

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 <sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> 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**

<b>Church:</b>	<b>Assessor's name:</b>	<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>Review date:</b>
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<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Controls required</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Action by whom?</b>	<b>Completed – date and name</b>
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  <a href="#">General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</a>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Choir Vestry	PSB & clergy	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	PCC already has one	PSB & clergy	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Done	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Done	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Done	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Done	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Done	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Done	PC	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	n/a		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	done	PC	regular basis

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	done	PC/PSB/CMK	June 30 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	n/a		
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Done	PC	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Church has been deep-cleaned in every area	PSB	May 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	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.	SW door (double-door), with one-way system returning to SW door	PSB	June 1 <sup>st</sup> - PC
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	done using CBC hurdles and notices	PC	June 10 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	SW door and inner doors to be wedged open at all times of public access	PSB/CMK	each day PSB/CMK
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Done – removed or covered up	PSB	June 10 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Done	PSB	June 10 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Considered and actioned	PSB	June 12 <sup>th</sup> - PC

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Done	PSB/PC	June 1 <sup>st</sup> - PC
	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).	Done – every other pew in central nave blocked – signage printed ready for use in case of a funeral	PC	June 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Done as above	PSB	June 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	To be done as required	PSB	on each occasion - PC
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	Done	PSB	June 10 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Done – at main visitor entrance/exit (to be supervised)	PSB/CMK/PC	June 10 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	n/a		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	done	PSB/PC	June 14 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Done	PSB	June 13 <sup>th</sup> - PC
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Done	PC/PSB	June 12 <sup>th</sup> - PC

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.	Done	PSB/SB	PSB/Vergers each day and at need
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Done	PSB/SB	PSB/Vergers each day and at need
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	attendance slips to be placed in pews with single-use pens	PC/PSB/CMK	PSB/Vergers following 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.	Done by social media	PC	30 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	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.	n/a		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Done by rota	PC	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Done	PC	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Done	PSB/SB	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Done	PSB/SB	1 <sup>st</sup> June - PC

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Done	PSB/Verger Team	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Done	PSB/Verger Team	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	To be decided by Vicar/Churchwardens	PC/CMK	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Necessary cleaning materials, PPE and methodology all in hand	PC/CMK/PSB	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	as above	PSB/Verger Team	10 <sup>th</sup> June - PC