

WORK AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN METHODIST PROPERTY

Version 1	Updated 26 June 2020	Updated due to new government guidance
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FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT ADVICE FROM THE 13th MAY 2020

1. Introduction

Under its roadmap to lift restrictions step-by-step, the government has outlined support for certain user groups or businesses to reopen or restart. A number of these may have an impact on Methodist Church property and are dealt with under separate, specific guidance provided by the Connexional Property team, including:

- Construction
- Property repairs and improvements, including Manses
- Property Inspections
- Early Years educational provision
- Shops
- Cafes

It has now been indicated that Methodist Churches can reopen for public worship from 4th July 2020.

This guidance is intended to provide Managing Trustees with a broad overview of the suitability for other groups who may potentially be wanting to re-open in church property. This is not intended as a definitive guide, and therefore we would recommend that Managing Trustees contact the Property team for further guidance if they have a specific case within their church building at –

property@methodistchurch.org.uk

2. Government Policy Basis & Timescales for Implementation

‘For the foreseeable future, workers should continue to work from home rather than their normal physical workplace, wherever possible. ...

All workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open. ...’

Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy pp. 25 (HM Government 2020)

This policy is part of the government’s roadmap to lift restrictions step-by-step, and is part of Step 1 covering the area of Work, which was applicable from Wednesday 13th May 2020.

During this phase, the government continues to update its guidance regularly with regards to which businesses can operate, or which premises can open. The team will monitor this, but Managing Trustees should also refer to some of the main links below before considering reopening parts of church property for other building users:

Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

3. Businesses & Venues that must remain closed to members of the public

The government's guidance continues to be updated, and is outlined here. If any of these activities previously took place within a church property they must currently remain closed –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>

4. Work Settings

In the quote from government guidance in Item 2, there is encouragement to continue to work if possible. There is also clear guidance to continue to work from home where practical and possible, to reduce the transfer of the virus and reduce pressure on public transport services and road networks. Employers are being encouraged to enable workers to achieve this, but in some cases it is not possible or practical. In such cases, the government has produced updated guidance on 11th May 2020 -

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

If a church property provides such accommodation, then Managing Trustees should make reference to this guidance and discuss arrangements with directly employed staff, or tenants (if a third party lease etc. agreement). This communication needs to ascertain what risks are associated with allowing people to work again in the property and whether all the requirements for safe working can be achieved.

Managing Trustees should also make reference to the following [Coronavirus guidance for Property](#):

- Risk assessments
- Re-opening buildings
- Cleaning regimes

5. Educational Settings

i. Early Years Settings:

As outlined in the separate specific guidance [here](#), early years education provision, amongst others, is being asked to plan for reopening from the 1st June 2020. This government guidance covers all early years providers in England, which include the following groups:

- Local authority-maintained schools
- Non-maintained schools
- Independent schools
- All providers on the early years register
- All providers registered with an early years childminder agency

Managing Trustees need to assure themselves that their provision or provider fits into one of these categories. This guidance and expectation to open is currently aimed only at early years providers who are registered with OfSTED or a Childminder Agency under the Childcare Act 2006. More information on the definition and differentiation on this can be found at -

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/childcare-and-the-law>.

If the provision within the church property does not fall into one of these categories, then it cannot currently reopen.

ii. Other Educational Settings:

Some church property may be used by specialist educational providers, whose provision falls under government guidance updated on 15th May 2020. This guidance outlines very specific requirements and expectations, so it is essential that Managing Trustees refer to this through the link below first –

Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak - actions for educational providers and other partners

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

These provisions need to be specifically meeting the requirements for ‘identification of vulnerable children and young people’, which are outlined in the following ways –

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child.
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and it is determined, following risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment.
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children’s social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued attendance. This might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children’s social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET (‘not in employment, education or training’), those living in temporary accommodation, those who are young carers and others at the provider and local authority’s discretion.

Only if a provision is meeting the needs outlined in the groups above can this provision reopen or continue. It must also be undertaken within the strict guidelines outlined in the government document including undertaking risk assessments, shielding or clinically vulnerable people.

It is important that if deciding to reopen a provision, whether directly or through a third party, Managing Trustees should reference the Connexional guidance for Early Years Provision in terms of processes and procedures, found [here](#).