

Eden Baptist Church

COVID-19: Safe use of Eden Chapel (September 2020)

This document sets out Eden's response to HM Government's 'COVID Secure' guidance for work places⁴ and for places of worship⁵ in so far as they relate to staff and others working and meeting in the Eden building. This note does not relate to our gatherings for worship, covered elsewhere.

This document sets out steps we will take to manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within the building, with the intention of protecting staff and other building users. The Government guidance is under constant review and so we will continue to keep this document under review.

1. We want to show that the church is 'open for business' and to provide safe workspaces here in the building, but we will also continue to support home-working:

Our previous position (that staff should work from home where you can and only to come into the building when necessary) has been reviewed in light of the easing of Government restrictions.

Please do not come to the building if you, or a member of your household, is displaying COVID symptoms⁶. Observe Government guidance on staying at home. If you develop symptoms while in the building, please go home immediately and notify us as soon as you can. And if you develop symptoms having recently visited the building (or if a visitor lets you know they have developed symptoms), please also notify us as soon as you can.

We also encourage you to observe the Government's guidance if you are shielding or at higher risk. The Government continues to advise that those who are 'clinically extremely vulnerable' should work from home wherever possible.

It remains the case that other keyholders, including volunteers, have been asked only to come in if absolutely necessary and only by prior arrangement with the Operations Manager or Administrator. This is in order to protect our staff and follow Government guidance requiring monitoring of building use. Not all activities have yet been risk assessed and so cannot yet recommence.

⁴ "Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres" <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

⁶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

2. Essential steps when working in the Eden building

a. **Maintain distance from each other:**

We must strive to maintain appropriate social distancing (2m minimum, wherever possible) and to take all appropriate further steps to protect each other from the spread of infection.

Please be aware of each other when moving around the building – for example, it will be necessary sometimes to duck into a doorway to let others passed. But given the small numbers of us working in the building, it is not considered necessary to impose a formal one-way system around the building.

Where it is impossible to maintain 2m distance for a particular task, please ensure disposable face masks are worn and that the task is completed as quickly as possible.

Please also observe room capacity limits, outlined below.

b. **Hand sanitising and washing:**

Upon entering and exiting the building, use the hand sanitisers provided. There is a dispenser at each of the three doors to the building. While in the building, wash your hands regularly – including after sneezing or coughing. Please use disposable paper towels to dry hands. Follow the NHS guidance on ‘how to wash your hands’.⁷

c. **Clean up after yourself:**

- i) If working at a desk in the office, **wipe it down before and after** your use with the anti-bacterial spray or wipes provided. If using meeting rooms, wipe down tables you use. Anti-bacterial sprays are located under the sinks in the kitchens. Dispose of waste to the bins provided.
- ii) If using shared equipment (e.g. a keyboard and mouse, telephones, etc), please wipe it down after use.
- iii) Wash up any crockery and cutlery you have used. Please do not leave washing up for others.

d. **Minimise contact with shared surfaces:**

⁷ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>

For example, pinning open doors with a wedge or hook reduces contact with shared surfaces. Wash or sanitise hands after touching shared surfaces. (If fire doors are wedged open, please remember to close them when leaving the building.)

e. **Please report any shortages of cleaning materials**

If supplies of hand sanitiser, wipes, masks, paper towels run out, please notify Steve or Hazel. Supplies of most things are available in the Cleaner's storeroom or in the Office storeroom.

f. **Ventilate rooms wherever possible**

Please open windows, turn on fans where provided and leave room doors open, to improve air-flow. (Please ensure windows are closed and fire doors shut before leaving the building at the end of the working day).

g. **Wear appropriate protective clothing for higher risk activities**

Specifically, when cleaning shared surfaces after services / gatherings of large numbers of non-staff, or cleaning bathrooms after services or emptying waste bins, please wear a disposable mask and gloves (provided).

h. **Avoid sitting directly face-to-face**

Even when maintaining 2m distancing, you should sit side-by-side or back-to-back rather than immediately opposite one another in close proximity.

3. Room capacity Limits

Different configurations of people (household sizes, whether seated in a circle or at tables, etc) impact capacity of a room. Therefore, please use the following figures as a 'rule of thumb'. The important thing is to avoid close proximity (less than 2m) between people / households and to follow the guidance in this note.

Office: 4 people (although that should not prevent others from popping in to use the printer, check mail, make tea, etc provided 2m distancing is observed. But anything longer than a 'quick chat' should be taken to a different room)

Rooms 1 & 2 (temporary overflow office): 4 people in an 'office' configuration.

Room 3: 3-4 people

Room 4: 4-5 people

Interview Room: 1-2 people

Back Hall: 8-12 people

Concourse: 6-10 people

As rooms will be in high demand, you are encouraged to book ahead through the 'Bookings' module in ChurchSuite (not the calendar) or email Hazel. The Office and Rooms 1&2 cannot be booked.

4. Face coverings

Summary:

- Generally, you do not need to wear a face covering when working with colleagues in the building Monday-Friday, but you may choose to do so. If it is impossible to maintain 2m distancing between colleagues for a specific task, you should wear a face covering for that task.
- When attending services or other meetings, events or gatherings with non-staff, please wear a face covering except where:
 - (a) doing so would impede you in carrying out your role or duties – for example, those leading, preaching, pastoring, teaching, or reading / praying at the front of church, or leading a youth group; or
 - (b) in other circumstances a specific exception has been identified or agreed and extra risk mitigation measures taken. This will usually have been the subject of risk assessment and discussion with the Operations Manager.

Background:

There is currently no general legal requirement to wear a face mask in a place of work, because employers have a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment. We will continue to strive to meet that obligation, for example through the measures described in this document. One of the ways in which we may do so is by requiring you to wear a mask in certain circumstances – for example, if maintaining 2m distancing is not possible, or if you will be indoors and in close proximity with people with whom you do not normally meet.

The position for churches is further complicated because mask wearing is compulsory in places of worship, since 8 August. An individual can be prosecuted for failing to comply. However, there are exemptions to that requirement – and it is generally the case that church staff are exempt, albeit we may consider the use of masks where appropriate and where other mitigations are not in place. A helpful summary of the position is available on the FIEC website: <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/wearing-face-masks-at-church>

As the article summarises:

Where the place of worship includes office facilities, these too are subject to the requirement for face coverings to be worn, although there are exemptions that will apply to church employees and volunteers that mean they would not have to wear face coverings in a church office environment. However, others attending the church office would need to do so.

A face covering must fit securely around the side of the face. There is consensus that clear visors do not meet this requirement. Nevertheless, if someone claims an exemption from wearing a mask they may wear a visor in mitigation of the added risk.

It is worth bearing in mind why we wear masks: the Government guidance is clear that it is to protect others, not ourselves (we might say it is part of our call to love our neighbour). When meeting with others in the building who must wear masks, please be aware of the message it may send if we do not wear a mask. That is not to say you should – there may be very good reasons not to, in order to communicate clearly with those you are teaching or pastoring. If a mask is not worn, please make sure other mitigation measures are strictly observed (i.e. not sitting face-to-face, maximising ventilation, sitting further apart).

5. Visitors

- a. When bringing visitors into the building, it is your responsibility to ensure they observe the guidance in this document. Please share this document with them if they will be in the building for more than a very short time.
- b. Guidance advises keeping a record of visitors to the building, for the purposes of complying with 'track & trace'. A visitor log will be located at the front door. **Please ask visitors to sign in** (after sanitising their hands).

Exceptions: The following do not need to sign in:

- i) Those attending our services – covered by ChurchSuite bookings.
 - ii) Those attending formal business meetings (e.g. Elders meetings) - a minute is taken and attendance recorded.
 - iii) Those for whom there is a need for exceptional levels of confidentiality. In this case, please enter "Visitor meeting [your name]" in the visitor log. Then if there is an outbreak, we will be able to source their details through you.
 - iv) Those attending other gatherings where attendance is accurately recorded – e.g. GAP and Impact registers.
- c. Please ask visitors to wear a mask. It is a legal requirement that masks must be worn in places of worship unless an exemption applies. Disposable masks are available in the office. For more info on the exemptions from mask-wearing, please see the Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

6. Looking after those who are at high risk from COVID

- a. Meetings with volunteers, Church Members or others who are at higher risk, and particularly those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, should take place outside the church building wherever possible – recognising that the risk to them will often be lower in their own homes or gardens, or elsewhere outdoors, than it will be in the Eden building.
- b. Any interactions with those classed as ‘extremely vulnerable’ should be conducted only in strict accordance with the Government guidance for the protection of such individuals.⁸

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Steve (07717 355704) in the first instance.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#who-is-clinically-extremely-vulnerable>