



**Buckingham/Gordon Road,
Shoreham-by-Sea,
West Sussex, BN43 6WF**

COVID-19 Policy

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| Church: Shoreham Free Church | Date completed: | Review date: 04/08/20 |
| Author | Andrew Earnshaw, Secretary 04/07/20 Pam Cripps, Treasurer 06/07/2020 | |

1. Introduction

Shoreham Free Church has a duty of care to all who use the building to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. These are laid out below and follow the guidelines on the use of places of worship as set out by the UK Government and issued on the 29th June 2020.

2. Definitions

“Place of worship”. A place of worship refers to a building used for regular religious ceremonies, communal worship or similar gatherings by religious organisations. It includes the use of surrounding grounds, for example, adjoining car parks, courtyards or gardens for which the Church leaders are also responsible. “Worshippers” or “visitors”. Those entering the building to engage in worship or other activity for which the place of worship may be used. “Church leaders”. The Minister/Leaders who have responsibility for the management of the building. “Household” and “support bubble”. A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation. A support bubble is where a single adult living alone, or a single parent with children under 18, can form an exclusive network with one other household where social distancing does not have to be observed. The two households that form a support bubble count as one household, for the purposes of this guidance.

3. Key principles for safely opening places of worship

Church leaders will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and should decide to remain closed if they are not able to safely adhere to the guidelines outlined below. A COVID-19 risk assessment has been carried out (see attached risk assessment)

4. Practices to reduce the spread of infection

Where possible, it is intended to stream live worship services or other events to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are self-isolating or particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Individuals should avoid touching property belonging to others such as coats, bags and umbrellas, which should remain with their owner whilst adhering to social distancing principles. Reusable and communal resources such as Bibles, service sheets and devotional material, will be removed from use. Single use alternatives including Bible passages will (may) be provided but should be removed and disposed of by the individual. Items owned by the individual to aid worship, such as Bibles and note pads, can be brought in but should again be removed by the worshipper.

Food and drink

As per the Shoreham Free Church Assessment of Risk, Communion bread and wine will be served in individual containers, the giver and receiver will wash or anti-bac their hands thoroughly before and after consumption, the consumables will be securely covered before being served and the minister will clean his hands before opening the containers. No singing or speaking will happen over unsecure consumables.

Sharing of food should be avoided, e.g. cakes, biscuits etc. Individuals should not handle consumables and any dishes and/ or cutlery, other than their own (for example the use of shared bowls). General access to the kitchen is restricted.

Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments

People should avoid singing, shouting, raising voices and/or playing music at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult or that may encourage shouting. This is because of the potential for the increased risk of transmission from aerosol and droplets, even if social distancing is being observed or face coverings are used. Therefore, spoken responses during worship should also not be in a raised voice.

Weddings and funerals

Only essential aspects of the ceremonies take place at this time. No food or drink should be consumed as a part of the event, unless required for the purposes of solemnisation.

Baptisms

Where baptisms require water, small volumes can be splashed onto the body, but full immersion should be avoided. Others present should move out of range of any potential splashing. Where an infant is involved a parent/guardian or other member of the infant's regular household should hold the infant. All individuals involved should thoroughly wash their hands before and after and ensure good hygiene.

Cash donations

Cash donations are discouraged. Please continue to use online giving. Where this is not an option, cash should be collected in a receptacle that is set in one place, and handled by one individual. Regular cleaning and hygiene should be maintained, and gloves worn to handle cash offerings where giving continues.

Young people and children attending places of worship

Young children should be supervised by the parent or guardian. They should wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds, with running water and soap, and dry them thoroughly **or** use hand sanitiser, ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered. Any shared facilities for children, such as play corners, soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are difficult to clean, will be removed and/or put out of use. Any outdoor play area is not to be used due to entering and exiting the Church building. Principles in general guidance from the Department for Education should also be followed for any separate children's activities being organised by the Church, alongside or within a service.

5. General actions to reduce the spread of infection

People should act in a safe and responsible way in order to reduce the spread of infection in our communities.

Test and trace

A record will be kept of all people attending the premises together with dates, which will be retained securely for 21 days. This will aid NHS Test and Trace service if required.

Restrictions on capacity

The number of people permitted to enter the Church building at any one time will be limited to **20**, so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable) between households.

In defining the number of people that can reasonably follow social distancing, the total floor space as well as likely pinch points and busy areas has been taken into account (such as entrances, exits) and one-way routes introduced.

Social distancing

All leaders and visitors to the Church building should follow the guidelines on social distancing including:

Where possible, adhere to social distancing of at least 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable) between households.

Consider and set out the additional mitigations you will introduce in your risk assessment. These could include, for instance, avoiding any face-to-face seating by changing layouts, reducing the number of people in enclosed spaces, improving ventilation, using protective screens and face coverings, and closing non-essential social spaces, as outlined throughout this guidance.

Queue management is to be implemented for entry and exiting the premises.

Those leading the Service are to remind the congregants of the importance of social distancing and hygiene.

A one-way flow in and out of the premises operates together with signage, with restrictions on accessing non-essential areas.

At the end of the Service, prevent crowding at entry or exit points.

Any changes to entrances, exits and queues should take into account reasonable adjustments to accommodate those who need them, such as worshippers with physical disabilities.

Consider introducing a booking system to help with managing numbers, particularly for Services where demand will be high.

If required, Church leaders will advertise set days or times when places of worship are open solely for those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, such as those over 70 or clinically vulnerable.

Where social distancing cannot be maintained, extra attention needs to be paid to cleaning and hygiene to reduce the risk of transmission, and to ventilating the building by opening doors and operating ceiling fans.

Follow the guidance on hand hygiene: Wash hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds, using soap and water or hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and nose blowing, or after being in public areas.

The above advice on social distancing also applies when travelling to and from a place of worship.

People who are symptomatic

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) **are NOT to attend the place of worship due to the risk that they pose to others**; they should self-isolate at home immediately with other members of their household. Individuals who are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household **are NOT to attend the services**.

Where possible, it is intended that live streaming of services will be available.

Individuals aged 70 years and over attending the place of worship

Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 and over, regardless of medical conditions.

Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household.

Hygiene

On entering and leaving the building, everyone should be asked to wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or to use hand sanitiser. Signs and posters are displayed to build awareness of a good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, and to avoid touching one's face. When a person coughs or sneezes, mouth and nose should be covered with a tissue, or the crook of a person's sleeved arm (not the hands) if no tissue is at hand. The tissue must be thrown away hygienically, immediately afterwards, and hands washed thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser, if hand washing facilities are not available.

Toilets

Toilets to be open.

To enable good hand hygiene, hand sanitiser is available on entry to toilets

Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider the use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.

Toilet facilities will be well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate and safe to do so.

Cleaning

All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched, such as doorways, door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned using suitable cleaning products. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place.

Face coverings

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it will provide some protection for others you come into close contact with.

Face coverings are additional to, and not a replacement, for the other ways of managing risk, including social distancing, minimising time spent in contact, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in a place of worship. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you and your household should isolate at home: wearing a face covering does not change this.

Worshippers, volunteers and staff may choose to wear face coverings to offer protection to others and, if so, it is important to use them properly. Thoroughly wash hands before putting them on and taking them off. The key thing is they should cover the mouth and nose and fit well around the face. Face coverings should not be used by young children or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. For example, primary age children un-assisted, or those with respiratory conditions.

Protecting the vulnerable

If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship, they should go home immediately and be advised to follow the [stay at home guidance](#) which covers NHS Test and Trace. If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become unwell, should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace. If they do develop symptoms they should follow the [stay at home guidance](#).

Individuals who are extremely clinically vulnerable/shielding

The NHS has written to around 2.2 million people who are considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, advising them to shield. Shielded patients are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship.

From Monday 6 July, those shielding individuals may choose to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a support bubble with another household. They will therefore still be advised not to attend places of worship indoors. Advice for both the clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable is however advisory and they can choose how to manage their own risks.

6. How can places of worship communicate this guidance to visitors?

Leaders will ensure that visitors are made aware of the guidance to ensure that visitors comply with the Government's guidance, and any risk assessments completed for the venue, for the safety of all those who visit and work there. The Government strongly advises each place of worship ensures that visitors comply with the social distancing guidelines.

Appendices

COVID-19 Risk assessment

Copy of Church attendance record

Shoreham Free Church COVID-19 Policy Summary