

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
2 nd December 2020	7	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed in the light of new guidance from the [Health and Safety Executive](#) and is intended for use from 3rd December onwards. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly.

From 3rd December, regardless of tier, churches are permitted to open for all purposes that can be carried out in a Covid-safe way. There may be specific local regulations, especially in tier 3 areas, that place additional restrictions on certain activities. There are varying limits on mixing of households that apply in different tiers. Before completing this risk assessment you can see what is permitted in your tier by checking [this document](#).

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, the template 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. Specific guidance linking to advice on the lockdown period is 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.

Separate risk assessments for outdoor worship and for access by contractors and construction workers are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Private prayer
 - Public worship
 - Livestreaming or recording services
 - Funerals, weddings, baptisms
 - Formal childcare or where part of a school
 - Essential voluntary and public services
 - Other exempted activities such as support groups
 - Opening for visitors/tourists, including opening shops and cafes
2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
 - Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual

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: Christ Church Bexleyheath	Assessor's name: Rev Trevor Wyatt	Date completed: 10 th December 2020	Review date: 10 th March 2021
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for purposes of recording and/or livestreaming services (with no congregation present) Risk: contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services	Consider if anyone required for recording or broadcasting is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Ensure that the people who need to attend the church building to enable the livestreaming or recording to take place are willing to do so and can do so safely. Check that those attending for livestreaming or recording can do so within the limits for places of worship in the relevant tier.	This has been considered and all those involved in living streaming/ broadcasting are: Attending safely and maintaining all Government guidelines	Rev Trevor Wyatt (TW)	04.12.2020
	Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible.	All those involved entrance and exit will be North Side (Car Park)	TW	04.12.2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Two people will be on site at all times	TW	04.12.2020
	Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building.	This has been considered and actioned	TW	04.12.2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	This was done before the opening for private prayer	TW	12.07.2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	This is ongoing and check before each recording/ streaming sessions	Living Streaming Team	04.12.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands	This was done before the opening for private prayer	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	This is ongoing and checked	Church Wardens	04.07.2020
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce or download signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law and requiring these for all except those exempt.	This is ongoing	TW	04.12.2020
	Identify where you can reduce the contact of people with surfaces, e.g. by leaving open doors that are not fire doors, using electronic documents rather than paperwork	This is actioned each session	Living Streaming Team	04.12.2020
	Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.	This was done before the opening for private prayer	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities	Consider how the tier system applies to the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider whether anybody attending would be likely to be traveling from a higher or lower tier	Those travelling from higher tier will be expected to follow higher tier guidelines	Church Wardens and Welcoming Team	04.12.2020
	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	This has been done – we have talked with newsagent our immediate neighbour.	TW	01.07.2020
	Check if any clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their household who do, and ensure	All those (and with household members) in clinically vulnerable categories have been	TW	04.12.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building.	advised to stay at home and access church online		
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	CCB has sufficient space for 70 general members and 20 volunteers (i.e those with a role in service) to attend and maintain 2 metre distancing. A booking system will be implemented for specific services when we anticipate numbers will exceed our safety limits (e.g. Christingle and Carol Service.) For all services, welcomers at the entrance door to the church will monitor numbers and will turn people away if the number of people who try to attend exceeds the maximum limit.	TW Parish Admin Welcoming Team	04.12.2020
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Offered provisions are complementary and in line with other churches in the Erith Deanery.	TW	04.12.2020
Preparation of the Church for access by members of	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	All the steps have been carried out	Live Streaming Team	10.12.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
the public for any permitted purposes Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. Clearly state the limits on attendance for the tier in which the church is located (or provide a link to https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know).	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Church website will be updated.	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (Parish Admin) Website (Parish Admin & MC)	04.12.2020
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	This is ongoing and checked. Guide of cleaning the church was reviewed	Parish Admin	04.12.2020
	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.	This is ongoing	TW	04.12.2020
	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.	Entrance will be through the Southside entrance (Broadway) Exit will be through the Northside (Car Park) Attendees will be asked to exit pews from the rear first working towards the front at the end of each service. Attendees will be asked not to chat within the church site, this will be reiterated at each service	TW Church Warden Welcoming Team	04.12.2020

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).	Welcomer will be on the entrance door to manage queue. Completed for private prayer opening.	Parish Admin Welcoming Team Church Warden	04.12.2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Completed for private prayer opening.	Church Wardens	04.07.2020
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in.	This is ongoing and with each service	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets.	Completed for private prayer opening.		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	This is on-going	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces.	Completed for private prayer opening.	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas.	Completed for private prayer opening.	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
	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).	Completed for reopening in July. It will be re-done before each special service	Parish Admin Church Warden	04.07.2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Bungee’s on pews to show open and closed. These alternate between services	Welcoming Team	25.09.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		to double capacity of church between services on Sunday	Parish Admin	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Arrow signs are in place through out the church	Parish Admin	25.09.2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed.	This is in place. NO access to certain areas. These are clearly signed	Parish Admin	25.09.2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Free from NHS download, Hand sanitising station location and placement	Parish Admin	25.09.2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	NA	TW	04.12.2020
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices are in place	Parish Admin	04.07.2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	This is on-going and done after services	Welcoming Team	04.12.2020
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	This is on-going and done after services	Parish Admin Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	This is on-going and done after services	Parish Admin Church Warden	04.12.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Controls to be put in place regarding the lighting of candles and any ‘per person’ materials used in a service (e.g. Christingle)	When the service requires the lighting of candles by the congregation or per person materials, the candle and materials will be left in a PEW, for there required period of time depending on the Covid transmission period of the item, prior to there use, and the person sitting in that PEW will be the only person to handle that Candle and materials. To light the candle each individual will leave their PEW (when instructed a row at a time) maintaining social distance 2 metres from all other people and form a queue in a one-way system to light their candle at the front of the church and to return to their PEW via the one way system. When handling flammable objects e.g. candles, all	TW Church Wardens Parish Admin	10/12/2020

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		member of the congregation will be advised to make sure all antibacterial hand gel is dry before handling flammable objects.		
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 . Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities.	If the church building has been closed for 48 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.	NA	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	We will ensure that cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	Identify surfaces that are frequently touched and by many people (often common areas), e.g. handrails, door handles, shared equipment, toilets, and specify the frequency and level of cleaning and by whom.	This is done to the best of our ability.	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.	This is done to the best of our ability		04.12.2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	This is on-going and monitored by Church Wardens	Church Warden and Parish Admin	04.12.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	This is on-going	Parish Admin	04.12.2020
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Cleaner and Church Wardens (twice weekly)	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Cleaner, Church Wardens and Parish Admin	Church Wardens	04.12.2020
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.			
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England guidance available here.		
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.		