

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th 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 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:	Date completed:	Review date:
St Mary's Bishop's Cannings	Peter Russ	02 July 2020	As advised by C of E

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	South door to be used by visitors and north door by three nominated keyholders. Records to be maintained of entry into the building with names and contact details. Signs being made.	PR/RC/TR/JC Briefing by Churchwarden on security and record keeping.	Ongoing
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Not required as more than one person will be present on all occasions and an appointment system in place to establish who the visitor is and reason for attendance.	None required.	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building is not airtight. Windows have been opened in all parts of the building and doors opened on a regular basis.	Churchwarden	Ongoing
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Building will be cleaned before opening. Has been checked on a weekly basis.	PR/TR	TR/CC 06.07.20 and ongoing

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	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Water has been regularly flushed and records maintained in diary.	Churchwarden	N/A
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Regular checks have been made and recorded in diary. Full electrical inspection completed in March 2020, together with remedial works. Heating switched off for summer after Service.	Churchwarden	N/A
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	The Font and stoups empty. The Font is covered and a seal placed over drain. It is always cleaned before use.	Churchwarden/Priest officiating.	N/A
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Equipment not used.		
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.	N/A		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Plans to be attached and website updated.	RC/HR	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Create booking system, on-line and phone.	RC/JP/HR	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Not open to 'un-booked' tourists.	PR/JP/RC	
Preparation of the Church for access by members of	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Separate Action Plan refers.	Churchwarden to supervise and ensure Action Plan completed.	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Guidelines read, cleaning provisions purchased, separate action plan.	TR/CC	TR 02.07.20
	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 South door will be used for entry and the North for exit. Flows will be marked and persons attending briefed by Priest/Churchwarden/Sidesman.	Churchwarden to oversee and check that arrangements are in place.	Ongoing
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Attendance is unlikely to cause queues or compromise social distancing.	Queues to be monitored by Churchwarden to ensure social distancing measures are met.	Ongoing
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Windows opened since May to aid ventilation and doors opened as per diary entries.	Churchwarden to ensure building thoroughly ventilated after access by visitors.	Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All books and papers will be securely stored in the Sacristy/choir vestry.	Churchwarden.	21.06.20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	There are no devotional objects.	None required.	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions and kneelers will be placed on designated pews to prevent the pew being used for sitting or the cushions being used by visitors. Notices will be affixed	Churchwarden.	PR/TR 21.06.20

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		to prevent use of these seats/cushions/kneelers.		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children’s resources removed to shed.		PR/TR 21.06.20
	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).	A safe flow of people will be managed by Sidesmen and seating marked to ensure physical distancing is maintained. Floor directional arrows affixed.	Churchwarden to supervise and brief Sidesmen.	Ongoing
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seats will be marked and signs displayed to remind people of the need to maintain 2m separation.	Churchwarden.	Ongoing monitoring
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Flow markings will be displayed. South door for entry and north door for exit.	See action plan.	Ongoing monitoring
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Out of bounds notice for choir vestry and seat barriers	See action plan.	PR/TR 21.06.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Tables moved, sanitiser and signs purchased, Hand sanitiser will be placed on a table at both doors, together with signs reminding people to use it.	See action plan.	21.06.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No changes required, apart from placing of cordons.	See action plan.	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices will be displayed for this purpose.	See action plan.	

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	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Key holders to wipe door handles inside and outside when locking and unlocking. The building will be locked for a period of 72 hours after any access. Records to be maintained of those attending.	See action plan. The two Keyholders to be briefed by Churchwarden	TR/CC 06.07.20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	All in place after procurement	TR	Ongoing monitoring by TR
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Pedal bin, liners and hand towels purchased	See action plan	Ongoing monitoring by CW
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	New foot pedal bin for toilet with liners	See action plan.	TR 26.06.20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Clipboard-details to be recorded by appropriate person, destroyed after 21 days	Churchwarden/PCC member	
	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.	Regular congregation emailed/contacted and relevant notices displayed at entrance.	Churchwarden/Incumbent	Ongoing by CW
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known	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.	No access will be permitted for 72 hours after use.	Churchwarden/keyholders	PR

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exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	A 72 hour closure will be maintained between any visits and records maintained.	Churchwarden to brief keyholders.	Ongoing
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning rota will comprise volunteers who are not considered vulnerable.	TR to co-ordinate	Ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	PPE will be supplied	TR to obtain/supply and brief as per Action Plan	Ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Suitable cleaning materials will be in place before opening.	Briefing to be completed by TR	Ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Receptacles to be emptied by Churchwarden and placed in sealed sacks in refuse bin for removal during usual collections.	Churchwarden/PCC member in his absence.	Ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Any waste to be removed immediately after visitors have attended.	Churchwarden/PCC member in his absence.	Ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Should this situation arise, we will close the church for 72 hours.	Churchwarden/keyholders	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Not applicable – will close for 72 hours, as above.	N/A	
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Should this situation arise, we will clean the church after the 72 hour closure for quarantine.	Churchwarden	