

GUIDE FOR FACE COVERINGS

Version 1	21 July 2020	First published
Version 2	28 July 2020	Update to those who are exempt as per government guidance
Version 3	31 July 2020	Update to reflect changed government policy on face coverings
Version 4	7 Aug 2020	Update to reflect those leading services are exempt from wearing face coverings
Version 5	13 Aug 2020	Update to include government links for Scotland and Wales as well as cafes and indoor sports
Version 6	29/9/2020	Update on face coverings in Wales, indoor public places and added links for exemption cards

1. Introduction

This Guide is a consideration as part of the assessment of risk under STEP 5: Safety First in the process for reopening and managing your church building. It provides some background to current Government policy and suggested responses by Managing Trustees. This can be read in relation to Reopening church buildings, but also for wider activities undertaken within church buildings.

2. Current Government Guidance for Face Coverings

The Government has now stated that face coverings will be mandatory in all places of worship and failing to comply can result in being fined. The guidance states:

*'From 8 August, face coverings will be required by law to be worn in a greater number of public indoor settings including: museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and public libraries. Please be mindful that there are valid exemptions for some individuals and groups to not wear a face covering in these settings.'*¹

More information can be found for:

- England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#when-to-wear-a-face-covering>
- Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/>
- Wales - <https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>

3. Face Coverings in Methodist Churches

Face coverings are now mandatory and they should be used during worship or larger gatherings in order to help reduce the spread of the virus. However, face coverings should not be seen as a substitute to other measures such as social distancing and good hygiene. As this decision is to be enforced by law, managing trustees have to insist upon the wearing of face coverings in their risk assessments and action plans.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>, see section on **Face Coverings**

To assist Managing Trustees in make this decision, the following scenarios also may be considered as a suitable situation where an individual or group could be required to wear a face covering:

- i. Settings where someone attending may be defined as ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’.²
- ii. Settings where someone attending falls into a clinically vulnerable group.³
- iii. Those who are undertaking building cleaning roles.
- iv. Those who are undertaking pastoral roles and responsibilities.
- v. Those who undertake regular face-to-face meetings within their role.
- vi. Those who have a key role in welcoming those into a building, in whatever capacity.
- vii. Those who have a ‘facilities manager’ role in a building.
- viii. Those who may be meeting the general public on a regular basis.
- ix. Those visiting or providing pastoral support within someone’s home.
- x. Those undertaking visits to or working with someone described in item i or ii above.

The provision of disposable face coverings for those attending a service who might wish to wear them is covered in the [Guide to Reopening and Managing your Church Building](#).

4. Those who are exempt from wearing a face covering

The government states that those leading a service in a place of worship as well as volunteers who are assisting with activities such as reading, preaching or leading prayer do not need to wear a face covering when performing those aspects of the service. However, a face covering should be worn social distancing cannot be maintained and when distributing communion or other consumables.

The Government has produced a list of those who are not required to wear a face covering unless they wish to⁴:

- young children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommended face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons);
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability;
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress;
- if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate;
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others;

² See list of those defined as **Clinically extremely vulnerable** at

In England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

In Wales - <https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html>

In Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/highest-risk-classification/>

³ See list of those defined as falling into a **Clinically vulnerable group** at

In England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july#clinically-vulnerable-people>

In Wales - <https://gov.wales/people-increased-risk-coronavirus>

In Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/>

⁴ Refer to the government links on face coverings at the start of this document for more information

- to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you;
- to eat or drink if reasonably necessary;
- in order to take medication;
- if a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering.

Exemption cards can be downloaded and completed which may help in communicating if you are exempt from wearing a face covering.⁵

Indoor Public Places

Face coverings are now required in all indoor public places, including shops and cafes in England, Scotland and Wales.

Additionally, a face covering is not required when eating or drinking in the designated seating area of a café that has table service. However, once an individual leaves the designated seating area, then a face covering should be worn.

Indoor Sport (England only)

The government recognises that face coverings could restrict breathing efficiency and should not be worn during exercise. However, wearing a face covering is recommended before and after an indoor sporting activity.

5. Practical Guidance about Face Coverings

The Government has produced a useful guide to face coverings –

- England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#when-to-wear-a-face-covering>
- Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/>
- Wales - <https://gov.wales/face-coverings-frequently-asked-questions>

It covers such subjects as –

- What is a face covering?
- Reasons for wearing a face covering
- How to wear a face covering
- When to wear a face covering
- Exemptions from wearing a face covering
- Standards and making your own
- Maintenance and disposal

⁵ In England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

In Wales - <https://gov.wales/face-covering-exemption-card>