

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 John the Baptist, Widford	Assessed by: Mark Dunstan, Hugh O'Reilly, Peter Hofer	Date completed: 24 th June 2020, revised 30 th Aug & 2 nd Sept	Review date: 31 st October
--	---	--	---

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	Clergy / Keyholder entry by main door. Door handle to be wiped after use.	Key Holders	Ongoing
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. An example can be found here .	Overarching Policy Produced. Produce for cleaners and others in context of “working” in the church building	MD / HO’R	MD 1 st Jul HO’R 3 rd Jul (Cleaners) Others in progress
	Buildings have been aired before use.		HO’R	H’OR 26 th Jun
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		HO’R	H’OR 26 th Jun
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	Only water supply is external tap which is used by visitors to the churchyard for watering flowers on graves	N/A	N/A
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	Heating system needs checking	HO’R	Electrics H’OR 26 th Jun

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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		MD	MD 30 th Aug
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.		N/A	N/A
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		MD	PCC 2 nd Sept
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Church is large enough for usual congregation without booking system. Will keep under review...	PCC	PCC 2 nd Sept
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark. Apply here.	Not sufficient interest to warrant application	PCC	PCC 2 nd Sept
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.		MD/HO'R	MD 4 th Jul
	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.	See below	MD / JB	See below

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Entry for private prayer will be by main door, and exit by chancel door. Notices to show this and also to remind visitors of social distancing will be displayed. At funerals, flow of people can be controlled by voice instruction (service leader and vergers)	MD printing / laminating HO'R posting MD	Done 2 nd July MD 11 th Jul Ongoing: at time of service
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Produce A-board sign to position by external door (key for funerals)	MD	MD 26 th Aug
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main and chancel doors will be left wide open all day. Tower door will also be left opened for funerals Windows will remain closed.	Key Holder MD	On unlocking On unlocking
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Bibles / hymnbooks etc. to be stored out of sight in vestry	HO'R	H'OR 26 th Jun

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Rope off vestry, rear pews and organ. No “devotional items”.	HO’R	H’OR 26 th Jun
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Government guidance not published. Will store in vestry to minimise any risk.	HO’R	H’OR 26 th Jun
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children’s resources already in vestry	N/A	N/A
	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).		HO’R	H’OR 26 th Jun
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Rope off ever other pew. Available seating to be marked with double-sided laminated signs “Sit here” / “This seat has been occupied today, please sit somewhere else”	HO’R/MD	HO’R 4 th Jul (ropes) MD 11 th Jul (signs)

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.	Entry for private prayer will be by main door, and exit by chancel door. Notices to show this and also to remind visitors of social distancing will be displayed. At funerals, flow of people can be controlled by voice instruction (service leader and verger)	MD printing / laminating HO'R/MD MD	MD 2 nd Jul MD 11 th Jul Ongoing: at time of service
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Rope off vestry, rear pews and organ.	HO'R	HO'R 26 th Jun
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	On shelf behind rear pew to right of main door. Mindful this may well be stolen if left unattended, consider some means of securing it to the shelf. N.B. sanitiser purchased 27 th May, received 24 th June.	HO'R / PH	PH 6 th Jul
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing. Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	No changes required	N/A	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Not required	N/A	N/A
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Acquire supply of binliners	MD	Done 2 nd Jul
	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 sign-in form for midweek visitors MD will note in services	MD	MD 11 th Jul Ongoing
	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.	Via email, website, social media and posters	MD	MD 2 nd Sept

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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.	Standard opening times arranged around the 72 hour window to avoid this need: 9am – 12noon Sunday 2pm – 5pm Wednesday (cleaning 12noon-2pm Wed, and 5pm-7pm Sat) Funerals will introduce need for extra cleaning Evening Prayer will also affect this. Initial plans are not to have Evening Prayer. Will keep under review	Cleaner(s) MD to discuss with JB MD to alert JB PCC	Ongoing MD/JB 7 th Jul Ongoing PCC 2 nd Sept
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Emergency cleaner Julia Brown?	MD to discuss with JB	MD/JB 7 th Jul
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Emergency cleaner Julia Brown?	MD to discuss with JB	MD/JB 7 th Jul
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Investigate	MD to discuss with JB	MD/JB 7 th Jul

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. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Investigate	MD to discuss with JB	MD/JB 7 th Jul
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Person who opens/locks. Unlocking rota to be limited to fewer people to reduce risk: just H'OR / cleaners in first instance. Must not be "vulnerable" person.	HO'R / JB to communicate	HO'R 11 th Jul
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily upon unlocking	HO'R / JB to communicate	HO'R 11 th Jul
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This should be possible	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.	Only likely if 2 funerals in 1 week or if at funeral on Thu / Fri (would affect Sunday service when we have them). Suspend opening for private prayer to allow 72 hours.	MD/HO'R to advise as soon as contamination is known	Ongoing, as soon as contamination is known

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	<p>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.</p>			Ongoing