

GUIDE FOR CHILDREN’S, YOUNG PEOPLE’S & INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP & ACTIVITIES

Version 1	10/07/2020	Simplification of previous guidance; clarification on age group
Version 2	31/07/2020	Additional notes relating to users groups beyond Children’s Worship

1. **Introduction**

Managing Trustees will be aware that Government policy decisions affect parts of Methodist Church property in different ways and at different times. We have therefore developed this guidance to work alongside the overarching **Guide to Reopening and Managing your Church Building**.

This Guide is part of STEP 5: Safety First in the process for reopening and managing your church building. It provides specific guidance for Children’s and Young People’s Worship and Activities. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the **Guide to Using Your Worship Space** or **Guide for Other Community Users in your Church Building**, whichever is most appropriate to the activity.

2. **Considerations Prior to Running an Activity**

At this time, this guidance is produced for the following activities which are allowed to take place in either a church worship space or other church buildings or rooms:

- Children’s worship and teaching (e.g. Sunday school);
- Alternative children’s (weekday) worship (e.g. children and youth groups);
- Family Worship (e.g. Messy Church);
- Other children’s and youth groups;
- Family work;
- Other family activities;
- Uniformed groups (e.g. Girls and Boys Brigade, Scouts, Guides and Brownies).

Not yet permitted (Property team seeking Government clarification) -

- Toddler groups;
- Crèche (within a worship setting).

Not yet permitted -

- Large gatherings or celebrations;
- Indoor performances in front of a live audience – e.g. drama, comedy and music.

All spaces to be used, worship space or other church buildings and rooms, should be **COVID-19 Secure**:

- Separate Risk Assessments and Action Plans should be carried out for the building itself to assess all activities together;
- Each activity or group organiser should also carry out their own Risk Assessment and Action Plan for their respective room or building which they are using or occupying with reference to this overall document;
- In the case of third party organisations (i.e. those not affiliated with the church), the activity risk assessment should be carried out by representatives of the organisation and coordinated with representatives of the Managing Trustees for the building.

- Managing Trustee should be aware that some third party organisations require approval of their risk assessments by their organisational body and the church's Managing Trustees (e.g. Girls and Boys Brigade).

Important Note: If Managing Trustees cannot prove in their risk assessments they are able to provide a [COVID-19 Secure](#) environment, groups should limit their social interactions to 2 households (including [support bubbles](#)) inside; or, if outdoors, up to 6 people from different households.

However, Methodist church buildings which are able to ensure they are **COVID-19 Secure** will be able to hold more than 30 people, subject to assessment of the capacity limits, which will be driven by their assessment of risk. This should also be considered in partnership with those providing the activity. Where community activities will have more than 30 people, Managing Trustees should take additional steps to ensure the safety of those involved and prevent large gatherings or mass events.

Different activities will have different risks which determine a safe size for a group. The following are useful considerations:

- Current guidance on social distancing;
- Ability of those involved to maintain or understand social distancing;
- Age of the children or young people attending;
- Nature of the activity (e.g. relatively static as opposed to greater movement in the space);
- Size and layout of the room or space.

Activities should minimise the number of different people each child or young person comes into contact with during a session. It is therefore suggested that activities should be planned to maintain small, consistent groups of no more than 15 children and one leader or supervisor. These groups should then be maintained for the duration of the activity - be it as a singular weekly activity or over a number of sessions over a number of days or weeks.

Important Note: safeguarding policies require at least two leaders or supervisors present per activity session. Within the terms of this guidance, this can be achieved through two (or more) smaller groups in the same space with separate leaders or supervisors for each group as outlined above.

If the activity or space is able to hold a number of multiple small groups, then it is important that as far as possible those groups do not mix within the activity itself. The same groups should be maintained day to day or week to week depending upon the activity.

The risk assessments should therefore consider these general points:

- Consider an individual's welfare and safeguarding in all decision making¹;
- Always review groups to minimise 'mixing' if attendance varies activity to activity;
- Keep up to date records of those attending and the groups they are in, including leaders;
- Consider groups of less than 15 if this is easy to manage;
- Consider the appropriate staff:child/young ratio to minimise contact, and look to reduce group numbers rather than increase numbers of adult leaders or organisers per group;
- Consider those who may fall under vulnerable groups²;

¹ This may need to include a refresh or update to your current safeguarding policies and procedures to encompass any changes made due to the effects of Covid-19 or the nature of the activity to be undertaken.

² Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, should follow the latest government advice on shielding in order to keep themselves safe. From 1 August the guidance will be relaxed so clinically extremely vulnerable people

- Operating multiple groups needs to consider hygiene and cleaning requirements.

3. Practical Steps for Managing Trustees Providing Accommodation for Activities

The following practical steps should be considered, so that changes can be made if not working:

- Monitor the cumulative impact of many activities being run in a small, local area and therefore consult wider community building owners if necessary to plan additional measures;
- Consider lowering capacity, even if it is safe to accommodate a larger number initially, so that activities can be monitored safely, such as car parking, travel arrangements generally, queuing and use of shared facilities such as toilets.
- Consider changing established start and finish times for activities so that there is staggered entry and exit to avoid 'bottle-necks'.
- Test and Trace (collecting data) – this is required for all activities, but should be carried out by the community group themselves.
- Car Parking - advice on social distancing also applies when travelling to and from an activity. Decisions to use car parks should be a shared consideration for Managing Trustees and activity organisers so practical measures such as changing the car park layout to help people socially distance are considered. Guidance on social distancing relevant to transport, parking and the public realm can be found here [guidance for passengers who need to travel during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

4. Practical Steps for those Organising and Running Activities

Introduce a Standard System of Good Practice for any activity³:

- Those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, should not attend;
- Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual;
- Ensure good hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach;
- Minimise contact between groups where possible;
- Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)⁴;
- Use Test and Trace recording processes as outlined for church buildings and worship⁵;
- Avoid gatherings at start or end of activity (e.g. waiting parents or guardians);
- Makes changes to traditional activities to ensure a quieter environment to reduce the need for shouting or raising voices (e.g. loud music);
- Where safe and practical to do so consider holding activities outside as much as possible;
- Try to limit the use of toilet facilities at the same time, particularly in terms of reducing the 'mixing' of multiple groups (it is acceptable for different groups to use the same facilities);

will no longer be advised to shield. Those who need to work and cannot do so from home will be advised to return to work as long as their workplace is COVID-19 secure.

³ This link also provides helpful information - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

⁴ The majority of activities will not require PPE, unless specifically requested, or in the following cases:

- Children or young people whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE;
- PPE should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child, young person or other learner displaying COVID-19 symptoms.

⁵ See <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/>

5. **Practical Considerations for both Parties in Facilitating Activities**

The successful running of all activities will depend upon cooperation and coordination between those with responsibility for the building and those with responsibility for the activity. The following potential practical scenarios and suggestions may be considered:

- *Consider how to keep small groups of children together and to avoid larger groups of children mixing* – this may mean providing additional, suitable rooms or space which will need risk assessing and referring to the legal and insurance guidance.
- *Remove soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean* – this may mean providing temporary storage for this. Please refer to the legal guidance regarding providing additional space and [contact TMCP](#) if this will require any amendment or variation to the lease or licence.
- *Consider how children arrive at the building* – coordination is needed in developing an entrance and egress strategy such as using different doors/corridors and limiting access to parking areas or play areas.
- *If parents and young people have allocated drop off and collection times* – it needs to be considered to introduce additional signage and controls for safe queuing measures and the processes for doing so, including protocols for minimising adult to adult contact (for example, which entrances or pathways to use).
- *Discuss with cleaning contractors or staff the additional cleaning requirements and agree additional hours to allow for this* – this is absolutely essential that this process is organised and agreed between all parties, particularly for those areas more commonly used or used by other people. It is important that a schedule of responsibilities is drawn up to ensure that regimes are adhered to and there are no areas of unclear, or no, responsibility.
- *Ensure that wherever possible children and young people use the same rooms for an activity, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day* - this is covered under [cleaning guidance](#).
- *Accessing rooms directly from outside where possible* – this can be assisted by discussing other means of accessing a room or set of rooms, bearing mind the issue around communal areas and controlled access for safeguarding and means of escape.
- *Considering one-way circulation, or place a divider down the middle of the corridor to keep groups apart as they move through the setting where spaces are accessed by corridors* – these are areas where Managing Trustees can help facilitate these requirements.
- *For outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff* – Managing Trustees might want to consider temporarily closing off parking areas etc. to traffic (if safe) to provide additional outside space during this time.

6. **Specific Considerations for Church run Children’s Worship or Activities**⁶

- It is very important that young children are supervised by their parent or guardian **at all times**.
- There is no age assumption or definition in this guidance as this needs to be assessed at a local level and suit the act of worship or activity being considered.

⁶ You might also wish to refer to Government guidance here for additional information - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

- They should also ensure that their children are following the recommended hygiene guidelines, and help them with this if necessary. Posters on general hand hygiene can be found on the [eBug website](#).
- Activities involving those under the age of 5 could also refer to the following link⁷ for additional information.
- Activities involving 8 – 25 year olds should also look at the National Youth Agencies guides.⁸
- Managing Trustees might also consider providing child friendly signage to help them understand what is required.
- Any children’s play equipment, books, toys, soft furnishings etc. that are hard to clean should be put in storage.
- Outdoor playgrounds are permitted as long as they can be easily cleaned.⁹
- Any objects used in children’s talks or similar activities during a service or as part of separate teaching should not be shared or handled by more than the person using them; a similar approach should be adopted for any pencils, pens, paper etc. used as part of this teaching.
- It could be that once this is risk assessed, Managing Trustees decide that to carry out separate children’s work is not possible and maintain everyone’s safety. It is therefore perhaps better to consider changing, adapting or having additional services to suit children and young people so that their spiritual needs are also catered for as part of main worship planning.

7. Useful Links for Reference, Additional Support and Inspiration

Methodist Church – Children, Youth & Family Ministry

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/>

Messy Church

<https://www.messychurch.org.uk/>

National Youth Service

<https://nya.org.uk/reacting-to-covid-19-advice-to-youth-services/>

Boys Brigade

<https://boys-brigade.org.uk/ourframework/covid-ready-risk-assessment/>

Girls Brigade

<https://www.girlsbrigadeministries.org.uk/resource/covid-19-resuming-gb-community-group-activities-guidance/>

Scouts etc.

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/>

Girl Guides etc.

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#who-this-guidance-is-for>

⁸ <https://nya.org.uk/reacting-to-covid-19-advice-to-youth-services/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>