

## Alert Level 2 moving to Alert Level 1

### A Practical Advice Update 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Wales is now moving, in incremental stages, from Alert Level 2 to Alert Level 1 and Welsh Government has set out the next steps of relaxing restrictions. This does mean that a wider range of activities are now permitted with greater numbers of people involved but the restrictions on how these activities are undertaken remain.

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

[Restrictions from 7 June 2021: frequently asked questions | GOV.WALES](#)

In particular, attention is drawn to:

[Gathering with other people: restrictions from 7 June 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)

Welsh Government has introduced the concept of 'Regulated gatherings' and these encompass a broad range of activities that can be attended by people of any age. These include activities that were previously referred to as 'organised activities' and allow for larger scale events.

Regulated gatherings are those 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.

Places of worship and buildings used for community activities, such as church halls, can now be open. Of relevance to local churches, the following activities are now permitted:

- regulated outdoor gatherings with a maximum of 4,000 people of any age (standing) and 10,000 people of any age seated.
- organised indoor activities for up to 30 adults\* (children under 11 and those working/volunteering at the activity do not need to be counted in the 30 limit)
- opening to visitors but with access carefully planned and controlled to maintain social distancing
- indoor supervised activities for children (NB this does not include activities such as children's birthday parties or wider social gatherings of families and friends beyond the existing arrangements for meeting other people outlined in this guidance)
- wedding receptions and funeral wakes but with a limit of 30 people indoors

\* NB the maximum number who can attend an act of worship (including weddings and funerals) indoors is limited to the safe capacity of the building rather than to 30 people. The 30-person limit applies to all activities other than worship.

#### *Celebrations and Parties*

Regulated gatherings can include celebrations but only if organised by the bodies referred to above. The scope for allowing the hire of premises for celebrations is very limited at this time:

*'Non-regulated gatherings, including celebrations or wider social gatherings of families and friends must follow the arrangements for gathering with other people, which is up to 30 people outdoors'*

*'Celebrations or wider social gatherings of families and friends indoors must follow the arrangements for gathering with other people, which is individual household or extended household only in private homes or up to six people from up to six households (not including children under 11 or carers of these households) in regulated premises.'*

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

All activities (indoors or outdoors) 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 should be consulted for specific limitations on permitted activities.

Welsh Government guidance is available at:

- [Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus | GOV.WALES](#)
- [Safe use of multi-purpose community centres \(COVID-19\) | GOV.WALES](#)

The following Church in Wales guidance on undertaking activities safely is available:

- [Opening Churches Guidance Alert Level 2 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance on re-opening of church halls 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance on Celebrating Holy Communion 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance on Conducting Baptisms 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance Marriages and Funerals 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance on Music and the Playing of Organs 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidance on opening churches for visitors 7 June 2021 \(PDF\)](#)

These documents are updated regularly as Welsh Government guidance is published so do regularly revisit the pages.

#### *Opening Churches for Worship*

Buildings can be opened for worship, funerals and weddings, Welsh Government continues to advise that:

*'Places of worship are able to open for communal worship in all alert levels. While we recognise the importance of communal worship, the advice remains, for people not to congregate whenever possible.'*

*'Those who are responsible for places of worship should consider whether there are alternative ways of holding worship services and providing support for each other whilst they are under restrictions. For example, faith leaders may choose to broadcast services without a congregation.'*

That is clearly good advice, especially as new variants appear, but the Bishops do feel that, for those churches which can safely do so, a limited number of in-person services is

appropriate. Accordingly, those responsible for churches who intend holding services in person, you must:

- Rigorously review and update your risk assessments and consequence risk management measures to ensure that recommended arrangements can be sustained.
- Adjust your arrangements in the light of experience and the observed behaviour of attendees, when open for worship, and make adjustments to prevent lapses. It is vital, despite vaccinations, that social distancing is maintained, face coverings are worn and that hygiene and cleaning standards are fully observed.
- Pay particular attention to arrangements for people to leave your building after services. The end of a service is a particular time when social distancing can be breached. Generally, controlled exit row-by-row is advised. Clergy should generally avoid standing by entrances or exits to meet and greet people as this can create bottlenecks and bunching.
- Strictly observe guidance on the administration of Holy Communion as this is a moment of closer contact. The guidance has been updated to allow for a form of simultaneous administration but generally the advice is still that Communion should be 'in one kind only'.
- Submit your updated risk assessment to your Archdeacon for approval
- Remember that as an open church you are an exemplar of good behaviour.
- Follow Government and Provincial guidance and do not take chances.

For those churches which cannot safely hold in-person services with the necessary precautions in place, organised outdoor worship may provide a useful first step in bringing back in-person worship.

### *Vaccination*

We celebrate the fact that well over 2 million vaccination first doses (and nearly 2 million second doses) have been administered in Wales. It is important to remember that although vaccination greatly reduces the risk of severe COVID-19, Public Health Wales is still learning about how the vaccine affects transmission of the virus and someone could still pass it on even after being vaccinated.

However, even if someone has received their two vaccine doses, they should still follow the same steps to keep themselves and Wales safe; wearing a mask, keeping a 2m distance, washing their hands regularly and keeping rooms as well ventilated as possible.

Even where a whole congregation has been vaccinated, there should be no relaxation of risk mitigation measures. Vaccination is not a cure but is likely to significantly reduce the impact of the virus on those vaccinated.