

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. Mark's Gillingham, Kent	Vicky Allen Amanda Maskell/Ray Shergill	10-07-2020	15-08-2020

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	External door to the vestry and toilet area...fire exit	HelenTowers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here.	N/A	
	Buildings have been aired before use.		HelenTowers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		HelenTowers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	HelenTowers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Mic controls electrics on his ipad and Glyn can control the heating if required.	Mic Aldington and Glyn Allen	14/07/2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A	N/A	
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Chris Blewitt can ensure this is adhered too.	ChrisBlewitt/ Luke Prankard	14/07/2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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.	In process	Saju M.	14/07/2020
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	In Process	Ops manager/Admin	14/07/2020
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system on Church website.	Re-opening Church strategy team	14/07/2020
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	N/A	
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.	In progress	HelenTowers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	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.	Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown	14/07/2020
	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.	One point of entry from main door and exit from rear door has been discussed.	Re-opening Church strategy team	14/07/2020
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Create 2m markings outside Church	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main door and rear door will be left open during service	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Removed and placed in boxes and up in loft area	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020

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	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Remove all leaflet, booklets etc.	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Remove and place in loft	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Creche area to be kept closed	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	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 by Amanda Maskell and Ray Shergill keeping a 2 metre gap between chairs. Toilets to be operated on a one in and one out basis. Congregation to be encouraged to wear mask	Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Chairs arranged at 2m apart.	As above	14/07/2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One-way system to be clearly marked with ducting tape	As above	14/07/2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Temporary cordon of areas during open church etc	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Katie J. to arrange Electronic dispensers for hand sanitising. Parish Buying for procurement options.	Helen Towers/ Ray Shergill	14/07/2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	N/A	

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	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices required	Katie Jenkins	14/07/2020
	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.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	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.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	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.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	This has always been the case and been already practised.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Online website booking. Place vestry computer near front door during church services. Other church use provide place for people to record their details with times of entering and exiting	Saju M, Office staff	14/07/2020
	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.	Saju to take control of communications	Saju M	14/07/2020

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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 .	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.	Damola and team to deep clean if less than 72 hrs	Damola Oyinloye	14/07/2020
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	If less than 72 hrs then Stan	Damola Oyinloye	14/07/2020
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Procedures from SOP's are to be followed.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Katie Kenkins	14/07/2020
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Katie Jenkins	14/07/2020
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Waste to be disposed of after 72hrs	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Every time the church is used for any activity.	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	TBC	Re-opening church team	14/07/2020
	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 .	(Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020
	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 .	Damola Oyinloye /Stan Brown)	14/07/2020

