

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: Saint Andrew the Apostle, Bolton upon Dearne	Assessor's name: Fr Carl Schaefer	Date completed: 1 st July 2020	Review date: As required
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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.	Entry to church via North door	Access points are clearly identified and have signage.	C.S	29/06/2020 C.S.
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Church of England Lone working policy for clergy	C.S.	12/06/2020 CS.
	Buildings have been aired before use.		Windows are open. Entry and exit doors are opened 30 minutes before opening time and kept open. C.S.	April 2020 C.S. As required C.S. or CW
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		Paths are checked and cleared of ANY waste before C.S.	Daily C.S.
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	All water systems have been flushed along with toilets and sinks etc. C.S.	Regularly through Shutdown. C.S.
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		Electricity has been on throughout Lockdown for security. C.S. Boiler checked CS	10 th June C.S.

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		All emptied in March and not refilled. C.S.	March C.S.
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	NA		
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.	There are no nearby venues and access is readily available		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		Website and Facebook page updated	1/07/2020 AH 1/07/2020 LB
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	No booking system is required as there is ample room to Social distance and good access.		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	We will not be open to tourists for the foreseeable future		
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.			29/06/2020 C.S.
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	Church deep cleaned on 10/06/2020 Cleaning Team	10/06/2020 CS 3/07/2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		& 3/7/2020 by Cleaning Team CW & JP	Ongoing CS
	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.		When open for Private Prayer C.S opens main door for entry into church and North door for exit and they are kept open C.S.	14/6/20 CS 18/6/20 CS 21/6/20 CS 25/6/20 CS 28/6/20 CS 2/7/2020 CS
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).		Signage outside church and publicity to remind people to arrive in plenty of time.	Ongoing CS
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.		All opening windows are opened 30 minutes before the service and doors are left open throughout	5/4/2020 AH
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Only single use sheets are to be provided for worship.	All literature, handouts and hymn books have been removed 10/6/2020 CS	10/6/2020 CS
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		Lighters and matches have been removed from prickett stands	10/06/20 CS

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance		Removed CW	April 2020 CW & JP
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas		Childrens play area cordoned off CS	13/06/2020 CS
	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).		Ticks and crosses placed on all chairs. Signs reminding people about social distancing at entrance to church. CS	13/16/2020 CW
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		Ticks and crosses placed on all chairs. Signs reminding people about social distancing at entrance to church. CW	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		Signs placed at various points marking entry and exit along with instructions. CS	13/06/2020 CS
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.		Unused doors to be closed and locked at all times. CS	13/06/2020 CS

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Hand sanitizers at entrance and exit to church along with paper towels and a bin. New foot operated hand sanitizers bought and installed	March 2020 CS 29/06/2020 CS
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	NA	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Notices at entrance to church giving advise and instruction CS	13/06/2020 CS
	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 to be deep cleaned on Saturday 4 th July following advice on cleaning churches by the cleaning team.	4/07/2020 CS
	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.	Paper towels and bins all emptied and checked as per list CS	4/07/2020 CS
	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.	Hand towels to be purchased and paper towel bin bought for the WC	1/07/20 CS
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce		Bins emptied and bags changed CS	4/07/2020 CS

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	the risk to those responsible for removing them.			
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days		Electoral Roll to be printed with gaps for recording any visitors, names to be checked off by church warden and visitors approached for contact details. Track and trace.	4/07/2020 CS
	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.		Telephone network has been engaged and notices have gone up outside church and on the website and Facebook informing people of the resumption of public worship and of the restrictions in place.	Ongoing CS
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.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	None of the cleaning team or from a vulnerable group.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.		Cleaning rota in place, cleaning team engaged. CS	Checked 15/16/2020 CS

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Disposable gloves purchased CS	6/06/2020 CS
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Suitable anti bacterial and anti viral cleaning materials purchased and tested CS	30/06/2020
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		CS to remove potentially contaminated waste	Ongoing CS
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		Waste to be removed after every public act of worship CS	Ongoing CS
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		In the event of exposure of the building to someone with symptoms the building will be closed and worshippers informed.	CS and telephone network
	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 distributed to churchwardens and cleaners.	1/07/2020. CS
	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.	Guidance distributed	1/07/2020

