

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 Bishops Stortford	Assessor's name: Roger Sudbury	Date completed: 4 July 2020	Review date: 17 July 2020
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information Steps taken or to be taken	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	Usual entrance for clergy is via Vestry door	n/a	3/7/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Lone working policy to be discussed between wardens and clergy	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Church has been open for several days for private prayer, with doors open, so has been aired	n/a	3/7/20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Church cleaning team has cleaned	n/a	3/7/20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies Has been done by Terry Pigram	n/a	3/7/20

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	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Has been done by Terry Pigram	n/a	3/7/20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font is kept empty	n/a	3/7/20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Derwyn planning to use his laptop for Zoom sessions. Check cable run does not cause trip hazard	Roger S	
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.	Not needed	n/a	3/7/20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Done	Katharine S keeps the entry up to date	3/7/20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system not needed, though congregation has been asked to indicate if they plan to attend	n/a	4/7/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	To be discussed later	
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.	All relevant steps have been carried out	n/a	3/7/20
	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. Church cleaning team has done a cleaning session.	Ongoing	

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		Prayer sessions will be cleaned as we go, cleaning will be done after each service. Cleaning team to be established – see below		
	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 via North door and exit via South door and one-way system in operation. Notices in place. Don't think we need to unlock West door for emergency exit when numbers attending services are small – north and south doors sufficient	n/a	3/7/20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Queuing instructions added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	3/7/20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors to be kept open– added to Re-opening Guidance Notes; clerestory windows partially open	n/a	3/7/20
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Leaflets and literature have been removed. Decided we don't need to remove hymn books – stewards to make sure people don't pick them up when they come in.	n/a	3/7/20

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		Prayer Board moved into Lady Chapel	Roger S	4/7/20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	None relevant	n/a	3/7/20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions have been piled up on alternate pews to indicate where people can sit (i.e. on uncushioned pews)	Wardens	4/7/20
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Book trolley moved into kitchen, but we will keep some books available at back of Church – to be quarantined for 72 hours if used	Roger S	4/7/20
	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).	Stewards will need to be ready to direct people to available seats. Stewards need to plan with celebrant how communion will be managed [NB maintaining 2m distance is the key issue for some members of Church]	Derwyn W and stewards	4/7/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	See above re pew cushions. Added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	4/7/20

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Marker tape on floor – perhaps the arrows need to be bigger?	Wardens	
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	Stewards to keep an eye on this. Added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	3/7/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Hand sanitizer in porches, but do we need more?	Wardens to check supplies	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . Not needed	n/a	3/7/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices already up but need to keep under review. Have notice in North porch on a freestanding board, not table	Roger S	
	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 . Need to identify these – e.g. kitchen door handle, toilet door handles and light switch, other light switches	Wardens	
	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. See below re toilet	n/a	3/7/20

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	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 has adequate supply of soap and has hot air dryer	n/a	3/7/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Waste bins do have liners. One steward to be responsible for removing – added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	3/7/20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	CofE guidance is this is not mandatory. To be kept under review		
	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.	Congregation has been informed via emails. Add details to website	Roger S	
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.	Not relevant – Church now open every day	n/a	3/7/20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	See below for cleaning rota	n/a	3/7/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Need to set up regular cleaning rota – added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	Rosemary T?	

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	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	Rosemary T?	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	Rosemary T?	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Weekday stewards to be responsible – added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	3/7/20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily removal – added to Re-opening Guidance Notes	n/a	3/7/20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	If Church needs to remain open for private prayer, this won't be possible.	To be actioned at the time	
	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. Guidance will be followed	To be actioned at the time	
	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.	To be actioned at the time	