

Extract from the Welsh Government guidance (link below) with regard to worship:

Last checked: 9th November 2020

<https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus-html#section-44811>

Permitted use: Communal worship and religious ceremonies including led prayers, devotions or meditations by a Minister of Religion or lay person

Places of worship may open for communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person.

Religious ceremonies can be held as part of communal worship or as an event in their own right, such as a funeral or wedding, such ceremonies that do not form part of communal worship should continue to be by invitation only as described in the guidance for [funerals](#) and [weddings](#).

Worship and belief ceremonies can be held outdoors in the limited circumstances described in this guidance.

Places of worship and faith and belief communities should adapt their services and ceremonies, especially where they would otherwise have taken place over a number of hours or days, to ensure the safety of those present and minimise the spread of infection.

Once completed, participants should be encouraged to leave the premises promptly and to maintain 2 metres distance from members of other households, to minimise the risk of contact and spread of infection. The rules on gathering allow attendance at a place of worship as a reasonable excuse, however that should not be for a social purpose. If appropriate, you should reconfigure spaces to enable those in attendance to be seated rather than standing which reduces the risk of contact.

It is recommended that, where possible, places of worship continue to broadcast worship or other events to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are [self-isolating](#) or [vulnerable](#) to COVID-19.

Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments

We recognise the importance of music, singing and chanting in worship, religious and belief ceremonies. However, there are significant risks associated with playing wind instruments and with singing or chanting at louder volumes. The risks are associated with the increased spread of droplets or aerosol which rise alongside volume. For this reason activities such as congregational singing, chanting, or shouting should be specifically avoided indoors.

It is possible for an organised group or groups of musicians or singers to play a part in worship, but a specific risk assessment and mitigating actions should be put in place to provide a Covid-19 safe environment. Singing or playing in groups should be limited in line with the capacity of the space given appropriate physical distancing requirements.

If singing or the playing of music is to happen it should be accompanied by clear messages that those not in an organised group of musicians or singers should not join in. Organised singing can be facilitated by establishing fixed groups of up to six people who can remain consistent and rehearse and perform together, whilst generally maintaining physical distancing amongst themselves. . These groups should prepare for participation in worship by ensuring they understand the importance of keeping volumes low. Only where physical distancing and other mitigations allow, a fixed team of six may perform with other fixed teams to create a larger group but action should be taken to create barriers to transmission between the fixed teams. This approach recognises that for organised groups interaction will be necessary outside the context of the act of worship (for example in rehearsal) and consistent teams of six will allow the whole team to isolate themselves should a positive Covid-19 test necessitate this. In this way, the mitigations that will still be necessary to reduce the chance of transmission to a congregation, will be more effective. If the physical distancing and other mitigations cannot be achieved in this circumstance, a larger group of this kind cannot be formed. All performers should be instructed in the use of planned mitigating actions and reminded of the role of volume in increasing transmission risk both for themselves and in creating a risk that congregations will sing, shout or chant at volume alongside the performance.

The number of children aged under 11 who can gather outside the home is not limited in law. However, as young children can still transmit the virus, they should be encouraged to follow hand hygiene measures and keep close contact to a minimum wherever possible. Even with children it is safer to meet in smaller numbers, and to meet the same people regularly rather than a range of different people. Therefore the number of children under 11 in an organised groups should be kept as low as possible.

In some cases congregations might be small and could be accommodated as a single organised group. This is permissible but the same requirements for preparation to sing at low volumes and mitigating actions, including collective exclusion from performing if a positive test is received in the group. Where, all the participants in worship are part of an organised singing group the number should not exceed six. It would not be appropriate for larger congregations to utilise the ability to add fixed groups together to circumvent the restrictions on gatherings. It is important that places of worship ensure that they maintain a barrier to transmission by making sure that singers are well prepared to sing safely. No gathering of these groups of six should exceed 15 indoors or 30 outdoors except where the performers are all professional. All rehearsal and performance should be based on a risk assessment.

Specific risk assessments for organised groups who are singing or playing musical instruments should consider;

- Physical distancing between individuals
- Physical distancing between fixed groups
- Physical distancing between performers and congregations
- The size and layout of the space
- The ventilation available to prevent the accumulation of aerosol.
- The use of screens or other barriers between individuals and fixed groups
- The positioning of singers and instrumentalists to favour back to back or side to side and reduce face to face performance.
- Performing outdoors
- Reference should be made to the [guidance on performing arts](#), which deals with safe performance for singers, musicians and other performers.

Wind instruments should not be played indoors. The decision whether to play an organ that requires air to be pushed through the mechanism should be based on a specific risk assessment and adherence with hand hygiene and [cleaning guidance](#) and physical distancing, for example from the remainder of the congregation and avoiding use of a registrant. It is advised that you use alternative instruments such as a piano, electronic instruments or recordings.

This guidance relates to musicians playing as part of worship. Other circumstances, such as concerts given to the public should follow the [guidance made available to the performing arts sector](#).

Music should not be played at levels that make normal conversations difficult. This is because raised voices or shouting significantly increase the risk of transmission through aerosol and droplets. Where a band or recorded music is playing it is advisable to stress to those in attendance the importance of avoiding singing and organisers should consider the impact of the volume or sustained length of music on the likelihood that people will converse with raised voices.

Congregational singing should not occur indoors. If appropriate worshippers can read hymns, songs, prayers or other texts in a lowered voice. Spoken responses should also be made quietly.

Singing and playing music outdoors is permissible, although in order for more than four people to gather outdoors this must be at an organised activity, limited to 30 people. Any such activity will be subject to a risk assessment and the organiser must take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus (more information is included in the section on Worship Outdoors below). Such gatherings should maintain physical distancing between households and volumes kept low wherever possible.

Ringling of bells, or similar, may take place. However, people attending to peal bells should be included in the risk assessment process and subsequent protocols for attendance at the event. Specific provisions should be made where circumstances allow, such as separate entrances, and physical distancing measures between bell ringers and hand hygiene while pealing the bells and between them and the other attendees.