

## 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>
Holy Trinity Headington Quarry	Revd Dr Laura Biron-Scott	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<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		Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be <a href="#">found here</a> .	Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	Buildings have been aired before use.		Wardens	11/6/20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		Wardens	11/6/20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a>	Wardens	11/6/20
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		Wardens	11/6/20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		Wardens	11/6/20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard			N/A
<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.	No known conflicts	Wardens and vicar	02/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Guidance on safety posted on web site	Vicar and web team	07/07/20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system for services	Rev Prof Rob Gilbert (online) and Helen (phone), or other designated individuals.	07/07/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here.</a>		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.		Vicar	11/6/20
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	Vicar	07/07/20
	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.	Both front doors of church to remain open where possible, and choir door opened.	Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Duty warden to ensure social distancing of 2m and mark ground. Helen to position posters	Duty wardens and Helen (parish administrator)	07/07/20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.		Wardens	11/6/20
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets		Wardens	11/6/20

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	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Signs on Narnia window and bookshelves.	Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	All removed	Wardens	11/6/20
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas		Wardens	07/07/20
	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).	Signs for social distancing of 2m and floor markings made.	Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		Wardens and Helen	07/07/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Arrows on floors	Wardens	11/6/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Duty warden to rope off areas not required for weekday private prayer after cleaning	Wardens	11/6/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Wardens and vicar	11/6/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> . Areas roped off and signs.	Wardens, vicar and Helen	07/07/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Printed notices in church and guidance posted on web site. Some light switches left on to	Wardens, all priests taking services and	07/07/20

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		avoid touching. Priest in charge to make announcement of all safe practices required at start of service.	Helen	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> . Pews to be wiped daily	Vicar, Verger	11/6/20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. Hand sanitiser for entry and exit.	Verger/assistant Verger to check and inform the Taylors who order supplies	07/07/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	As above	07/07/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		As above	07/07/20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Booking system online to record contact details.	Rev Prof Rob Gilbert	07/07/20
	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.	COVID-19 guidance, worship and private prayer guidance posted online with printed notice in church	Wardens, vicar and Helen	07/07/20
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone)</b>	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.			

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<b>with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		Vicar	07/07/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Check that no one in cleaning rota is in a clinically vulnerable group or is self isolating	Vicar	11/6/20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Vicar/Vergers to inform Flora when stocks run low.	2/7/20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Vicar/Vergers, to order through the Taylors	2/7/20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Person not clinically vulnerable	Vicar/Vergers	7/7/20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Weekly	Vicar/Vergers	7/7/20
<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.	People visiting for private prayer asked to inform us they have developed Covid-19 symptoms after being in the building, so a decision can be made about risk and closure	Wardens and Vicar	11/6/20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	Wardens and vicar.	11/6/20

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	healthcare settings.	We will close church for 72hrs after any possible exposure, unless a service is due to take place.		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	Vicar and cleaners.	12/6/20