

COVID-19 Action Card: Places of Worship

Version: Torbay 5

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This guidance is designed to support you in preventing and responding to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19. It does not replace, but sits alongside, any discussions you may have with Torbay Council and Public Health England.

This document should be used alongside the **COVID-19 Flowchart- Places of Worship**.

Setting context

For all places and venues that host individual or group worship

Key contacts

Torbay Council Public Health Team: trackandtrace@torbay.gov.uk and **01803 208030 (9am-6pm)**

Public Health England Health Protection Team: 0300 303 8162/swhpt@phe.gov.uk

Supportive Resources

- [Safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#)
- [Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#)
- [The Church of England coronavirus guidance for churches](#)
- [Guidance for collective worship in Catholic churches](#)
- [Baptists Together essential guidance](#)
- [The United Reformed Church advice to churches](#)
- [The Muslim Council of Britain 9 steps to re-opening mosques safely](#)
- [The United Synagogue coronavirus updates](#)
- [COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#)
- [NHS test and trace: workplace guidance](#)
- [Stay at home \(self and household isolation guidance\)](#)
- [How to get a test if you have symptoms](#)
- [Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

Local resources for your setting, including posters, can be found [Coronavirus Torbay Council](#)

Definitions

COVID-19 symptoms (any one or more of):

- A persistent, or continuous, cough (coughing for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
- Fever
- Loss of or change in sense of taste or smell

Possible case: an individual with **symptoms of COVID-19:** (new persistent cough, fever, or a loss of or change in sense of smell and / or taste) who has not yet been tested or is awaiting test results.

Confirmed case: an individual who has received a **positive test result for COVID-19**

Household contact: a household may be the person's family, or anybody they live in close proximity with (e.g. have shared facilities such as kitchen, bedroom and/or bathroom). It will also include people in their 'support bubble' if they have had recent contact.

Close contact means:

- face-to-face conversation with someone within 1 metre;
- contact within 1 metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact;
- skin-to-skin physical contact;
- spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone; e.g. travelling in a car or other small vehicle with someone (even on a short journey).

Close contact can have taken place anytime from 2 days before symptoms started, up to 10 days after the onset of symptoms

How to prevent the spread COVID-19 in your setting:

Guidance for establishing COVID-safe workplaces:

1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment: refer to the [HSE guidance](#) and consider how fair and equal access can safely be provided for all users to be able to undertake faith practices within a place of worship in line with government guidelines.
The Heart of the South West Growth Hub also has an example risk assessment that you can adapt at <https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19-RISK-ASSESSMENT-TOOLKIT.pdf>
2. Develop cleaning, [handwashing and hygiene procedures](#):
 - a. Hand washing and drying facilities
 - b. Providing hand sanitiser throughout the setting
 - c. Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly.
3. To support your risk assessment you may wish to consider co-designing a community behaviour agreement, setting out how you, worshippers, volunteers and staff will all take action to minimise the potential for spreading COVID-19 in your venue. Think about how this can be accessible to all.
4. Maintain 2m social distancing as far as possible and put up signs to remind people. Use tape to mark 2m distances. If 2m is not possible, then 1m with mitigation measures such as:
 - a. Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other;

- b. Staggering arrival, departure, break times and meal service, for staff and guests. Limit face to face contact:
 - c. 'Back-to-back' or 'side-to-side' rather than 'face-to-face' contact.
 - d. Use 'working bubbles', to reduce the number of people each person has contact with;
 - e. Keeping any activities where 2m distance cannot be maintained as short as possible.
 - f. Also consider other activities such as staff breaks and car sharing to and from work.
5. Maintain a register of all staff and visitors on the premises. Ask third-party users of the venue to do the same. Guidance on maintaining records is available [here](#).
 6. Adhere to the gathering limit set for your venue (based on size and ability to social distance) including no more than 30 for funerals, 15 for weddings and 6 for 'life events'. Greater numbers may be permissible for services but must always at least meet the government guidelines for social distancing within the building and also when entering, leaving or safely travelling to and from the venue. Always refer to the **latest guidance for updated numbers**: [Safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#)
 7. Avoid the use of and contact with shared items during ceremonies, services or other meetings.
 8. There should be no group singing inside places of worship and, except for the limited circumstances set out in the guidance, people should avoid singing, shouting or the raising of voices.
 9. Face coverings must be worn in places of worship.
 10. Develop cleaning, [handwashing and hygiene procedures](#)
 11. Anybody with symptoms, or living in a household where someone has symptoms, should follow the [stay at home guidance](#) and **not come to a place of worship**.
 12. Ensure staff, volunteers and visitors are aware of the steps they need to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes providing people with information about your policies in a format that is accessible to them.

Additional advice for places of worship being used as a multi-purpose community facility.

1. The above principles apply and guidance is available for alternative activities within [multi-purpose community settings](#).
2. Only activities permitted by law should take place. Where an activity is permitted by law, venue managers have discretion over when they consider it safe for the activity to go ahead.
3. An additional risk assessment for the proposed use should be completed.
4. Venue managers must take reasonable measures to ensure the premises, access to them, and any equipment or substances provided are safe for people using them, so far as is reasonably practicable, in line with the principles above.
5. Users and hirers of places of worship for community activity have responsibility for managing risks arising from their own activities when they have control of premises and should take account of any guidance relevant to their specific activity or sector. [Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community settings](#) provides links to relevant other guidance.

Actions in the event of a possible or confirmed case

This guide covers actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It does not cover treatment. If at any time you feel someone needs medical advice then follow usual practice and contact NHS 111, GP, or 999 if it is an emergency.

If a possible or confirmed case has been in your setting for a short space of time and not been in close contact with anyone whilst there, you may not hear about it and you do not need to take any action. This guidance refers to possible or confirmed cases who work in your setting or have spent time there in contact with others. If you have put all the prevention measures above in place, this will significantly minimise the impact if someone with symptoms has been in your setting.

What should we do if there is a possible case?

Actions for the venue if there is anyone with symptoms

- Symptomatic individuals should immediately isolate (see [Stay at home guidance](#))
- They should access a test as soon as possible. Testing can be booked via www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.
- If you have any concerns or queries - or if there is more than one person with symptoms associated with your setting - contact **Torbay Council Public Health** at trackandtrace@torbay.gov.uk and we can advise you on the steps to take.
- Members of their **household** should also isolate.
- Individuals should inform their employer or group leader that they are symptomatic and are required to isolate.
- If someone becomes symptomatic whilst at work/in your setting, they should return home directly, avoiding public transport, and isolate alongside their **household**. If there is a delay in them being able to leave your setting (for example waiting for someone to pick them up) they should isolate away from others until they are able to leave safely. You should ensure any areas they have been working in are cleaned in line with guidance [COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#)
- If a worshipper, staff member or volunteer are required to isolate and need help with food/medication deliveries or other support, they can call the local Community Development Trust helpline 01803 446022, or online at bit.ly/torbayhelpline
- If the possible case informs you they had **close contact** (see definitions) with others in your setting consider alerting these contacts without breaking confidentiality. At this stage close contacts do not need to self-isolate, but they should take extra care with social distancing and hygiene, watch out for symptoms and self-isolate if they show signs of COVID-19. Individuals are also encouraged to inform anyone they have had **close contact** (see definitions) with.
- If their test is negative they can end self-isolation, if they are well enough to do so. If the test is positive, follow instructions for a confirmed case (below).

What should we do if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19?

You may be informed of a positive case who has been in your setting by:

1. NHS Test and Trace
2. Public Health England (PHE).
3. Torbay Council Public Health Team

OR

If the individual informs you themselves, then please contact Torbay Council Public Health immediately on 01803 208030 (9am-6pm) and at trackandtrace@torbay.gov.uk .

Actions for the Venue Manager

- If a worshipper, staff member or volunteer **is COVID-19 positive** they will need to stay at home and self-isolate for 10 days from when their symptoms started / or from the date of their test. Their household will also need to self-isolate for 14 days. **Symptomatic people should already be self isolating.**
- If Torbay Council have not contacted you, notify **Torbay Council Public Health** immediately on **01803 208030** (9am-6pm) and at trackandtrace@torbay.gov.uk .
- If PHE have not contacted you, inform them of the confirmed case immediately on 0300 303 8162 or email swhpt@phe.gov.uk
- **If anyone else becomes symptomatic, they must isolate and also arrange a test.**
- **Follow advice provided by Torbay Council Public Health and Public Health England**
- If requested, provide NHS Test and Trace, or one of the Public Health Teams, with your record of staff, patrons and visitors for relevant date(s).
- It is possible that contact tracing will identify additional **close contacts** (see definitions) in your Place of Worship who will need to self-isolate for 14 days.
- You may choose to inform other worshippers, staff and volunteers (without breaking confidentiality) that there has been a confirmed case in the setting so they can be vigilant and look out for any symptoms. Torbay Council Public Health will help you with the wording to use in any communication with congregations.
- If the individual was in your setting while infectious (48 hours before symptoms to 10 days after), you need to ensure any areas they have been working/staying in are cleaned in line with the [COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#) guidance.
- If a worshipper, staff member or volunteer are required to isolate and need help with food/medication deliveries or other support, they can call the local Community Development Trust helpline 01803 446022, or online at bit.ly/torbayhelpline

Actions for the person with a positive test result (and their household)

- Individuals must inform the Place of Worship that they have tested positive for COVID-19 and are required to isolate for 10 days.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate for 10 days.
- Household members and contacts of confirmed cases need to self-isolate for 14 days. **If they become symptomatic they should also arrange a test.**

- The NHS Test and Trace service will send a text, email or call the confirmed case with instructions of how to share details of people with whom they have had close, recent contact (see Definitions) and places they have visited. It is important they respond to this ASAP.
- Torbay Council Public Health Team and PHE will provide advice and information which should be followed by all symptomatic individuals and their close contacts.

Actions for contacts identified through Test and Trace

- Public Health England will advise all **close contacts** who need to self-isolate for 14 days. If they become symptomatic they will also need to arrange a test as above.

What should we do if there is an outbreak?

An outbreak is **two or more cases** in the same setting. In the event of a suspected outbreak:

- Torbay Council Public Health and Public Health England will undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment with you. You will be offered advice, guidance and help to put appropriate interventions in place, as well as what needs to be communicated and to whom during the outbreak.
- If you have not been contacted, please inform **Torbay Council Public Health** immediately on **01803 208030** (9am-6pm) and at trackandtrace@torbay.gov.uk and PHE on 0300 303 8162 or swhpt@phe.gov.uk

What interventions might be put in place to control the outbreak?

Torbay Council and **Public Health England** will work with you to put appropriate interventions in place. (refer to 'supportive guidance'). This may include:

- Enhanced cleaning procedures
- Additional hygiene and distancing measures
- In some cases, temporary or partial closures

This document can be made available in other languages and formats. If required, please contact publichealth@torbay.gov.uk
