

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

| Issue Date                  | Version Number | Issued by                                    |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> August.*

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](#).

**Risk assessment template**

|   |   |                                   |   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Church:</b><br>St George's Hatford and All Saints Goosey | <b>Assessor's name:</b><br>Nigel Archer | <b>Date completed:</b><br>19/3/21 | <b>Review date:</b><br>End of June 21 (or when social distancing is not required) |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|

The overall conclusion is still that it is not safe to conduct public worship in these buildings as they are too small for safe, social distancing. The flow of people in and out of the service, or for Holy Communion, cannot be controlled. They are also poorly ventilated and over winter would be too cold if doors or windows were left open. People would be in close, indoor contact for longer than 15 minutes..

Areas of the risk assessment related to these points are highlighted below.

| 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><br><br><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 |  |                 |                           |
|   | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.  | An example can be <a href="#">found here.</a>  |                 |                           |
|   | Buildings have been aired before use.   |  |                 |                           |
|   | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.   |  |                 |                           |
|   | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.  | See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> |                 |                           |

| Area of Focus  | Controls required   | Additional information   | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|--|---|--|-----------------|---------------------------|
|  | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.  |  |                 |                           |
|  | Holy water stoups and the font are empty.   |  |                 |                           |
|  | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard  |  |                 |                           |
| <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.   |  |                 |                           |
|  | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.  |  |                 |                           |
|  | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services  |  |                 |                           |
|  | If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark   | <a href="#">Apply here.</a>  |                 |                           |
|  | <b>Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.</b>  |  |                 |                           |
| <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.   |  |                 |                           |
|  | 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> |                 |                           |
|  | <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> |  |                 |                           |

| Area of Focus  | Controls required   | Additional information  | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|--|---|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
|  | 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. | There is only one entry point in All Saints and only one usable one at St George's. There are no different exits available. |                 |                           |
|  | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).                   | Both churches have small entrances. Any queuing arrangements would mean people waiting in the cold with the door open.      |                 |                           |
|  | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.  | This cannot be done over autumn / winter and only on warm days. Both churches are otherwise poorly ventilated.              |                 |                           |
|  | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets  |   |                 |                           |
|  | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)   |   |                 |                           |
|  | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance   |   |                 |                           |
|  | Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas   |   |                 |                           |
| 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). | Safe, social distancing is not possible as aisles are narrow and seats / pews are close together. Similarly, the flow of visitors in / out of the buildings isn't safe.                 |   |                 |                           |

| Area of Focus | Controls required  | Additional information  | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---------------|--|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
|               | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.   |   |                 |                           |
|               | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.             |   |                 |                           |
|               | Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.                                       |   |                 |                           |
|               | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.  | Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.    |                 |                           |
|               | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing  | Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> .       |                 |                           |
|               | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.                    |   |                 |                           |
|               | 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> . |                 |                           |
|               | 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.    |                 |                           |
|               | 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.    |                 |                           |
|               | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |   |                 |                           |

| Area of Focus  | Controls required   | Additional information   | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|--|---|--|-----------------|---------------------------|
|  | If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days   |  |                 |                           |
|  | 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. |  |                 |                           |
| <b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b><br><br>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.                             |  |                 |                           |
|  | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.   |  |                 |                           |
|  | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.  |  |                 |                           |
|  | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).   | Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. |                 |                           |
|  | 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. |                 |                           |
|  | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.  |  |                 |                           |
|  | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.   |  |                 |                           |
|  | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.  |  |                 |                           |

| 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>         |                 |                           |
|  | 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> |                 |                           |