

## 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 Matthew Coates	<b>Assessor's name:</b> N Pollock	<b>Date completed:</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2020	<b>Review date:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2020
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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	One Door. Clergy will not use building for private prayer to avoid complications with closed periods and cleaning. Church Warden to be in control of building access	Warden	1/7/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be <a href="#">found here</a> . consulted	Warden & Rector	N Pollock 5/7/2020
	Buildings have been aired before use.		PCC	N Pollock (Warden) 1/7/2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Building checked and clean in line with recommendations	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Cold water supply only. Has been flushed through.	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating and all lights and sockets etc checked to ensure no discernible system degradation during period out of use	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font empty	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	No plans to stream from church as no reliable signal	N/A	N/A
<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.	No local business but we can inform Church Farm when we start services regarding access point	no action at present	
	Update your website, and any relevant social media.	Decide on opening time(s) in consultation with PCC and Rector and discuss restarting services within the benefice and St Matthews Opening Times for prayer Sun 10:00am – 3:00pm At present no services due to limitations to manage this within congregation (see attached note)	Rector, Warden, PCC Rector to update website and local communications	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not required for private prayer.	Rector	6/7/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
purposes, including worship and tourism	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	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.	South porch door is only easy access.  Signage reminders for social distancing at door and within, use of hand gel (60% alcohol) As there is only one entrance/exit door to be pinned back to improve sightlines and to reduce handling of door furniture. Clear instruction on opening procedure needed for volunteers.	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Queues not expected due to small numbers  Signage at doors and within	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main door to be open when in use	PCC	As per rota As required
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets		PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Each pew to be used ONCE per weekly prayer session. Removal not needed	N/A	N/A
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	None present	N/A	N/A
	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).	Appropriate signage for unsupervised private prayer.  Walk through at each Wednesday cleanup	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20  weekly
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		PCC	5/7/20 N Pollock
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		PCC	5/7/20 N Pollock
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Appropriate signage for unsupervised private prayer	PCC	5/7/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	60% based alcohol gel provided by entrance/exit with instruction	PCC	5/7/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Not needed Social distancing by signage and temporary barriers	PCC	5/7/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Appropriate signage for unsupervised private prayer	PCC	5/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Not needed as 72 hour minimum between uses	N/A	N/A
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Alcohol Gel provided no towels needed	N/A	N/A
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	None provided	N/A	N/A
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Not possible. Unsupervised list poses greater risk of transmission	N/A	N/A
	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.	Benefice website to be updated and notices sent on village news	Rector	
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>	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.	Use will comply with 72 hour recommended interval	N/A	N/A
Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Intention to maintain 72 hour closure	N/A	N/A
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	General inspection and cleanup on Wednesday as per rota	PCC	N Pollock 1/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Minimal inspection when unlocking for private prayers		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Cleaners to wear gloves Alcohol gel provided to visitors so no towels /waste	PCC	N Pollock 5/7/20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning material in kitchen + waste bags, to be removed weekly	PCC	N Pollock 5/7/20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	See above	PCC	N Pollock 5/7/20 weekly
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	See above	PCC	N Pollock 5/7/20 weekly
<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.		PCC	As Required
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		PCC	As required
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.		PCC	As required