

## Churches as vaccination centres

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
8 <sup>th</sup> December 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

It is admirable that so many churches and cathedrals have suggested that they may be able to provide space for vaccination centres as part of the national response to Covid-19. Where this is possible to do it will be a great act of service and witness. The purpose of this note is to set out some of the logistical issues that churches might consider when deciding if their buildings could be appropriate centres.

The Royal College of Nursing has produced a [guide to immunisation services and large-scale vaccination delivery during COVID-19](#) which says “Buildings with the capacity for large scale vaccination options such as sports and leisure centres, community centres and religious venues may offer the potential to facilitate a mass throughput of people. Providing certain logistics are thought through and a local risk assessment carried out they can be a valuable option.”

Decisions on the setting up of vaccination centres are made by local NHS trusts, in consultation with local authorities and resilience forums, general practices, pharmacies, and other stakeholders. Most of the vaccination hubs being set up are expecting to process upwards of 1000 people a day – they need large spaces that are not needed for any other purposes, and that can be kept for the purposes of vaccinations for up to a year. If you do not have a dedicated space that can be given over to this purpose it is likely to be difficult for you to offer your church.

By and large the issues of whether cathedrals, churches, church halls and similar buildings might be suitable venues is one of access, accessibility, and (for church and cathedral buildings) practicality alongside the use of the building for worship.

When considering if you might suggest part or all of your cathedral, church or associated buildings for use as a vaccination centre – or if you are approached as a possible venue – consider the following factors:

1. The space needed. How large is the dedicated space you can offer? Are you sure you won't need it for other purposes for as long as the vaccination centre remains in place? Are there adequate toilet facilities and easy access to water and electricity supplies? Does what you can offer fit with what your local NHS Trust or resilience forum needs?
2. Access to the venue for all visitors. Assess the ease of access and transport routes and the availability of parking. Where will the staff running the centre park? Can delivery vans get close enough to deliver supplies, collect medical waste etc? Is there enough space for people to wait? Can a one-way system be set up across the site to help with distancing?
3. Accessibility of the venue. Has the building had an access audit? Can the space be accessed by people using wheelchairs, people with buggies or small children, those who have difficulty walking? Is there an operational hearing loop or could one be installed? What sort of visual markers could be installed to allow access by those who are blind or visually impaired? Is there

at least one accessible toilet and is it kept in proper working order and free of clutter? Is there adequate and accurate access information available online to allow people to plan their visit?

4. The need to adapt the space. Most vaccination centres need to set up a number of individual cubicles for the administration of vaccines, plus secure areas for storage of records, computers, medical waste etc. Assuming that such interventions are temporary and do not have an impact on historic fabric, does the layout of your building allow for such a layout?
5. The need for permissions. If you are in a position where your church or an associated building is being considered, you will need to ensure you get a formal agreement between the PCC and whoever will run the centre. The NHS has allocated mobilisation funding via regional teams to support deployment. A licence or hiring agreement should be agreed that includes information on fees and payment, insurance and liability arrangements, as well as agreement over access to and use of the space.

Churches and consecrated church halls will require a faculty, whether or not a lease is granted, as this will be a secular use rather than use of the church as a place of worship. However, Chancellors may issue Additional Matters Orders disapplying the need for faculties in their dioceses but the position will, in each case, need to be checked with the DAC. By virtue of emergency planning provisions which came into force in April 2020 and/or the transitional provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, it is unlikely that planning permission would be required, at least up to August 2021. However, the emergency provisions are currently due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and new Use Classes provisions will be issued with effect from August 2021, so the position should be checked with any partnering health authority and the local authority.

If your church is felt suitable and you have been asked to progress setting up a centre by the NHS then the first port of call should be your Diocesan Advisory Committee or Archdeacon, who can help to advise you.

Cathedrals should contact the [Secretariat of the CFCE](#), and they will work with your Fabric Advisory Committee to get you the right advice and get appropriate permissions in place.