

Scottish Episcopal Church College of Bishops Pastoral Framework for Covid-19 Lockdown Easing

This document is a high-level route map for the SEC taking account of the Scottish Government's phased easing of lockdown social restrictions.

It reflects how churches can safely undertake a range of pastoral ministry actions at each phase of easing. For each phase it also advises on how churches could prepare for the following phase including aspects of church life and ministry that may need to be addressed e.g. by the Advisory Group on the Re-opening of Buildings.

In later phases (Phase 3 and Phase 4) there is a lot less definition than the current phase (Phase 2). Even Phase 2 changes depending on what the Scottish Government is able to permit based on assessment of virus transmission risks. This document will be updated and redistributed as the Scottish Government and other sources update and refine their guidance.

The College of Bishops and their Advisory Group will provide further support, specific advice and resources to assist congregations as they work to re-build their pastoral activity in the longer term.

The College of Bishops Advisory Group on the Re-opening of Churches is providing specific guidance and proforma to allow buildings to be re-opened. This detailed guidance produced by the Advisory Group is referred and linked to in the phases below.

Issue Version 1 – Scotland in Phase 2 – dated 18th June 2020

Phase 2 (as announced 18th June 2020)

Scottish Government advice/rules:	<p>19th June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet outside with two other households per day (including going into a home to use toilets). 	<p>22nd June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Places of worship open for individual prayer under physical distancing rules and hygiene safeguards. Funerals in churches with minimal attendees. 	<p>29th June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weddings held outdoors with minimal attendance, distancing, hygiene Non-essential workplaces (e.g. factories, laboratories etc.) can re-open with social distancing and hygiene.
Phase 2 Activities in Church Buildings	<p>Please refer to the Phase 2 Advisory Group guidelines at https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Phase-2-Guidance-Version-1-12.6.20.pdf</p> <p>Under section G: Worship recording by groups – this guidance does not apply under the Scottish Government’s 18th June 2020 Phase 2 announcement. Only members of one household can be present in church buildings at one time.</p> <p>Proforma for approval of vestry re-opening plans by the bishop are at https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Pro-forma-Plan-for-Reopening-for-Individual-Prayer-Version-1-12.6.20.docx</p>		
Phase 2 Pastoral Activities	<p>Please refer to the Phase 2 College of Bishops Pastoral Guidance at https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Pastoral-Guidelines-for-Phase-2-issued-12.6.20.pdf.</p> <p>Pastoral visits inside other households are NOT permitted at present under the Scottish Government’s 18th June 2020 Phase 2 announcement. Members of two other households can be met outside, once per day. This constraint will apply to any pastoral work.</p>		
Church Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diocesan treasurers are to be informed of any cashflow issues. Standing order giving to be encouraged for all if possible. 		

Phase 2 cont.

PREPARATIONS for Phase 3	<p>Church Buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Advisory Group will work on guidance for phase 3 and the SEC is liaising with the Scottish Govt and other faith groups. Areas to be clarified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When meeting indoors with other households may be possible? ○ Can we get a clearer understanding of the definition of "extended groups" meeting for worship? ○ What social distancing and enhanced hygiene requirements will apply? ○ What limitations will there be on numbers able to be accommodated? ○ Eucharistic worship – what is safe and possible? ○ Music: worship groups, choirs, congregational singing: are these possible with constraints? ○ What non worship events can now take in church buildings (social events, fundraising, interviewing)? ○ What developments/approaches are being taken in other denominations?
PREPARATIONS for Phase 3 continued	<p>Pastoral activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide if clergy/pastoral team wish to offer pastoral visiting & home communion (if permitted under Govt guidelines): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, planning for potential pastoral visiting and home communions (special training for Eucharistic Assistants?) ○ Identify/recruit pastoral team members (who are not shielding or in vulnerable categories) ○ Identify members urgently requiring support, ensuring that appropriate safeguarding measure are in place • Worship planning: design blend of in-Church and Online services – what capacity does the church have to support the extra workload? • Regular church cleaning rotas: extended to cover Phase 3 worship services in accordance with Advisory Group Guidance • Interview and visits for ministry candidates – can these be now be safely planned for Phase 3? <p>Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diocesan Comms teams prepare agreed and consistent communication to be released in lead up to Phase 3 – our own guidelines and processes but always that Scottish Government guidelines/rules are paramount. • Communicate to Dioceses what changes (e.g. worship for extended congregations, multiple households meet in church) and what remains the same (e.g. social distancing and hygiene regulations) in Phase 3. • Communicate any changes to the Diocesan processes to be followed for re-opening for extended group worship.

Phase 2 cont.

Safeguarding:

- If PVG checks can now be carried out: Identify any new volunteer roles which will involve 'regulated activity' and require PVG checks or registering as 'position of trust'.
 - Staffing church for worship services
 - Staffing church for individual prayer
 - Re-starting Sunday Schools and young people's activities
 - Pastoral visiting
- Process new volunteers through appropriate SEC Safeguarding systems
- Raise awareness of clergy and volunteers that, as people return to church, some may disclose non-recent or current abuse and that mandatory SEC reporting policy must be followed

Church finances:

- Prepare for Phase 3 safe resumption of cash collection at services (if church chooses to open)

Phase 3 (as defined in May 2020 - TBC)

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Scottish Government guidance/rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can meet from multiple households (including indoors) subject to physical distancing. • Places of worship open to extended groups subject to physical distancing and hygiene safeguards. • Relaxation of restrictions to attendance at funerals, marriages and civil partnerships beyond “close family”.
Phase 3 Activities in Church Buildings	<p>This area will require Phase 3 Advisory Group guidelines covering the Phase 3 ‘Preparation’ areas outlined above.</p>
Phase 3 Pastoral Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for pastoral visiting & home communion (if permitted by Scot Gov): • Blend of in-Church and Online services offered – inclusion of those who are e.g. shielding and also unable to access online services by e.g. paper copies of liturgies/pewsheets • Continue to utilise various forms of communication (social media platforms, posted letters, telephone calls) to keep all members connected, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform about Church building worship plans & times (if church chooses to open) ○ Newsletters, texts of prayer services & scripture and other useful leaflets delivered ○ Recorded services made available (local radio, phone) ○ Lists of services that you can join in with at home. ○ Drawing attention to on-line worship/support (where available). • Essential mission/outreach activities (e.g. food/poverty support projects) continue in line with Scottish Govt/local authority guidance – but may be returning towards ‘normal’. • Within Phase 3 Advisory Group guidance, some formal indoor & outdoor activities for church & congregation can take place – Scottish Govt allows multiple household meeting and ‘extended’ gatherings in Phase 3, subject to physical distancing and hygiene standards. The details of this will be better understood as Phase 3 is approached
Church Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess state of the church finances/reserves that have been used in lockdown phases • Diocesan treasurers to request status of charges as worship and hall users etc. re-start • Standing order giving to be encouraged for all if possible

Phase 3 cont.

PREPARATIONS for Phase 4

Church Buildings:

- In line with advice from the Bishops Advisory Group, plan what physical measures can be eased during phase 4 for public worship and other church access including individual prayer
- Re-visit decisions on opening in Phase 4 ‘with any necessary precautions’ – dialogue can take place between clergy/vestry/bishop for particular contexts
- Plan for other phase 4 changes e.g., full resumption of social activities, casual external groups using church halls etc.: all in context of Scottish Govt public health guidance

Pastoral Activities:

- Pastoral life of churches largely returns to ‘normal’ – plan for any changes to the phase 3 model for ‘necessary precautions’.
- Review blend of online and real-life worship & discipleship activity: what has worked and flourished? How do we continue to allow for inclusion of all in forms of worship.
- Planning for memorial services for funerals that were unable to be held as families wished during lockdown
- Planning for commemoration of those who have died and those who have served: local, diocesan and national
- Assessment of Scottish Govt Public Health Guidance remaining in place on all church activities: risk assessments carried out by and for the local vestries

Communications:

- Clear planning Diocesan/local comms response to spiritual/emotional cost of the pandemic
- Diocesan Comms teams prepare agreed and consistent communication to be released in lead up to Phase 4 – our own guidelines and processes but always that Scottish Government guidelines/rules are paramount.
- Communicate to Dioceses:
 - what changes (e.g. application of ‘further relaxation on restrictions on gatherings’ and ‘all ceremonies could now take place’) and what remains the same (e.g. necessary precautions) in Phase 4.
 - Diocesan processes for re-opening churches are wound down as Phase 4 is reached and default position is for churches to be open.

Safeguarding:

Identify any changes to be back to operating in pre-Covid mode

Finance:

- Recovery plans for charges which have had financial difficulties
- Quota calculations for dioceses and province: assess against financial health

Phase 4

Scottish Government advice:	<p>At this stage the potential constraints are hard to define. The implication is that a 'new normal' has been reached.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further relaxation on restrictions on gatherings and the continued importance of hygiene and public health will be emphasised • All ceremonies can take place, with necessary precautions
Phase 4 Activities in Church Buildings	<p>This area will require Phase 4 Advisory Group guidelines</p>
Phase 4 Pastoral Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold memorial services and remembrance activities to commemorate Covid and those who have served. • Keep a blend of in-Church and Online services offered – inclusion of those who are unable to attend in person for any reason (i.e. also excluded pre-Covid) • Essential mission/outreach activities (e.g. food/poverty support projects) are running as 'normal' in line with Scottish Govt/local authority guidance. • Pastoral life of churches largely returns to 'normal' with 'necessary precautions'. The details of this will be better understood as Phase 4 is approached
Church finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess state of the church finances/reserves that have been used in lockdown phases: recovery plans where needed • Dioceses to review central costs and future quota requirements
Future Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College of Bishops continues to be advised on all aspects of church life and public health • Advisory Group for the Re-opening of Churches is disbanded • Communications: clear statement of church position on issues raised in pandemic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social resilience ○ Protection of the vulnerable ○ Low-paid care workers are essential ○ Racism & racial impact of pandemic ○ Positive environmental impact of lockdown ○ etc.