

## GUIDE FOR HOUSE GROUPS AND SMALL CHURCH GATHERINGS

Version 1	10/07/2020	Simplification of previous Reopening Churches for Worship Guidance
Version 2	21/07/2020	Updated to reflect change in Government guidance for Open Air Worship and small gatherings

### 1. **Introduction**

This Guide is part of STEP 5: Safety First in the process for reopening and managing your church building. It provides specific guidance for House Groups and Small Church Gatherings.

### 2. **Specific Considerations for House Groups and Small Church Gatherings**

There is no specific Government guidance on this area of church fellowship, but there are other pieces of guidance if smaller groups wish to meet in different settings other than inside their church building:

#### i. Virtual House Groups and Church Gatherings:

House Groups and other forms of fellowship are strongly encouraged to continue to meet in online forms and to keep in contact in other ways. This is not only a safer way of meeting, but also enables those who may be vulnerable, shielding or unable to travel to still have access to pastoral support and encouragement through their church family.

#### ii. House Groups or Small Church Gatherings in Church Buildings:

If your church building is open for private prayer or worship and is therefore ensured to be COVID-19 Secure, then following the **Guide for Using your Worship Space** (if using your worship space) or **Guide for Other Community Users** (if using a community room) will allow the use of this accommodation for small church groups to meet.

#### iii. House Groups or Small Church Gatherings in Other Spaces:

The Government now acknowledges that worship in other forms can occur in spaces not directly associated with a church building or its adjoining land. Depending upon the chosen setting, it is important that the relevant guidelines are strictly followed:

- Grounds adjoining your church building – please refer to the **Guide for Open Air Worship** if you wish to meet in small groups on grounds adjoining your church building. This might include, for example, a car park, courtyard or garden area.
- Private spaces – this may be the house or garden of a church member for example. In this case it is encouraged to use the garden spaces rather than inside the property to reduce the risk of virus transfer. In either situation though, all those attending should adhere strictly to the Government’s guidance for domestic meetings with others which are outlined in the document - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do-after-4-july>
- Public spaces – the Government confirms that it is not illegal under coronavirus legislation to pray in a public outdoor space. Please refer to the **Guide for Open Air Worship** for further guidance on this setting if used for house groups or small church gatherings.