

**Keeping everyone safe – July 2021 update**

At the moment, the various governments in Britain & Ireland are relaxing restrictions on social distancing, mask wearing and the numbers of people who can meet together both indoors and outdoors. It’s clear that the guidance applicable across our provinces is likely to be subject to review and change over the coming weeks and months. Current information on the guidance applicable across Britain & Ireland can be found on the following websites:

**Current advice for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales can be found at:**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

**Current advice for the Republic of Ireland can be found at:**

[COVID-19 (citizensinformation.ie)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/covid19/)

But it’s more than just keeping to current Government guidance. Some members may have been shielding for a long time and may still be cautious about mixing socially, even at a distance. We need to make sure that as Mothers' Union members start to gather together again, everyone can feel safe.

**Avoiding the spread of Covid-19**

Everyone can take steps to make meeting together safer. Many members will have received both their vaccine doses which reduce, but do not eliminate, the chances of catching Covid-19 or of passing it on.

Anyone with Covid-19 symptoms, however mild, or who is required to self-isolate for whatever reason, should stay at home and not invite visitors to their home or garden. Anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 should also arrange to have a PCR test.

If members are concerned about unknowingly passing on the virus to others who may be vulnerable, they may choose to take a lateral flow self-test. Kits are free from pharmacies or online ([Order coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

**Social Distancing**

As social distancing requirements are removed or relaxed, it becomes more of a personal choice on whether to keep a distance from family and friends. Inevitably, those choices will be different, so it is important to make space for people to keep their distance if they wish at any Mothers’ Union gatherings.

**Face Coverings**

Wearing a face covering may no longer be mandatory in all areas of Britain & Ireland, but the recommendation is that these should be worn in crowded indoor areas. Face coverings are effective in limiting the spread of Covid infection and, while they can give reassurance to those who are anxious, they can also create issues for those with hearing difficulties. Decisions about this need to be taken in consultation with members.

**Fresh air**

Meeting outside allows Covid-19 particles to be blown away and less likely to be breathed in by another person, but after the summer, this may not be a realistic option.

If you are meeting indoors, make sure the space is well ventilated – open windows and doors to let in plenty of fresh air. The more fresh air that is brought inside, the quicker any airborne virus particles will be removed.

**Meeting Venues**

As regulations move to recommendations, these are likely to be interpreted differently across various meeting venues. Those with responsibility for venues, whether church, community or commercial premises, are ultimately responsible for deciding what is appropriate for their venue and their requirements should be observed as a minimum.

**Risk Assessment**

It is good practice to carry out your own risk assessment for any venue you use for Mothers’ Union meetings. A risk assessment guide can be found at <https://www.mothersunion.org/sites/default/files/resources/public/Risk%20Assessment.docx>

**Keep members informed**

Do let members know what steps are being taken to keep them safe and give them the chance to express any concerns they may have about meeting together again, so these can be taken into consideration. Groups could be encouraged to come to a joint agreement about what they will do in terms of social distancing, face coverings, etc, so that everyone knows what is expected of them.

22 July 2021