



# COVID-19 Secure

## Opening places of worship after lockdown

**The challenges COVID-19 has presented to churches and other places of worship have been particularly significant. Not being able to provide spiritual support face to face in the local community at a time of national crisis being one of them.**

However, as the Government and Devolved Administrations begin to relax lockdown rules, places of worship may begin to think about a phased approach to reopening. In doing this, making sure everyone remains safe will be a priority for you.

Deciding how to do this in your own particular circumstances will be key. You will want to do everything that is practicable given the risk presented. This means following closely any guidance provided by your denomination and applying it, whilst recognising you will not be able to eliminate completely the risk that the virus presents.

Generally, places of worship remain closed although there are [some exceptions](#), with similar provisions in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#). These exceptions include reopening in some parts of the United Kingdom for private prayer. Given the various approaches to releasing lockdown across the Administrations, work is ongoing to develop guidelines to help you re-open safely. You can follow developments and keep up to date with current advice by using the relevant denominational resources highlighted at the end of this page.

### Making a start

It is likely that you may need to restrict activities for the time being. In most cases, you will probably have to introduce precautions to prevent infection.

**It is vital, that as guidelines are published you implement these in-line with any phasing restrictions imposed.**

With all of this in mind, here are some broad points you may like to consider in the context of any denominational guidelines you need to comply with. Some may be more relevant to you than others and the list is not exhaustive:

- As your premises have been shut for some time, you will want to check that they remain in good condition. This will include checking that utilities, heating and water systems, work and emergency equipment (such as, fire-fighting or fire detection equipment) remains safe. This includes any statutory inspections that might be required. You may also want to check footpaths and that there are no accumulations of waste that could present an additional hazard.
  - You may need to carry out additional cleaning, making sure that those involved in this are kept safe.
  - In starting up any equipment, such as heating, you should make sure that this is done safely following any necessary procedures.
  - You will need to implement suitable precautions to:
    - protect those who are clinically vulnerable (or shielding someone who is) or extremely vulnerable, making sure that anyone who is self-isolating does not physically come to the premises
    - maintain social distancing
    - make sure that premises and any equipment remain clean
    - provide access to adequate sanitation facilities
    - safely dispose of any waste
    - minimise the number of unnecessary visits to your premises
    - provide information to others about the precautions you have taken or those necessary if people are thinking about coming to your church premises.
- As mentioned above, any precautions you take must be in accordance with guidance issued by your denomination and any phasing restrictions imposed.**
- You will want to carry out checks from time to time to make sure that the precautions you have taken remain effective and adequate. This may include simple inspections to check that premises remain clean or any equipment is safe.

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### Want to know more?

More information and guidance can be found in the COVID hub on [ansvar.co.uk](https://ansvar.co.uk), where we have a dedicated area relating to Risk which gives helpful advice and tips. You may also find the Faith Action website helpful, which encompasses many different faiths. See [here](#) for more information.

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