

## 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
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2020	5	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> CHRIST CHURCH EATON	<b>Assessor's name:</b> CATHERINE JEFFRIES	<b>Date completed:</b> 12 August 2020 <b>Changes in RED</b>	<b>Review date:</b> To be done when a new RA is issued.
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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		CJ	15/6/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be <a href="#">found here.</a>	Already in use	
	Buildings have been aired before use.		CJ	Windows open throughout closure CJ
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		CJ	14/6/20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a>	CJ	10/6/20 and regularly CJ
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		CJ	10/6/20 CJ
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		CJ	14/6/20 CJ
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		CJ	Any leads to be taped down when used CJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<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.		CJ and Worship Committee	CJ 1/7/20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		CR	Tbc (asap)
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services		CJ and Worship Com	CJ 1/7/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here.</a>	n/a	
	<b>Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.</b>		PHR	PHR 8/8/20
<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.		CJ	15/6/20 CJ
	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>	CJ	14/6/20
	<b>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.</b>		CJ	CJ 8/8/20
	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.	The same door can be used for entry and exit as there is glass in the door. The east emergency door to be opened for services.		CJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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 possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	A sidesman will be on duty outside. Door to be kept open before and after the service	CJ  CJ	CJ 2/7/20  CJ 15/6/20
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets		CJ	14/6/20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		n/a	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions replaced as pews will be roped off after each service. One service per day	CJ	3/7/20 CJ
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas		CJ	14/6/20
	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).		CJ	1/7/20 CJ
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	To be done immediately before the service.	CJ	CJ 4/7/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Not needed. Sidesman on duty to direct people. CJ to write instructions for each service	CJ	CJ tbc (before 4/7/20)

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.		CJ	14/6/20 CJ
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	CJ	14/6/20 CJ
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> .	CJ	14/6/20 CJ
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		CJ	14/6/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	CJ	Regularly and before and after each service CJ
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	CJ/SH	CJ 14/6/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	CJ/SH	CJ 14/6/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		CJ	CJ 14/6/20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Sidesman to ask name and number – (instructions for services)	CJ	CJ tbc (before 4/7/20)
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider		PHR by Email	CJ tbc (before 4/7/20)

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.		CJ notice outside church	
<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.	Pews will be roped-off after the services. It will be over 72 hours before SH goes into the church.	CJ	CJ
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		See above	CJ15/6/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.		CJ/SH (JA/SB)	CJ
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	CJ	15/6/20 CJ
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	SH will carry on as normal with her usual things.	To be looked into. Parishes are registered with Parish Buying CJ
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		CJ/SH	15/6/20 CJ
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Twice a week SH on Friday CJ Monday or Tues	CJ	15/6/20
	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		Will do if necessary.	CJ

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 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	Will close for 72hrs	CJ
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>		