

**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**  
**CORONAVIRUS – COVID19**  
**GUIDANCE ON RE-OPENING OF CHURCH HALLS AND COMMUNITY CENTRES**

**Alert Level 2**

***Introduction***

This guidance outlines the general approach to opening buildings for community use at this time. Typically, within the Church in Wales, such buildings are Church Halls but can include multi-purpose churches too.

Details of what Alert Level 2 means in Wales can be found at:

[Alert level 2 | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)

In particular, attention is drawn to:

[Gathering with other people: alert level 2 | GOV.WALES](#)

***Permitted Activities***

From 17 May 2021, buildings and their grounds can open for organised community activity subject to limits on numbers of people attending at any one time of 30 people indoors and 50 people outdoors (excluding children under 11 and activity organisers).

NB Organised activities encompass a broad range of activities that can be attended by people of any age but do not include activities such as parties or wider social gatherings of families and friends beyond the arrangements for meeting other people.

An organised activity must be organised by a business, public body or a charitable, benevolent, educational or philanthropic institution, a club or political organisation, or the national governing body of a sport or other activity.

Wedding receptions and funeral wakes can be held but with a limit of 30 people indoors and 50 outdoors.

Worship activity within churches or halls is not subject to the 30 person limit. The limit for these activities is the safe capacity of the building to maintain 2 metre social distancing. See guidance on opening churches for further information.

All activities must be accompanied by a risk assessment to decide the best risk mitigation measures for the activity. Social distancing of two metres must be observed at all times for such activities.

Welsh Government guidance on opening community centres is available at:

<https://gov.wales/safe-use-multi-purpose-community-centres-covid-19>

MACs/PCCs should follow Welsh Government guidance in re-opening their halls. **General**

## **Considerations for the Re-opening of Church Halls and other buildings for community activity**

It is strongly recommended that any decision to re-open a hall and to permit community activities (either directly organised or by hire to third parties), should be clearly minuted by the PCC/MAC, with an explanation of the reasoning adopted in coming to that decision, in case questions are raised at a later date.

In opening the hall, you are obliged by law to take all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The operation of the hall, and any activities within it must comply with Covid-19 secure guidelines. The principles of these are the same as for opening churches or any other building: maintaining two-metre physical distancing between people, ensuring regular hand washing/sanitizing and regular cleaning of premises especially surfaces.

You should carefully review the Track Trace and Protect guidance referenced in the Welsh Government guidance. NB The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations place a duty on those responsible for the community centre to collect contact information from each person at the premises or, in relation to persons from the same household, from one of them, and retaining it for 21 days for the purpose of providing it to the Welsh Ministers or to a public health officer upon either's request. A consent form and privacy notice can be found on the Church in Wales website.

The 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> 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.

Church Halls are facilities provided by a MAC/PCC as building manager in which activities are organised. Some of these activities are operated directly by the MAC/PCC whilst others are operated by a third party (a user/hirer).

## **Considerations for the MAC/PCC as Building Manager**

As the building manager, the MAC/PCC has an overall duty to make sure the building is used in such a way as to prevent the spread of coronavirus. This means you should take reasonable steps to ensure activity organisers plan their activities appropriately. It is not sufficient to 'leave it to the user'. You should:

1. *Review the Guidance:* Take time to work through the guidance from Welsh Government at [Safe use of multi-purpose community centres \(COVID-19\) | GOV.WALES](#)
2. *Prepare:* Make sure the building is ready for use including maintenance checks, electrical and heating checks, check water systems (e.g legionnaires disease measures). The grounds and access routes should be tidy and safe.

3. *Survey and measure*: survey the building to think about how its layout would impact on maintaining 2-metre distancing. Consider walkways and access routes in and around the building. You need to calculate the safe capacity for different activities whilst maintaining 2-metre distancing and subject to the overall limit of 15 people. With this information, you can discuss detailed use arrangements with each user.
4. *Signage*: Ensure signage is in place to remind people of requirements. See [Safety and physical distancing signs for employers: coronavirus | GOV.WALES](#)
5. *Plan your cleaning regime*: The general requirement is that areas of buildings that are used are cleaned before and after use. The section in the Welsh Government guidance headed Cleaning and Infection Control is very useful in helping you think about your cleaning regime. You should review your cleaning arrangements to ensure that an appropriate cleaning regime is reliably implemented.
6. *Hygiene*: Whilst activity organisers are likely to include this in their own precautions, you should ensure sanitizer/hand washing facilities are available.
7. *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 building.

Further guidance for the public is available at:

[Face coverings: guidance for public | GOV.WALES](#)

and for premises managers at:

[Face coverings: guidance on measures to be taken by employers and managers of premises | GOV.WALES](#)

The public should be reminded of the requirement to wear a face covering and a standard sign can be found on the Church in Wales website.

8. *Ventilation and Heating*: Ensuring good ventilation of your building before, during and after use are important risk control measures. Where practicable, non-fire doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation.

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 it 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. 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.

9. *Toilets*: 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 [Providing safer toilets for public use: coronavirus \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

10. *Record your arrangements (Risk Assessment)*: You must complete a risk assessment before re-opening. This should set out the precautions and mitigation measures you will put in place. This should then be shared with users/activity organisers. You should share this Risk Assessment with your Archdeacon too. A template risk assessment document is attached.
11. *Liaise with Activity Organisers*: Make contact with your activity organisers to start discussing appropriate risk mitigation measures. You should check carefully that their activity is permissible under the latest regulations. They should provide you with a risk assessment for their activities within your building. This should be based on any government guidance for the safe operation of their particular activity. You should carefully study this to make sure that it dovetails with your own arrangements. Make sure they understand your arrangements for Track, Trace and Protect.

A major part of managing physical distancing so as not to exceed the safe capacity of your hall (and the limit of 30) is to control access carefully. Generally, it should be for activity organisers to manage this as they are inviting people to attend. This will be easiest for pre-booked attendees. If attendees can simply 'turn up', the activity organiser will need to consider stewarding arrangements.

If the PCC/MAC is not satisfied that proper arrangements can be put in place for safe operation, the activity should not be permitted. There may be sense in re-opening for a limited range of activities as a first stage. Groups that make use of the hall on a very regular basis e.g nurseries, would be a good place to start. It makes sense to work with trusted users as you develop your procedures.

### ***Considerations for MAC/PCC when directly organising an activity in the hall***

1. *Permissible activity*: You should check carefully that the activity is permissible under the latest regulations.
2. *Consider the activities you wish to undertake*: The way these are undertaken will need to change to ensure appropriate precautions. Be creative to ensure activities can be undertaken safely but also enjoyably. Don't forget that some elements of your activity might be most safely conducted on-line rather than in person.
3. *Risk Assessment*: Prepare a written risk assessment setting out how you will operate the activity to comply with government guidance. The focus should be on physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning arrangements. The risk assessment template can be easily adapted for this purpose. You should prepare a risk assessment for each separate activity. This should be discussed and shared with all involved with running the activity.
4. *Physical Distancing Issues*: It may be that essential activity will require some breaching of the two-metre distancing. You will need to consider carefully how this will be

safely managed. This might include rigorous hand washing regimes before and after such a breach.

17 May 2021

Name of Church Hall:	Address:		Date:	
Area of Focus	Control Measure <i>These are the main themes to consider in opening your hall. They may not apply in each case.</i>	Detailed arrangements <i>Set out below the detailed arrangements you will implement under each control measure.</i>	Action by?	Completed
PREPARATIONS	Maintenance Checks			
	Check services e.g water, electrical, heating systems			
	Access Routes			
	Car Parks			
	Airing and Cleaning			
	Ventilation and Heating			
	Review Fire Risk Assessment			
PHYSICAL DISTANCING	Building capacity calculations for different types of activity (subject to limit of 15 people)			
	Signage			
	Entry and Exit routes including car parks			

	One-way systems			
	Taped/barriered routes			
	Seating arrangements			
	Restricted areas			
HYGIENE	Hand washing sanitising			
	Toilet arrangements			
CLEANING	Cleaning regime			
	PPE			
	Cleaning team details			
OTHER	Liaison/communication with activity organisers			
	Liaison/communication with staff and volunteers			