

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, Shedfield	Assessor's name: Adrian Jordan	Date completed: 4 July 2020 amended 8 August 2020	Review date: 8 September 2020
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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.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Access via fire escape from Study Centre	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	N/A – two persons present for recording.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Aired every day and will be aired throughout service by leaving main door and Study Centre doors open	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Church regularly cleaned for bat faeces	Julia Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Kitchen locked and not being used. Bottled water to be used.	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electrical systems working. Heating not required and will be serviced in September before use.	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No stoups and font always empty unless baptism – N/A	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	N/A	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
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.	No change from normal Sunday use.	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Updated every week with relevant information	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Considered and not deemed necessary. Discussed with ministry team and churchwardens. Very few people have presented for private prayer so unlikely to be large numbers. No special services being held.	Adrian Jordan	4 Jul 2020
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	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.	All steps above have been taken	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 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 . Reviewed and measures complied with. Church has been cleaned every day since opening for 2 hours per day.	Adrian Jordan	4 Jul 2020
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with	Very clear signage using main door as entry point and Study	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 5 Jul 2020

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	notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	Centre doors for exit. One-way system in place. Three stewards to direct to seats.		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Doors will open at 0940 for the 1000 service. People will be advised to socially distance and steward outside to control entry into church.	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 5 Jul 2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	All doors will be open throughout the service	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets			
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	No devotional items are out and books / bibles have been removed	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers have been removed from pews designated for private prayer. Other kneelers left in place as only used on Sunday and will not be used again for at least 72 hours. In reality it will be 14 days until church open for public worship again.	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	All removed and stored in choir vestry	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 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	Following the service on 5 Jul, it has been decided to remove the ticks and crosses and have	Stewards	Adrian Jordan 9 Aug 2020

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	<p>from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).</p>	<p>four people stewarding people into church: one outside, one by the hand sanitiser and two guiding people to the pews. Pews will be filled as directed by the stewards. North and South aisle pews will be used if required. People will be placed in seats and asked not to move around. All rope that is in place for private prayer is to be removed and chairs placed on the dais at the west end of the church for overflow seating grouped in pairs or threes depending on households. Use of 1m with mitigation of all facing the same way if absolutely necessary. From 8 August, the wearing of face coverings is mandatory. All of the congregation will be asked to wear a face covering. Those refusing to wear a face covering will be denied access to the building. The ministry team does not have to wear a</p>		

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		face covering as long as they maintain an appropriate distance (> 2m).		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Clearly marked	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Clearly marked and will be reinforced verbally just before the service starts. On leaving the building, stewards will direct order in which congregation vacates the building. Those with limited mobility will be asked to remain in their seats until the rest of the congregation is outside.	Stewards	Adrian Jordan 5 Jul 2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Chancel gates are closed. Lady chapel kneelers not available.	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Completed and sanitisers on wall of church at entry and exit. Steward to monitor people on arriving in church and point to sanitiser point. (Amended 5 Jul)	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020

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	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No temporary permissions required	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 5 Jul 2020
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices on noticeboard in porch	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 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 . Appropriate wipes and sprays being used routinely	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 14 Jun 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. No change from normal operating	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 14 Jun 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. One toilet will be available during public worship with wipes and soap, towels and bin	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Normal practice	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 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	Names and contact telephone number will be recorded by churchwarden on entry and shredded after 21 days	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020

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	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.	All are aware	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020
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.	Church is open daily for 2 hours of private prayer in designated pews. These pews and all door furniture wiped as well as tops of edges of pews and any other furniture that may be touched for support	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 4 Jul 2020
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Only completed by < 70 and not shielding	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Set up and managed by verger who is doing most of it and delegating when not available. A sign-off sheet is in the priests' vestry along with list of areas that need to be cleaned. This is to be signed daily by the person responsible for cleaning the church.	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Purchased as required	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 14 Jun 2020

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	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. N/A		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Removed by verger	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 14 Jun 2020
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Removed by verger	Julia Jordan	Julia Jordan 14 Jun 2020
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	Public Health England advice will be followed and if necessary the church will be closed for 72 hours.	Church will be closed for > 72 hours if we are aware of a case with notice placed on church doors. It will also be posted on the website	Adrian Jordan	4 Jul 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. Church will be closed for > 72 hours if this occurs	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 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. As above	Adrian Jordan	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020