

Coronavirus: Children’s, youth and families ministry

Version Most recent first	Changes
6 December 2021	Changes to Section 2 to reflect (conflicting) advice on face coverings in England and the requirement to self-isolate for close contacts of those with the Omicron variant.
1 October 2021	Revision of source documents. Change to face coverings rules in Wales, which are no longer required in areas where food and drink are consumed.
12 August 2021	Removal of distinct section for Wales following the move in Wales to Alert Level 0. Changes throughout Section 2 to allow for remaining differences between England and Wales. Revision of Section 1’s list of source documents.
22 July 2021	Updated list in Section 1 of the source documents. Changes to introduction in Section 2 regarding children’s and youth activities in England. Change to Section 3 regarding residential visits in Wales.
15 July 2021	Document re-written to reflect removal of legal requirement in England from 19 July and the completion of the move to Alert level 1 in Wales from 17 July.

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1. Sources

This guidance is based on a number of Government guidance documents.

UK Government

[COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021](#)

[Coronavirus: How to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#)

[Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings](#)

[Actions for early years and childcare providers](#)

[Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings](#)

[Interactive map](#)

Welsh Government

[Alert level 0: frequently asked questions](#)

[Childcare and play: frequently asked questions](#)

[Guidance for childcare and playwork: coronavirus](#)

[Interactive map](#)

You may also find the following BUGB guidance helpful:

[Coronavirus: Guidance on re-opening Baptist church buildings](#)

[Coronavirus: Guidance on church worship](#)

[Coronavirus: safeguarding considerations for Baptist churches](#)

Further websites that may be useful

[National Youth Agency](#)

[Parenting for Faith](#)

[Together at Home](#)

[Messy Church](#)

[Youthscape](#)

2. Children's and youth activities guidance

From 19 July, the UK Government moved to step 4 of their Covid-19 recovery roadmap. From 7 August, the Welsh Government moved to Alert Level 0. In both cases the majority of the previous legal requirements have been removed. Any number of people may meet for any purpose both indoors and outdoors in either nation.

The notable exception to this lifting of legal requirements is that in Wales face coverings are still mandatory in almost all public indoor places. This includes churches. There is an exception for areas of the building where food and drink are being consumed.

Please note also that in Wales alone, residential visits are restricted to up to 30 children. Leaders are in addition to the 30 children.

Despite the lifting of legal restrictions, both Governments recommend continuing caution. Good ventilation, diligence in hygiene, wearing a face covering in enclosed and crowded spaces whether or not it is mandatory, and minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contacts with those we do not live with, are all noted as beneficial behaviours.

Above all, we recommend groups continue to undertake risk assessments with COVID-19 measures in mind.

Risk assessments for supervised children's and youth activities might consider whether it will remain beneficial to:

- Keep a record of all who attend each group on any one date.
- Move groups outside wherever possible as this reduces risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Ask those who are unwell, sharing a house with someone unwell or self-isolating not to attend. Those who have to self-isolate include anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19; anyone who has received a positive test for COVID-19 whether or not they are symptomatic; and anyone who has been a close contact of someone with the Omicron variant. Those under 18 or those over 18 who have been fully vaccinated do not have to self-isolate if they have been in contact with a person who has tested positive, unless that person tested positive for the Omicron variant.
- Encourage and provide for regular hand washing or sanitising.
- Require face coverings for children aged 11 and over as follows:
 - In England, advice is unfortunately conflicted. UK Government guidance says, "we recommend that face coverings should be worn by children [in year 7 and up], staff and adult visitors when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms or activity rooms, such as in corridors and communal areas." However, the NYA, who work in conjunction with Government, say, "All young people (unless medically exempt) over the age of 11yrs are required to wear a face covering when indoors. Staff, volunteers and visitors should wear face coverings when indoors also." We suggest that if you usually operate according to NYA guidance, then you follow their stricter interpretation, but that otherwise you ask young people, staff and volunteers to wear them at least when moving around the building.
 - In Wales, face coverings remain mandatory indoors on church premises for those aged 11 and over in any case.
 - Face coverings are not required when outdoors.
- Stagger drop-off and pick-up times to reduce interaction between families.
- Clean any rooms after one group has left and before another uses it.
- Limit singing to well-ventilated spaces where singers can be some distance from each other, and avoid loud singing.

Risk assessments for parent and child groups might consider whether it will remain beneficial to:

- Keep details of attendance for the required period for Test and Trace purposes.

- Make clear that families should not attend if they or anyone in their household has Covid-19 symptoms.
- Clean the floor, touch points, chairs, tables and toilets before and after each session, using a tick list to make sure nothing is forgotten.
- Organise families arriving and leaving such that there is space for each to 'unpack' at the start and prepare to leave at the end.
- Keep windows open for ventilation even as doors are closed for security.
- Ask adults to wear masks if they are moving around the building and interacting with one another.
- Make toilets unisex and allow one family only in the toilet area at a time.
- Serve any refreshments from behind a counter rather than having a self-service area.
- Encourage social distancing between adults especially by marking out contained zones for each family, or each activity.
- Avoid sharing soft toys.
- Pre-prepare craft packs rather than offering a craft table where all items are shared.
- Provide wipes and sanitizer for cleaning shared items such as trampoline handles, or so that parents can clean toys before passing them to children.
- Limit the adults that sing to a few leaders.
- Quarantine any toys after the session for 72 hours before they are used again.

While infection rates remain high, we suggest all these measures are worth considering.

However, your answers to these questions will vary from setting to setting, according to the numbers attending and the available space. Your answers may also vary according to the infection rates in your area. The interactive map (please see link in Section 1) shows those areas where Covid-19 cases are highest. Where infection rates are high, you may wish to take extra precautions such as meeting outside where possible and maintaining 2m social distancing. When you complete your risk assessment, you should agree a date when it will be reviewed. This is good practice, though the changing nature of the situation and fresh Government guidance may of course demand a review sooner than the date you plan.

3. Safeguarding

Please pay renewed attention to your safeguarding policy and procedures and work with your designated person for safeguarding to make sure the usual measures are in place. Bear in mind that many children and young people returning may need extra support because of:

- Anxiety regarding the pandemic.
- Bereavement within their family or circle of friends.
- Difficult home circumstances intensified by lockdown.

You might want to give particular attention to enabling children and young people talk through their experiences of the past eighteen months, as well as provide resources to help with mental health and wellbeing. Please familiarise yourself afresh with the signs of harm or risk of harm and address any issues by following your safeguarding policy's procedures and contacting the designated person for safeguarding.

Ministries Team
This version: 6 December 2021

This is one of a series of Guidelines that are offered as a resource for Baptist ministers and churches. They have been prepared by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and are, of necessity, intended only to give very general advice in relation to the topics covered. These guidelines should not be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific and more detailed advice in relation to a particular matter. The staff at the Baptist Union of Great Britain at Baptist House will be very pleased to answer your queries and help in any way possible.
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Registered Charity Number: 1181392, operating as a CIO
First Issue 9 July 2020; restructured 15 April 2021; re-written July 2021