

Using places of worship and community halls during the November lockdown in England

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020

The regulations laid down in Parliament are at

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1200/pdfs/uksi_20201200_en.pdf

They are subject to amendment before the vote on November 4th, and if passed will come into force from midnight the same day.

Reg 18(8) A place of worship may be used—

- (a) for funerals,
- (b) for commemorative events celebrating the life of a person who has died,
- (c) to broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast,
- (d) to provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency),
- (e) for childcare provided by a person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006*,
- (f) for individual prayer, and for these purposes, “individual prayer” means prayer by individuals which does not form part of communal worship, or
- (g) to host any gathering which is permitted under regulation 8** [no indoor gathering of 2 or more people except under the exemptions in Reg 11] or regulation 9** [no outdoor gathering of 2 or more people not counting a carer for a person with a disability or a child under 5, other than those permitted by the exceptions in Reg 11].

(9) A person who is responsible for a community centre or hall must ensure that the community centre or hall is closed except where it is used—

- (a) to provide essential voluntary activities or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency),
- (b) for the purposes of education or training,
- (c) for the purposes of support groups, or
- (d) for the purposes of— (i) childcare provided by a person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006*, or (ii) supervised activities for children.

* Elsewhere the regulations specify that childcare is allowable “where the childcare is reasonably necessary” to enable the parent/guardian to attend work, search for work, or undertake education or training. See Reg 11 para 17.

** The relevant exceptions to prevent gatherings given in Regulation 11 include:

- Exception 2: gatherings necessary for certain purposes – for work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services, education or training, to provide emergency assistance; to enable one or more persons to avoid injury or illness or escape a risk of harm; to provide care to a vulnerable person, to facilitate a house move.
- Exception 5: support groups – of no more than 15 people at a place other than a private dwelling, where the group is organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to its members, for example to victims of crime, those with or recovering from addictions, new parents, carers, those facing issues related to their sexuality or gender identity, those who have suffered bereavement, and vulnerable young people.
- Exception 8: marriages and civil partnerships – the solemnisation of marriage, formation of civil partnership, conversion of CP to marriage, and alternative wedding ceremony where one of the parties is seriously ill and not expected to recover, with no more than 6 people
- Exception 10: funerals for no more than 30 persons
- Exception 11: a commemorative event following a person's death – for example scattering ashes or a stone setting ceremony, for no more than 15 persons
- Exception 13: children – access between a child and their parents where the child doesn't live with one or both of the parents or contact between siblings where one or more of them are looked after by a local authority, for prospective adopters, for childcare in order to allow a parent to work or access education or training
- Exception 14: Remembrance Sunday... – where the gathering takes place outdoors ...and the persons attending are limited to persons there as part of their work, persons providing voluntary services in connection with the event, members of the armed forces, veterans or their representatives or carers and spectators who participate alone or only with members of their household, and where the gathering organiser take the required precautions in relations to the gather. [The "required precautions" are given in Regulation 14, and require the gathering organiser to carry out a risk assessment and take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of coronavirus.]