

COVID-19 Permitted Activities under national ‘Step’ Regulations

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
25 th March 2021	1	The House of Bishops Recovery Group
This document replaces the document called ‘COVID-19 Permitted Activities under national lockdown rules’, the most recent version of which (version 3.1) was issued on 7 th January 2021.		

The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).

The following information summarises how national regulations¹ that come into force on 29th March 2021 affect various church-related activities. The Steps are designed so that they may be applied to different geographical areas as well as nationally – so it is possible that not every area will move up a Step at the same time. The restrictions that apply depend on what Step a particular area falls under. Step 1 involves the most severe restrictions, Step 3 the least severe. The table states what is and what is not legally permitted under the relevant Regulations for each Step and the earliest date from which they will apply.

Reference should also be made as appropriate to Government Guidance, in particular [the guidance on the safe use of places of worship](#).

Additional church specific guidance is available on the Church of England’s national coronavirus [webpage](#).

¹ The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 2021/364).

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
General activity – NB the general rules are subject to exceptions, including the exceptions for activities in churches etc. set out below.	No indoor gatherings of 2 or more people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households. No outdoor gatherings of more than 6 people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households.	No indoor gatherings of 2 or more people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households. No outdoor gatherings of more than 6 people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households.	No indoor gatherings of more than 6 people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households. No outdoor gatherings of more than 30 people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households.
Public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held	Permitted as ‘communal worship’ provided that any person attending is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone or • part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group. A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.	Permitted as ‘communal worship’ provided that any person attending is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone or • part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group. A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.	Permitted as ‘permitted organised gathering’ provided that any person attending is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone or • part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group. No statutory requirement for risk assessment.
Individual prayer in church	No restriction. <i>It is recommended that a risk assessment is undertaken and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</i>	No restriction. <i>It is recommended that a risk assessment is undertaken and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</i>	No restriction.

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
Travel to church	Permitted. <i>But people are advised to avoid travelling outside of their village, town or the part of a city where they live.</i>	Permitted. <i>But people are advised to minimize travelling outside of their village, town or the part of a city where they live.</i>	Permitted.
Weddings in church	Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 6 persons. A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus. <i>Wedding receptions are not permitted.</i>	Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons. A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus. <i>Wedding receptions with up to 15 people are permitted outdoors, in premises other than a private dwelling with a statutory risk assessment.</i>	Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons. A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus. <i>Wedding receptions with up to 30 people are permitted outdoors, in premises other than a private dwelling with a statutory risk assessment.</i>

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
Funerals in church, churchyard, cemetery or crematorium	<p>Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p>Related activities, such as the burial of ashes, are also permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 6 people.</p>	<p>Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p>Related activities, such as the burial of ashes, are also permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 people.</p>	<p>Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p>Related activities, such as the burial of ashes, are also permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 people.</p>
Baptism and confirmation (in the context of communal worship, whether or not a regular service)	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).	<p>The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).</p> <p>‘Private’ baptism and confirmation (i.e. not performed in the context of communal worship) also permitted as ‘significant event’, provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons, a statutory risk assessment is carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p>

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
Ordinations (in the context of communal worship, whether or not a regular service)	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).
Ministering to the sick and dying	Permitted on the basis that it constitutes work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services.	Permitted on the basis that it constitutes work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services.	No restriction, assuming that no more than 6 people gather.
Homegroups or other meetings taking place in private homes (including vicarages)	Not permitted.	Not permitted.	No restriction, provided that no more than 6 people gather.

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
<p>Support groups on church premises (e.g. support for those who are bereaved or for new parents)</p>	<p>Support groups are permitted to meet provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not including children under 5) and it is reasonably necessary for members of the group to be physically present to be provided with mutual aid, therapy or other forms of support.</p> <p>Parent and child groups (i.e. groups for the benefit of children under 5) are permitted to meet outdoors (but not indoors or at a private dwelling) provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not counting any child under 5).</p>	<p>Support groups are permitted to meet provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not including children under 5) and it is reasonably necessary for members of the group to be physically present to be provided with mutual aid, therapy or other forms of support.</p> <p>Parent and child groups (i.e. groups for the benefit of children under 5) are permitted to meet indoors or outdoors (but not in a private dwelling) provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not counting any child under 5).</p>	<p>Support groups are permitted to meet provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not including children under 5) and it is reasonably necessary for members of the group to be physically present to be provided with mutual aid, therapy or other forms of support.</p> <p>Parent and child groups (i.e. groups for the benefit of children under 5) are permitted to meet indoors or outdoors (including private dwellings) provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not counting any child under 5).</p>

Activity	Step 1 (from the 29 th March)	Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 th April)	Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 th May)
Provision of youth services	Permitted as ‘supervised activities for children or other persons under 18’ but only outdoors.	Permitted as ‘supervised activities for children or other persons under 18’ whether indoors or outdoors.	Permitted as ‘permitted organised gathering’ provided that any person attending is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone or • part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group. No statutory requirement for risk assessment.
Churches providing services involving use of the church as a concert hall, theatre or indoor heritage site <i>N.B. this is the terminology used in the relevant Regulations. Although churches are places of worship, many also provide services such as concert venues or put on plays or seek to attract visitors on the basis that they are a heritage site. It is these activities that are covered by the above.</i>	Not permitted except for rehearsal or performance without an audience for broadcast or recording and for certain educational purposes.	Not permitted except for rehearsal or performance without an audience for broadcast or recording and for certain educational purposes.	Provision of the service not restricted. Gathering for purpose of attending a concert or play is a ‘permitted organised gathering’.