

Changes to English COVID-19 government guidance

1 December 2020

Britain
Yearly
Meeting



The headlines

- Overall, very little has changed for 'Places of Worship' in England between the old tiered system and the new tiers and guidance. The restrictions for communal worship are the same as before the national lockdown.
- There are small changes concerning worship in educational establishments, support groups, children and young people, and recommending attending a funeral remotely if you are self-isolating.

So you only need to read on if you have a particular focus on these topics.

Do the restrictions on social mixing mean we cannot hold Quaker worship for multiple households or multiple groups of six etc.?

No. The guidance for '[Places of Worship in England](#)' published on 1 December remains very similar to the October 15 tiered version. It still says that for communal worship, the limits should be decided "*on the basis of the capacity of the building*". It also still says that the local tiers apply for "*social mixing*", and for "*mingling*".

This has not changed from how it was before the national lockdown. Remember that during conventional socially-distanced Quaker worship, we are not "socially mixing", nor are we "mingling". But we have to avoid these before and after worship.

Unfortunately, some paragraphs that previously made it clearer that communal worship can include multiple groups or multiple households have been removed. One which remains here is:

- *The law allows for multiple groups to pray in a place of worship or its grounds.*

If you still remain in any doubt that communal worship can take place containing multiple households, or several groups of 6 people etc., then do refer to the overall guidance for each tier: [Tier 1](#), [Tier 2](#), [Tier 3](#).

For example, in Tier 2 under the heading 'Places of Worship' it says:

- *You can attend places of worship for a service. However, you must not socialise with anyone outside of your household or support bubble.*

and earlier for Tier 2 it says:

- *Venues can host multiple groups and should follow COVID-secure guidance, but you must not mix with anyone who is not part of your household or*

support bubble when you are indoors. This includes in: pubs and restaurants, shops ... places of worship ...

Similarly, for Tier 3 it says:

- *You can attend places of worship for a service. However, you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble.*

Meeting for worship in educational establishments

If your worship takes place in an ‘*educational establishment*’, now the ‘*guidance relevant to that place should be adhered to*’. That is because ‘*educational establishments*’ have been added to this paragraph:

- *This guidance does not cover educational establishments public parks, private homes, cultural sites or other open spaces, such as woodlands which may be used for religious purposes. If people do want to engage in worship in these spaces, then the guidance relevant to that place should be adhered to.*

Support groups

An additional sentence has been added to the Places of Worship guidance:

- *Organised parent and child groups can also take place with up to 15 people. Any child under 5 is not included in this limit.*

While several explanatory paragraphs have been removed, you can refer to the general guidance for your tier.

Young people and children

The previous statements here that organised children’s activities can take place within a place of worship have been replaced by pointing to the guidance for out-of-school settings, and for formal childcare and educational settings. The general guidance for tiers includes these exemptions:

- *for supervised activities provided for children and those who were under 18 on 31 August 2020, including wraparound care (before and after-school childcare), children’s groups, activities for under-18s, and children’s playgroups*
- *for parent and toddler groups – up to a maximum of 15 people. Under-5s do not count towards this limit. These cannot take place in private dwellings.*

Self-isolating and Funerals

For those ‘*self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household*’, this paragraph has been added:

- *For a funeral, even if you are a close family member of the deceased, we strongly recommend that you attend remotely, if possible, to reduce the risk of*

COVID-19 spread to other mourners. However, if after careful consideration of the risk, you choose to attend in person, it is essential that you follow the precautions outlined in the guidance.

Face coverings

The position remains the same. The wording has just been shortened.