

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: St Michael's Church Flixton	Assessor's name: Andrea Walsh and Debbie Gould	Date completed: 16 th July 2020	Review date: 1 month after start of services
---	--	--	--

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	Main doors used for entrance and exit due to flags outside south porch uneven and slippy when wet. Vesty only for clergy and warden use.	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 2020	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Always two wardens on duty, or one warden and a sides person, no lone working.	N/A	N/A	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	No opening windows – can only air by leaving doors open which will be done before service starts.	Warden when opening church an hour before the service.		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Bins in vestry to be checked.		Andrea/Debbie 23 rd July 2020	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on		Andrea/Debbie 23 rd July 2020	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		supplying safe water supplies Water heater in vestry to be filled, heated and flushed through		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electrical system left on, heating off for summer.	Andrea	16 th July 2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font is always empty, only filled during baptism service	Andrea	16 th July 2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Not livestreaming from the building. Video to be produced using battery powered equipment.	N/A	N/A
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.	The pub isn't open when the 10.15 service runs.	N/A	N/A
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Announcement and guidance for reopening to be posted in the week prior to opening	Paul Bailey	26/7/20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not at first. 45 to be seated in church safely will see how this goes.	Clergy and wardens	Review September
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here . Not Applicable	N/A	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 2020
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 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.	Main doors to be used for entrance and exit with taped lines so people are kept at a safe distance. South porch to be kept open for emergency exit. Vestry can also be used in an emergency	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 2020
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	There is a long open waiting area outside the church if a queue forms. Sides and wardens will be on hand to show people to seats swiftly to prevent a queue.	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors will be open an hour before the service to allow for ventilation	Andrea/Debbie/Marc	Done before service
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	The main hymn book stand has been completely covered and a do not touch sign added. It’s too heavy to remove. All other	Andrea Walsh	16 th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		leaflets, books, literature have been removed.		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Prayer corner has been cordoned off	Debbie Gould	16 th July 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers are fixed and have been flipped up out of the way where possible. Due to the plastic material they can be easily cleaned and/or left to the 72 hour rule. Pew cushions have been removed.	Andrea Walsh	16 th July 2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children’s corner has been cordoned off. No access allowed.	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 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).	Double doors to be opened for safe flow of visitors. Every other pew in use to allow for 2m distancing. Risk mitigation – everyone facing the same direction (no face-to-face contact).	Debbie	16 th July 2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Signs to be used to indicate where people can sit at a safe distance. Unused pews cordoned off.	Debbie	16 th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Entrance to be divided with tape and marked for entrance and exit including distancing requirements.	Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Congregation will be seated throughout the service and communion brought to them so no moving around is required. No one will go past the sanctuary. There will be no access to the vestry or Church Croft facilities.	Andrea/Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Hand sanitisers on entrance, on table near font and at the back of church near the south porch. One on the other side too. Also sanitiser in the vesty and altar.	Andrea/Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No temporary changes needed.	N/A	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	New notices, hand sanitisers instead of washing as toilet will be closed.	Andrea/Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here . Church will not be open in the 72 hours before the service. Ensure keyholders know about cleaning door handles and touch points if going into church. Cleaning materials (wipes) available.	Andrea/Debbie/Marc	As required.
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Handwashing in vestry for money counting/settting up – make sure liquid soap is available and paper towels. Waste must be removed same day.	Andrea/Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Toilet facilities not in use.	Andrea/Debbie	16 th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Plenty of bin liners in vestry.	Andrea/Debbie	23 rd July 2020
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Track and trace will be carried out. Permission slips will be provided in pews and collected by wardens or sidespeople after the service and kept for 21 days as per regulation. Pens to be wiped after the service.	Andrea/Debbie/Marc Make sure sheets and pens in pews before service.	At each service
	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.	This will be done on the notice board, our newsletter (email) and social media.	Paul Bailey	In the week before opening
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	Church only to be used for one service on a Sunday. If anything needs to be done in church it has to be on a Wednesday to stay in line with the 72 hour rule.	N/A	N/A
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.	No cleaners or money counters to be from a vulnerable group.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Wardens to cover at first. If church is to be used more a rota to be made with	If cleaning rota required	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		volunteers from non vulnerable groups.	Andrea/Debbie/Marc to arrange	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Gloves in vestry	Gloves and cleaning equipment in vestry	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Cleaning products in vestry.	Gloves and cleaning equipment in vestry	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Warden after the service to take to bins at Church Croft.	Warden after the service.	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Only one service a week at the moment so after the weekly service.	After the weekly service.	N/A
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Church will only be used for one service on Sunday.	N/A	N/A
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England guidance available here.	Will be reviewed if/when church is used more frequently.	
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	Wardens/cleaning team if rota if in place.	