

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August.

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15th June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4th 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

Church:	Assessor's name: Fr Jonathan Kester (Fr J), Robert Cox (RC), Harin Perera (HP), Casey Hammett (CH), Nicki Siddall (parish administrator NS) Ben & Dan (contract cleaning company from 07.09.20)	Date completed: 25.08.20	Review date: 30.09.20
----------------	--	-------------------------------------	----------------------------------

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Where possible clergy will enter via the Resurrection Chapel and Vicarage and via bell tower porch door	Fr J/RC	09.06.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	PCC deemed policy is wherever possible two people in church at any time	Fr J/RC	PCC ongoing
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Fully aired for past two months	Fr J/RC	Begun 01.07.20 JK and ongoing review by Fr J & RC
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Done	Fr J	01.07.20 and ongoing cleaning routine Fr J/RC/HP, CH

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
				And Ben & Dan from 07.09.20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	RC	01.07.20 and ongoing monitoring RC
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Done	Leach electrical services and Fr J/RC	09.06.20 Fr J/RC and Simon House electrician and ongoing review
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Done and removed	Fr J	09.06.20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Done, streaming currently Saturday at 1800 with only clergy present and Mondays 1930/Wednesdays 1230 and ongoing monitoring to ensure safety	Fr J/RC	25.08.20 and ongoing monitoring by Fr J & RC
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Done	Fr J	09.06.20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Done	Fr J	09.06.20 and ongoing updating Fr J
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Exploring booking system via Eventbrite for when 0915 Joyful Noise Eucharist begins.	Fr J/RC NS	26.08.20 Fr J RC

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		All external groups within their own risk assessments to ensure Covid-secure compliance and to confirm with parish administrator		NS
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Currently N/A		
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	This is covered in all church electronic and hard copy communications and external groups required to comply with current legal requirements.	Fr J RC NS	26.8.20
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Done	Fr J/RC/HP	01.07.20
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Done	Fr J/RC/HP/CH	01.07.20
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.	Done	Fr J / RC	01.08.20
	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.	Multi-use building For worship clearly defined one-way system in operation. All external groups in individual risk assessments to	Fr J RC CH NS	26.08.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		confirm and operate covid-secure system as per their own requirements		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Where necessary queue along pathway in north churchyard to main entry points. Individual hirers to make their own arrangements in this risk assessments according to their requirements	Fr J RC NS	26.08.20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Done regularly and will be ensured for all public services and hirers.	Fr J / RC / HP NS	26.08.20
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Done	Fr J / RC / HP	09.06.20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Done	Fr J / RC / HP	09.06.20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Done Removed wherever possible	Fr J / RC / HP	09.06.20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Done	Fr J / RC / HP	09.06.20
	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).	Done	Fr J / RC / HP	Fr J / RC / HP 09.06.20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	This has been done, pews have been clearly marked	Fr J / RC / HP	Fr J / RC / HP 04.07.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		where individuals or whole households can sit and grey chairs spaced at the back of the church at 2 m distancing		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Yellow marker arrows placed on floor for all acts of worship. Private hirers to make arrangements in their own risk assessments based on system in order to fulfil their own requirements	Fr J RC NS Individual hirers	26.08.20 and ongoing Fr J RC NS Individual hirers
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Kitchen and vestry locked WC open as required	Fr J RC	26.08.20 Fr J / RC
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Electronic sanitisers available in both porches and at front of nave. Additional hand operated sanitisers at entry points and entrance to WCs	Fr J RC	01.07.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No structural changes needed Temporary cordons in place	FrJ RC	01.07.20 Fr J / RC
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Done	Fr J RC	01.07.20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Regularly carried out after services, in regular cleaning parties and at by new contract cleaners.	Fr J RC CH Ben & Dan	01.07.20 Ben & Dan from 07.09.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Done	Fr J RC	01.07.20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Done.	Fr J RC HP	01.07.20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Done	Fr J RC HP	01.07.20
	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 book for all worship Individual groups via their risk assessments to ensure compliance	Fr J RC HP Individual user groups	01.07.20 26.08.20 and ongoing – NS and groups
	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.	Done	Fr J	01.07.20
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	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.	Ongoing monitoring	Fr J	01.07.20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Done	Fr J / RC / CH Ben & Dan	01.07.20 Ben & Dan from 07.09.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Done and ongoing	Fr J / RC / CH Ben & Dan	01.07.20 Fr J / RC / CH Ben & Dan from 07.09.20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Church volunteers yes Ben & Dan to ensure compliance	Fr J / RC / HP	01.07.20 Ben & Dan from 01.07.20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	In hand	Fr J / RC / CH	01.07.20 Fr J / RC / HP
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Done	Fr J / RC / CH	01.07.20 Ben & Dan from 07.09.20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily	Fr J / RC / CH Cleaning rota and Ben & Dan	01.07.20 Fr J / RC / CH Ben & Dan from 07.09.20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Will be done as necessary	Fr J / RC / H{	01.07.20 Fr J / RC / HP
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<u>Public Health England guidance available here.</u>	Fr J / RC / CH	01.07.20 Fr J / RC / HP
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <u>cleaning church buildings can be found here.</u> Will be done as necessary	Fr J / RC / CH	Fr J / RC / HP 01.07.20 and ongoing monitoring