

## COVID-19 GUIDANCE UPDATE (Step 3)

This guidance is offered as we enter Step 3 of the Government Covid-19 Response Roadmap because it is important as lockdown measures ease that the general principles of creating a safe environment in our parishes is not abandoned.

### General Principles

- **Prevailing local conditions**  
All parishes should always consider the prevailing local conditions for the virus (R number, prevalence of new variants, rates of hospital admissions, PHE advice etc)
- **Mitigations**  
Although the vaccine rollout program is very successful, the risk of transmission is still there. We therefore recommend that the following measures remain in place:
  1. Hand sanitiser is readily available;
  2. Face coverings, even if removed by law, remains in place.
- **Cleaning**  
General cleaning to a good standard with attention to frequent touchpoints is the standard to continue. There are several key things which churches and parishes have been doing, and should continue to do, which significantly reduce this risk:
  1. **Sanitising hands** on entry to churches.
  2. Ensuring people **wear face coverings** properly will reduce aerosol or droplet spread.
  3. **Ventilating buildings** well (especially during and between services) remains important.
  4. Maintaining a good general standard of **routine cleaning** using usual cleaning detergents is sufficient for regular use.
  5. Clearing spillages of body fluids (faeces, blood, vomit etc) should always follow specific higher standards (and not just because of SARS-CoV-2). This guidance is reproduced in Appendix 1, but body fluid spillage kits are strongly advisable.
- **Social distancing**  
At the moment, the regulation on social distancing requires that a reduced capacity exists in all churches. However, it is advisable to now make a reassessment of the covid-secure capacity based on the principles of combination prevention (masks, hand sanitiser, good ventilation, percentage of population vaccinated, local r rate etc) because Risk Assessments should be dynamic, i.e., they should be refreshed and revised as circumstances change in the locality.
- **Congregational singing**  
Indoor congregational singing is still prohibited, but the use of a small cantor group or other small choirs is allowed. The following guidance should be followed:
  1. Indoors – only when essential to acts of communal worship and should be limited to groups of six, with social distancing being maintained at all times. Communal singing should not take place.

2. Outdoors – when communal worship takes place outdoors on church grounds, the congregation may join in with the singing, but social contact limits apply. This means that participating groups cannot exceed 30 and they must not mingle.
- Track & Trace  
A registration system (QR Codes, Divine Liturgy Register / Booking System) must remain in place for purposes of Track & Trace because knowledge of who is present, should it be needed, is necessary. Churches should display QR Codes prominently. We recommend that stewards continue to help.

### **Acts of Worship**

- Divine Liturgies –

Capacity	Based on COVID-secure assessment limit
Servers / Assistants	Only those needed for the celebration
Holy Water Stoups	Remain empty
Votive Candles	Available
Veneration of Icons & Statues	Do not touch or kiss
Incense & Candles	Can be used
Holy Communion	Follow current practise
Concelebrants	Permitted, but the number of concelebrants should be determined on local conditions

- Baptisms –

Capacity	30 people maximum as stand-alone celebration OR Based on COVID-secure limit if during a Divine Liturgy
Servers / Assistants	As needed
Anointing	Should be applied using cotton bud
Pouring of Water	With caution to prevent splashing
Holy Communion	Follow current practised

- Weddings –

Capacity	30 people maximum
Servers / Assistants	As needed
Exchange of Vows	As usual
Exchange of Rings	As usual

- Funerals –

Capacity	Based on COVID-secure assessment limit
Servers / Assistants	As needed
Reception of the Body & Vigil	Permitted
Coffin bearers from friends & family	Permitted (6 maximum)
Placing of a Flag or Pall & Christian Symbol	Permitted
Incense & Holy Water	Permitted

- Confessions –  
The use of confessional boxes is still prohibited. Follow current practices.

### **Parish Life**

- Social activities  
As virus transmission rates begin to fall, social activities can resume, but in line with latest guidance providing a risk assessment for both the activity and the space is completed.
- Catechetical groups  
Catechetical and faith formation groups are divided into two areas: under 18s & over 18s.
  1. Under 18s: any group provision (educational or social) for under 18s may meet indoors or outdoors without limitations on group size. All standard covid-security measures (social distancing, hand hygiene and face coverings etc.) will continue to be required.
  2. Over 18s: may meet indoors or outdoors in groups of no more than 15 (plus staff, volunteers, catechists, and carers). All standard covid-security measures (social distancing, hand hygiene and face coverings etc.) required.
- Home visits  
Clergy are now permitted to carry out home visits, but it is important the Government Guidance<sup>1</sup> is followed. We recommend:
  1. No more than 2 home visits take place in one day (one in the morning, one in the afternoon).
  2. The use of regular freely available covid-19 home test kits for those doing pastoral visits, to ensure they are not potential spreaders of infection to those who are sick and medically vulnerable. These can be obtained through: [www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site](https://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site)
  3. Careful hand sanitisation, wearing face masks, and minimising exposure time indoors (if possible, sit outside in the garden with them).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>

## Appendix 1

### **Cleaning spillages of body fluids in all situations**

Spillages of body fluids such as blood, sputum, vomit, faeces, or urine can present an infection risk and should be cleaned up immediately. Cleaners should treat every spillage of body fluids or body waste as potentially infectious.

Cleaners should wear protective gloves and aprons and use disposable wipes wherever possible. Eye protection is advised if there is risk of splashing.

For a spillage of blood, a 10,000ppm hypochlorite solution (1:10 chlorine releasing eg bleach to water) should be used. Staff should follow the procedure below. Even better is to use a body fluid disposal kit which solidify the spillage.

1. Put on disposable gloves and apron (protective goggles should be used if there is danger of splashing) and ensure that the area of the spillage is well ventilated and clear of service users, other staff and visitors.
2. If using a hypochlorite solution, prepare it in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions — if using granules apply directly to the spill.
3. Cover the spillage with paper towels.
4. Carefully wipe up the spillage with more towels soaked in hypochlorite.
5. Dispose of the waste in a clinical waste bag.
6. Wash hands in soap and water.

Solid or semi-solid matter (e.g., faeces) in the spillage should be removed first as this can inhibit the disinfectant.

## Simple Checklist

Item	Done
Check Church to ensure all markings are still in place and do not pose a tripping hazard.	
Ensure all restricted areas remain cordoned off	
Ensure all signage remains intact and in place.	
Ensure hand sanitisation stations are adequately provided.	
Identify your team of stewards / volunteers. If you do not have a full team – revise plan.	
Ensure the Church has been cleaned.	
Ensure there is a cleaner(s) available to carry out cleaning of frequent touchpoints.	
Ensure there is adequate protective equipment available for team. (They may use their own protective equipment)	
Ensure no shared publications have been left in the church.	
Ensure items left behind by parishioners have been removed to lost property.	
The collection box has been emptied and handled only when using gloves.	
Doors and windows open to allow flow of fresh air through the church.	