

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> July. Other activities, except for a few still prohibited by law, may also take place in churches, subject to the government guidance in place for the relevant sector.

The [government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy and members of the public entering for any permitted purposes. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. You should read the advice on re-opening buildings and the guidance on public worship before completing this assessment. Both are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

A separate risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

## Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
  - Private prayer (clergy only)
  - Livestreaming services (clergy only)
  - Private prayer (general public)
  - Public worship
  - Rites of passage services
  - Opening for visitors and tourists

2. Consider the hazards:
  - Transmission of COVID-19
  - Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church
  - Hazards arising from now using the church in a different way

Read the guidance and think about how it relates specifically to your church. What constraints are there? Consider how people will arrive at the church, including if they will need to wait or queue outside; how people will enter and leave the church; circulation inside: from the entrance to the worship space and out again; circulation within the worship space; also access to other areas including the toilet(s).

3. Consider who might be harmed and how? Read the guidance and think about how the activities you are planning will affect different groups of people. The risks are not different for larger churches so long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming through your building makes the possible impact – for example of someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller venues with fewer people. Consider your particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate.
4. Using the risk assessment checklist below as a template:
  - add in mitigations for any risks that are particular to your circumstances that may not be on the list;
  - record what you need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
  - consider any equipment you need and any temporary changes you might need to make to the church;
  - check back against your list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when.

**Risk assessment template**

<b>Church:</b> St Anne's Edgeside	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Jill Bevan	<b>Date completed:</b> 03.07.20	<b>Review date:</b>
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  <a href="#">General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</a>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Keep main entrance for entry & exit for all. As signposted	Complete	9.7.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Lone Worker Policy Reviewed and displayed in main office	Standing Committee (SC)	16.06.20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Responsibility of each session leader. Also checked weekly	RB/JB	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Responsibility of each session leader. Also checked weekly	RB/JB	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Responsibility of each session leader. Also checked weekly	RB/JB	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Responsibility of each session leader. Also checked weekly	RB/JB	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font checked	RB	25.06.20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		Session leader	
<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Times do not conflict with school opening & closing	RB	03.07.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Information to be put on Facebook, Instagram & website	AJ/RB	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system in place for general access	LH/JB	9.07.20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	N/A		
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Responsibility of each session leader. Also checked weekly	RB/JB	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	CofE guide reviewed and arrangements discussed with cleaner. Arrangements monitored by the SC.	RB/AJ/SC	26.06.20/ 9/7/20
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	Main door to be used for entry & exit. Social distancing notices to be displayed. Notices recommending wearing masks displayed. Floor marked by crosses indicating social distance of 2m. Only one person allowed in porch and foyer at any one time.	JB	24.06.20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Ramp to entrance to be marked every 2m	RB/JB	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main door clipped open	Session leader	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All books & leaflets, etc removed from main hall & foyer	JB	24.06.20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Cordon off choir stalls. No entry signs on small room, kitchen, store, office.	JB/RB	24.06.20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Remove cushions and kneelers from chancel	RB/JB	24.06.20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	No entry sign on store. No toys etc out.	JB	24.06.20
	Walk through the church to plan for physical distancing in seats, aisles, at the altar rail, including safe flow of visitors. Remember 2m in all directions from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	Individual seats placed at measured 2m distances to work out maximum capacity. booked. (16)	SC	7/7/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Individual seats placed keeping 2m social distancing according to number of places booked. Crosses on the floor as waiting points.	SC	7/7/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Notices: only one person in porch and foyer; fill up seats from front; leave building back seats first. This info given as verbal notice by	JB	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		leader. Supervisor on duty managing flow of people.		
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	No entry signs - as above	SC	9.07.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers at entry and on entry to toilets.	JB	24.06.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Checked and none needed	RB	7.07.20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Handwashing, face masks, social distancing notices put up	JB	7.07.20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Session leader checks – hand sanitiser and wipes by entrance.	Session leaders	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Cleaner & session leaders to check supply on opening. Bins in toilets and entrance. Remove lids from bins.	Session leaders	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Session leaders to check supplies on opening. Stock running low – contact Kath.	Session leaders/KT	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Cleaner to sort bin liners – spares in kitchen	Session leaders	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Signing in sheet at entrance. People asked to bring own pen. For main events, worship sheet is removed and	JB	24.06.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		contact details taken on booking.		
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.	Notices on church doors, email church notices, website and social media giving full details	SC/AJ	
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.	Cleaner is aware	AJ	9.07.20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Cleaner not vulnerable and happy to clean	RB	24.06.20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Schedule agreed with cleaner	AJ	9.7.20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Cleaner aware supply of disposable gloves in kitchen	RB	24.06.20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning materials agreed with cleaner	RB	24.06.20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Cleaner removes waste	RB/AJ	24.06.20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Waste removed between each use of building by cleaner	AJ	09.07.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Building will be closed for 72 hrs	SC	09.07.20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	N/A		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Cleaner to be informed	AJ	
<b>Clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable and those who are self-isolating</b>	The clinically extremely vulnerable (shielded) are not to engage in employment or volunteering The clinically vulnerable group may choose to engage in employment and volunteering subject to the agreement of the PCC Those who are self-isolating should not attend services or church activities	See Government and Diocesan Advice	RB & Church wardens	9.07.20