

Risk Assessment Checklist for Places of Worship

July 2020

The Government is easing the lockdown gradually with guidelines. [From July 4th Places of Worship will be able to reopen with specific guidelines.](#) It is vital to note that trustees remain fully responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all those who visit their place of worship. This includes worshippers, staff, volunteers and other visitors. All Government and NHS guidelines are to be followed strictly by the trustees/committee members/management and the responsible persons for the place of worship.

It is the legal responsibility and duty of care of the responsible persons to ensure they follow their health and safety policy as well as the new Government guidelines about reopening places of worship. They have a duty of care towards the wellbeing of staff, volunteers, worshippers, learners, suppliers, contactors, cleaners, drivers, visitors, and vulnerable people.

This template may be used to carry out a **Risk Assessment** of your place of worship to deal with the risks due to the current Covid-19 situation. It is not likely to cover all scenarios and each place of worship should consider their own unique circumstances. To keep up-to-date visit the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) advice to places of worship](#) and see the full [government guidelines for places of worship](#).

For further information or to **request a site visit to your place of worship in England**, email Strengthening Faith Institutions (SFI): natan@sfitogether.org, or call 07590 028 823.

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

As a trustee of your place of worship, you have a duty of care to protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 to those who use your place of worship. This is called a risk assessment and it will help you manage risk.

You need to:

- identify what activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus
- think about who could be at risk
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed to the virus
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this is not possible, control the risk
- consider how to track incidents in an accident log book in accordance with the Health & Safety Policy for your place of worship.

Name of Place of Worship:	Assessment undertaken by:
Address:	Areas of the building assessed:
Postcode:	
Date of Initial Assessment:	Assessment Review Date:

Points for Best Practice for Places of Worship Opening Safely

(notes summarised from the [safe use of places of worship guidance](#))

What You Should Know Beforehand

1. Trustees and managers of places of worship have a legal duty of care to ensure their centres are safe and clean, and that all governmental guidelines are followed at all times.
2. The most effective way to check for risks is to run a risk assessment that clarifies which actions are needed, who will do them, and when they will be completed. General and faith-specific templates are available via SFI: <https://www.sfitogether.org/2020/06/18/risk-assessment-checklist-for-places-of-worship/>
3. Communal worship and individual prayer can have any number of people inside the centre, **AS LONG AS 2M SOCIAL DISTANCING IS FOLLOWED AT ALL TIMES** (or 1M provided that you really need the space, and ALL other risks are mitigated). Measure your capacity beforehand and insure you post your maximum capacity at the entrance of each room and inform your congregants of these limits. Other activities, such as weddings, and life-cycle events in the place of worship are capped at 30 people.

Preparing Your Centre

1. **Tell** your neighbours and local authority contacts that you are reopening your premises via letters and emails, and ensure that your traffic plan is updated to avoid congestion.
2. **Cleaning:** All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched such as door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned using standard cleaning products. See [guidance on cleaning and waste disposal](#). Sufficient time must be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before reopening. Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation in the premises.
3. On entering and leaving a place of worship everyone, including staff, should be asked to **wash their hands** thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or to use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available. Ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand dryers) are available. Communal towels should be removed.
4. **Objects for worship:** Store away all prayer books, rugs, and other shared items, and ask congregants to bring their own items and take them with them after the prayer service is over. Individuals should be prevented from touching or kissing objects that are handled communally. Barriers and/or clear signage should be put in place where necessary to avoid this taking place.
5. Where **food or drink** ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used, however the sharing of food should be avoided wherever possible, as should the use of communal vessels.
6. **Singing, Chanting and the Use of Musical Instruments:** Activities such as singing, chanting, shouting and/or playing of instruments that are blown into should be specifically avoided both in communal worship or devotions and in rehearsals. Where essential to an act of worship, only one individual should be permitted to sing or chant and the use of Plexi-glass screens should be considered to protect worshippers, as this will further prevent transmission and they can be easily cleaned.

What Your Congregants Need to Know Before They Arrive

1. **Protecting the vulnerable:** There should be a particular focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable and more likely to develop severe illness. Stay [at home and self-isolate](#) if you have a new, continuous cough, or a high temperature, or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste.
2. **Individuals aged 70 years and over attending the place of worship** are at a higher risk of infection. Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household.
3. **Young people and children attending places of worship** should be supervised by the parent or guardian. They should wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly. Any shared facilities for children (play corners, books, toys) should be removed where possible. Outdoor playgrounds are permitted to open where venue managers risk assess that it is safe to do so.
4. **Everyone** should bring their own prayer books, prayer mats, tallitot and tefillin, and other ritual objects, and take them home immediately after the service.
5. Where possible any pre-requisite washing/ablution rituals should **not be done** at the place of worship. Where this is not possible, washing facilities within the place of worship should be used in line with social distancing guidelines and hygiene measures applied.

Setting Up Your Place of Worship for Social Distancing

1. Use your risk assessment to organise the layout and tasks. Contact SFI for further support and to arrange a site-visit: info@sfitogether.org or 07590 028 823
2. Where possible, adhere to social distancing of at least 2 metres (3 steps) between individuals, households and support bubbles. For frequently used places, mark areas using floor tape or paint to help people keep a 2 metre distance.
3. Avoid any face-to-face seating by changing layouts, reducing the number of people in enclosed spaces, improving ventilation, using protective screens and face coverings, and closing non-essential social spaces, such as libraries.
4. Introduce a one-way flow in and out of the premises with appropriate floor markings or signage, with restrictions on accessing non-essential areas.
5. Stagger arrival and departure times to reduce the flow at exits and entrances as well as reduce any impacts on public transport. Create a booking system to help facilitate this.
6. Consider using screens, barriers or alternative rooms and spaces to separate worshippers.
7. Any changes to entrances, exits and queues should take into account reasonable adjustments to accommodate those who need them, such as worshippers with physical disabilities.
8. Clearly display the name and contact details of your Covid-19 Compliance Officer(s) so that everyone knows who to speak to if there are any issues or concerns.

Maintaining Good Hygiene

1. Use signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, and to avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
2. Ensure there are tissues, paper towels, and waste-bins throughout your centre, with signs on proper disposal.

3. Provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to toilet facilities.
4. Face coverings are not mandatory in places of worship, but they are recommended.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Tasks	Controls Required	Action by who?	When? (Date)	Done Y/N
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Appoint a Covid-19 Compliance Officer and ensure they are fully trained	<p>Management/trustees to appoint a dedicated Covid-19 Compliance Officer (CCO) for their place of worship.</p> <p>The CCO will be responsible for the implementation of the risk assessment and all matters relating to the phased re-opening of the place of worship.</p> <p>Identify suitable training courses for the CCO and arrange for him/her to attend that along with at least one trustee/committee member.</p>			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Entrance and Exit	<p>Decide on one entry point but use as many exit points as available to let the worshippers out as soon as possible.</p> <p>Ensure the entry and exit doors are clearly marked and sign posted.</p> <p>Physical distancing signs to be marked clearly at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● entrances ● Prayer Halls 			

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corridors <p>Make sure people enter and exit in single-file 2 metres apart (or 1m plus), and that this is monitored by volunteer/staff/committee marshals.</p> <p>Separate entrances for male and female worshippers, where necessary, need to be clearly marked.</p>			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Opening and closing the place of worship	A named person should be appointed for opening and closing the place of worship.			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Flow of movement	<p>Clearly mark out flow of movement within the building, if possible use a one way system.</p> <p>Manage those waiting outside a place of worship, including the introduction of a socially distanced queuing system.</p> <p>Consider the needs of people with disability</p>			

Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Airing building	Buildings have been aired before use. Doors and windows opened to improve ventilation.			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Notices/Signage	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices. Mark areas using floor tape or paint to help people keep a 2m distance.			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Hand sanitizers	Hand sanitizers should be available on entry and exit from the place of worship.			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers,		Purchase:			

	learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suitable sanitizers • liquid soap with dispensers • disposable towels • disposable bags • bins for used PPE 			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)	<p>Provide facemasks, gloves for staff as essential items</p> <p>Follow guidelines on safe disposal after use.</p> <p>Where risk assessment identifies wearing of masks and gloves as a requirement of the job, an adequate supply of these must be provided. Staff will be instructed on how to remove gloves carefully to reduce contamination and how to dispose of them safely.</p>			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Face coverings	Worshippers, and staff at the place of worship, may wear face coverings to offer protection to others.			

<p>Spread of Covid-19</p>	<p>All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors</p>	<p>Cleaning Premises</p>	<p>Place of worship should be deeply cleansed with a suitable disinfectant.</p> <p>Clean all rooms coming into use for prayer and learning or other activities.</p> <p>Clean all door handles and railings in all places of the building.</p> <p>Ensure all doors handles and railings have been cleaned with disinfectant and signed by the person responsible.</p> <p>Clean all chairs/tables and stools which are normally used by elderly and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Clean and restrict access to teaching rooms to the public.</p> <p>Clean and restrict ablution and toilet areas - but encourage people to make ablution at home (applicable to mosques).</p> <p>Sanitize electric switches and sockets.</p> <p>Sanitize microphone sound system.</p> <p>Extra Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wear disposable latex gloves when cleaning 			
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a suitable disinfectant spray • turn off all electronic devices • use microfiber cloths to wipe the surfaces • clean all surfaces that people are likely to touch such as door handles, window handles, switches, buttons, touch screens, trays, iPads, computers, counting beads, copies of holy books etc. • make sure all surfaces are dry before the people arrive • dispose of gloves and cloth safely by putting them in disposable bags and then seal bags • clean and sanitise hands after cleaning 			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners	Cleaning Personnel	<p>Anyone responsible for the cleaning must confirm that they are not in the vulnerable groups of self isolating individuals.</p> <p>All undertaking the cleaning MUST be provided with disposable gloves, masks, and</p>			

	and contractors		sanitizers and ensure that they are fully aware of the disposal procedure.			
Spread of Covid-19	Staff/volunteers/trustees and committee members	Access to library, computers and literature	<p>If anyone needs to use any library, office equipment, books etc., they must wipe those with anti-bacterial wipes before and after use.</p> <p>There should be no access to this by the public</p>			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Air conditioning	Keep air conditioning and fans switched off until the risk of the spread of Covid-19 is completely over.			
Spread of Covid-19 - risk of infection	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments	Activities such as singing, chanting, shouting and/or playing of instruments that are blown into should be specifically avoided both in communal worship or devotions and in rehearsals. Where essential to an act of worship, only one individual should be permitted to sing or chant, and the use of Plexi-glass screens should be considered to protect worshippers, as this will further prevent transmission and they can be easily cleaned.			

<p>Spread of Covid-19</p>	<p>All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors</p>	<p>Communicating with users of the place of worship</p>	<p>Develop a statement from the trustees highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the guidelines for safe use of the place of worship ● put the statement on your website (if you have one) ● deliver the statement through social media pages ● send messages through WhatsApp messenger groups ● use local online media platforms to get your message out ● use your app (if you have one) ● use email if you have email lists ● update contact numbers for key people and make sure people know this ● communicate opening and closing times with your local key organisations such as Police, Council, NHS and others 			
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advise vulnerable worshippers to pray at home 			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Training	<p>After doing the walk through of the premises, all staff and committee members/ trustees need to be trained on all issues relating to this checklist. This will ensure safe management of entry and exit by worshippers so that everyone is on the same page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint door managers during prayer times. • Make sure all PPE is in place. • Check insurance policy for validity. • Local police and emergency services are aware of the opening and closing times. • All protocols relating to queuing, moving, and evacuation is clearly defined and agreed with staff, committee and trustees. 			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors,	Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All external contractors should have carried out their own risk assessments for their staff. 			

	cleaners and contractors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to have their own insurance in place. • Representatives from the place of worship to check external contractors' risk management plan along with evidence of valid insurance. • If contractors are working in a specified area of the premises, make sure the area is cleaned, sanitised and all waste and rubbish removed. 			
			Additional Guidance			
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Guidance	<p><u>Hand Washing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand washing facilities with soap and water in place. • Stringent hand washing taking place. • See hand washing guidance: • Drying of hands with disposable paper towels. • Gel sanitisers in all areas where washing facilities are not readily available. 			

			<p>Worshippers, learners, visitors and employees are to be reminded on a regular basis to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap, and to dry their hands with disposable towels.</p> <p>They are also to be reminded to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and to avoid touching their face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.</p> <p>Tissues will be made available throughout the place of worship.</p> <p>Posters, leaflets and other materials are available for display.</p> <p>Staff are to be to be reminded of the following:</p> <p><u>Cleaning</u></p> <p>Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly such as door handles and light switches, using appropriate cleaning products and methods.</p> <p>Staff to be reminded that wearing of gloves is not a substitute for good hand washing.</p> <p><u>Social Distancing</u></p>			
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			<p>Social Distancing: reduce the number of persons in the prayer/work area to comply with the 2-metre (6.5 foot) gap</p> <p>Take steps to review work schedules including start and finish times.</p> <p>Ensure all worshippers attend at specified times are guided by volunteers to ensure all guidelines are followed.</p> <p>Conference calls to be used instead of face-to-face meetings.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic</p> <p>The importance of social distancing both in the place of worship and outside of it.</p> <p>Management checks to ensure this is adhered to.</p> <p><u>Symptoms of Covid-19</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New continuous cough ● High temperature 			
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste • fuller details of symptoms here <p>If anyone in the place of worship has any of the above symptoms, they will be sent home immediately and advised to self isolate.</p> <p>Line managers will maintain regular contact with staff members during this time.</p> <p>If anyone has developed Covid-19 and was at the place of worship recently, the management team will contact 111 and follow advice and guidance given.</p> <p><u>Mental Health</u></p> <p>Management will promote mental health and wellbeing awareness to staff during the Coronavirus outbreak and will offer support where they can.</p> <p>Reference:</p> <p>https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/</p> <p>www.hseni.gov.uk/stress</p>			
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Need to provide emergency first aid	The casualty as well as the first aider	Emergency first aid tasks such resuscitation, bandaging etc.	Make sure at least one trained first aider is present during the opening hours and they have full PPE and access to a first aid kit.			
Need for ablution arises while a worshipper is already in the place of worship	Those who clean or go to the ablution area		Ask the worshipper concerned to go home for the ablution -Or- Let the worshipper in the ablution area but make sure the taps and other surfaces touched are cleaned and sanitised before and after use.			
Evacuation of the building required due to a fire or other major emergency situation	All those present		Trained fire marshals to ensure safe and organised evacuation.			

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<p>Spread of Covid-19</p>	<p>All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors</p>	<p>2 metre distancing (or 1M provided that you really need the space, and ALL other risks are mitigated)</p>	<p>Measure your capacity beforehand and ensure you post your maximum capacity at the entrance of each room and inform your congregants of these limits. Other activities, such as weddings, and life-cycle events in the place of worship are capped at 30 people.</p>			
<p>Spread of Covid-19</p>	<p>All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors</p>	<p>Toilets</p>	<p>Toilets inside or linked to places of worship should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available. b. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets. c. Putting up a visible cleaning schedule that is kept up-to-date and visible. d. Providing more waste facilities and more frequent refuse collection. 			
<p>Spread of Covid-19</p>	<p>All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors,</p>	<p>Food & Drink</p>	<p>Where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used; however, the sharing of food should be avoided wherever possible, as should the use of communal vessels.</p>			

	cleaners and contractors					
Spread of Covid-19	All worshippers, learners, staff, visitors, cleaners and contractors	Objects for worship	Store away all prayer books, rugs, and other shared items, and ask congregants to bring their own items and take them with them after the prayer service is over. Individuals should be prevented from touching or kissing objects that are handled communally. Barriers and/or clear signage should be put in place where necessary to avoid this taking place.			