guidance. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
* Promote a clear point of contact for anyone who develops symptoms after a visit to the church.

**Test Trace and Protect:**

* The Welsh Government Test, Trace, Protect strategy sets out the approach to tackling coronavirus, testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.
* All persons entering places of worship should be asked to complete a record of attendance which records their name, contact telephone number and date and time of visit but people cannot be required to do so.  Attendance at funerals and marriages is by invitation only so this information should be obtained in advance.
* In the case of access to church halls or churches for essential voluntary of public service, it is a requirement that attendees are recorded before being admitted.  These records must be handled in accordance with GDPR to protect the individuals’ privacy.  These records should be kept for 21 days after the event and then destroyed.
* A [consent form](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/test-trace-and-protect/) can be found on the Church in Wales Website
* You should also provide a revised [privacy notice and templates](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/test-trace-and-protect/) can be found on the Church in Wales website.  There is a version if you collect this information in advance online rather than ‘at the door’. The ‘online’ privacy notice should be made available on your website, and the ‘at the door’ privacy notice should be available for inspection (perhaps on the table where people are completing forms and on the church noticeboard)
* The new NHS COVID-19 app is intended to help in this process but is not mandatory.  The system  involves the creation of a site specific QR code which allows people visiting to use the App.   See [https://gov.wales/nhs-covid-19-app-guidance-businesses-and-organisations](https://gov.wales/nhs-covid-19-app-guidance-businesses-and-organisations%0D)  This system does not replace the physical recording of attendance set out above.
* It is recommended that all public church premises (including churches, halls, offices etc) should display such a QR code.
* Further Welsh Government guidance [can be found here](https://gov.wales/keeping-records-staff-customers-and-visitors-test-trace-protect) on how to maintain records and on compliance with GDPR.
* Further information [about Test, Trace, Protect](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-your-questions) is available here.

**RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE**

Using the advice above, complete the proforma risk assessment below. This should be approved and dated by an authorised representative of the PCC/MAC/LMAC. The completed form should be approved by your Archdeacon.

| **Name of Church:** | **Address:** | **Date:** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area of Focus**  | **Control Measure***These are the main themes from the checklist and guidance. They may not apply in each case.* | **Detailed arrangements***Set out below the detailed arrangements you will implement under each control measure. The boxes will expand as you complete them.* | **Action by?** | **Completed**  |
| PHYSICAL DISTANCING | Staffing arrangements incl PPE |  |  |  |
|  | Signage |  |  |  |
|  | Entry and Exits |  |  |  |
|  | One-way system |  |  |  |
|  | Taped/barriered routes |  |  |  |
|  | Seating arrangements |  |  |  |
|  | Restricted areas |  |  |  |
| HYGIENE | Hand washing sanitising |  |  |  |
|  | Face coverings |  |  |  |
|  | Prayer books and worship sheets |  |  |  |
|  | Shared objects |  |  |  |
| CLEANING | Cleaning team |  |  |  |
|  | PPE |  |  |  |
|  | Cleaning regime |  |  |  |
| SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES | Holy Communion |  |  |  |
|  | Baptisms |  |  |  |