



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Places of worship and funerals: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)

Provides advice on measures that are likely to be reasonable to take to minimise the risk of coronavirus at places of worship and funerals.

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## What is this?

This “action card” provides advice on measures that are likely to be reasonable to take to minimise the risk of coronavirus in places of worship and at funerals.

It should be used in conjunction with current Welsh Government [regulations](#) and other [\(more general\) guidance](#).

## Context

This action card relates to the measures places of worship must take, by law, in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Those responsible for these places are required to take [reasonable measures](#) to minimise the risk of people being exposed to coronavirus, and spreading the virus, at their premises.

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As a basis for deciding what measures should be taken, they must also carry out a specific assessment of the risk posed by the coronavirus.

The action card highlights risks generally associated with these venues and activities and considers what reasonable measures could to be taken to mitigate those risks.

This is not an exhaustive list and other reasonable measures not referred to below may be appropriate.

If you have questions or concerns please seek advice from your local authority's environmental health department as soon as possible. Please be aware and respectful of the fact that their role is to ensure that appropriate reasonable measures are taken so that your venue can operate as safely as possible. However, it is not their role to approve your risk assessment.

## Specific risks in these venues and activities

Places of worship often involve the gathering of people for communal prayer or services. It is important that all organisations and persons which operate venues appreciate that the pandemic is not over, and that everyone still needs to manage the risks of coronavirus. Many of those who attend the venues will be aware of this and wary of the risk.

While risks will vary from venue to venue, and will depend on the activities being undertaken at the venue and the number of people present, the following risks will be typical:

- singing or chanting can increase aerosol transmission, particularly congregational singing
- sharing of food or refreshments after or as part of a service
- touching objects during or as part of worship
- participation by more vulnerable members of a congregation, volunteers or staff
- at funerals, potential for persons who have tested positive for coronavirus

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being present

- related children's activities that take place within places of worship, for example Sunday School, Madrassa etc
- people congregating in close proximity and for prolonged periods of time, particularly indoors where the risk of transmission through aerosols is higher
- activity that leads to direct physical contact between individuals from different households as part of worship practice, for example blessings, communion, baptisms

## What reasonable measures should I consider taking to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus?

While it is unlikely to be possible to mitigate the risks completely in venues and activities of this nature, some measures are reasonable to take so must be taken.

You should consider whether the following measures are reasonable to take. The measures you take should be informed by your assessment of the risk of coronavirus spreading at your premises and tailored to your specific circumstances. The Welsh Government has produced a [standard template](#) for coronavirus risk assessments, and there are [further information available to support you provided by the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#).

### Reduce the chance of coronavirus being present

- requiring members of the congregation to take a test before they enter
- requiring members of the congregation to show that they have been vaccinated before they enter
- asking members of the congregation if they have been vaccinated, have recently been tested or if they have COVID-19 symptoms before they enter.
- informing members of the congregation that anyone who is symptomatic, has tested positive, is awaiting a test result or has been told to self-isolate by

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NHS Wales Test Trace Protect, must not enter your premises

The best way of preventing spread of coronavirus in any place of worship is to reduce the risk of the virus being present in the first place.

## Prevent crowding

- Maintaining physical distancing between groups and individuals wherever practical.
- Rearranging seating. In a place of worship which has chairs that can be moved, reconfiguring them to maintain distance between people from different households and avoid face to face orientation.
- Where this is viable, reducing the number of people who may be inside your premises at any one time for example by having additional services. Limiting numbers will reduce the extent to which close physical interaction will occur, in particular by reducing the potential for crowding.
- Using signs and markings to manage the flow of people entering and exiting the premises and inside in order to avoid bottlenecks.

## Improve your ventilation

- Maximising natural or mechanical ventilation (and not recirculating air). Airflow can be improved by opening windows and propping open internal doors (but not fire doors) where possible for the duration of a service or between activities.

Making sure mechanical ventilation systems are effectively maintained and have been serviced.

## Keep your premises clean

- Regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and equipment. Allowing for breaks between service and ensuring thorough and regular cleaning, using disinfectant in high footfall areas and in high contact touchpoints such as

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door handles or rails.

- Where objects are touched as part of worship, cleaning the object between each worshipper that touched it and require worshipers to sanitise or wash their hands before and after touching the object. .
- Providing hand sanitiser and encouraging regular hand washing.

## **Protect vulnerable people on your premises**

- Adopting additional measures to minimize risk where more vulnerable people congregate at the place of worship. This could include shortening the length of the service, asking worshippers to undertake lateral flow test before attending, stricter physical distancing measures or moving activities outdoors.
- Avoiding face to face interaction and orientation.

## **Take particular care if a person who has tested positive is present at a funeral**

- As (exceptionally) a person who has tested positive for coronavirus may attend a funeral of a family member or close friend on compassionate grounds, taking particular care in relation to any such person present – including by requiring that person to wear a face covering, maintaining strict physical distancing, reducing the length of the funeral service, ensuring good ventilation and holding as much of the funeral as possible outside.

## **Sing with mitigations**

- Singing or chanting increases the amount of aerosol expelled into the air from people's mouths. Reducing the amount of singing or stopping singing can help to reduce the risk of transmission.
- If singing or chanting takes place, other mitigations should be put in place, which could include improving ventilation, moving the activity outdoors, increasing the space between people, or having fewer people present.

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## Remember face coverings

- Helping to ensure that people present comply with their legal obligation to wear a face covering, for example through signage and/or verbal reminders

## Help Test, Trace, Protect

- Understanding the role of the NHS Wales **Test, Trace, Protect** system has in monitoring and controlling the virus.
- Informing anyone who is symptomatic, has tested positive, is awaiting a test result or has been told to self-isolate by TTP must not enter your premises. Record keeping for the purposes of Test Trace Protect. This is most useful when records identify groups that are most likely to have come into close contact with an infected individual.

## Communicate

You have a legal obligation to provide information to those entering or working at the place of worship about how to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. This includes, in particular, information to all those present about their risk of exposure to coronavirus identified in the risk assessment and the measures to be taken to minimise this risk.

This could include announcements, clear signage (e.g. signs, floor tape or paint) for limits on the number people present in a particular area or room, queuing systems and one way systems.

## Other relevant guidance

**General guidance on taking reasonable measures** to minimise the risk of spreading coronavirus.

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## Self-isolation guidance.

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