

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: East Crompton St. James	Assessor's name: David Woodall assisted by David Marsland, Howard Moston, Emma O'Donnal, Kirsten Stott, Jacque Adams.	Date completed: 8/07/2020	Review date: Monday 13th July 2020 following first service.
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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	St. James main door. Entry into grounds through double gates. No entry sign on single gate.	Clergy and/or warden on duty.	On-going
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	N/A for Sunday Worship		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Doors open at least 30 mins before worship.	Minister and/or warden on duty.	On-going.
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Building checked each week.		On-going
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Taps are run and toilets flushed each week.	DW	On-going
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Systems have remained active. No heating on over summer.	DW	On-going
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	All empty – no holy water in church.	DW	DW. Beginning of lockdown.

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	No livestreaming taking place. Service via Facebook continue to be pre-recorded.	DW	On-going
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		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		DW/KS	On-going
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Electronic Notice sheet circulated and item on Facebook that we can accommodate 36 people. Warden on duty will inform people outside if places filled.	DW	DW 9/07/2020
	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.	Log in sheet available to record who accesses building between services.	DW	On-going
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Surfaces wiped/cleaned after Private Prayer on Thursdays ready for Sunday.	People on Thursday duty.	On-going.
	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.	St. James main door is entry and exit. Emergency exit is choir vestry door. Unbolted and key left in lock. Remember to bolt and remove key after service.	Clergy/Wardens.	On-going.

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	One entry system into grounds. Cones 2m intervals on path in case people need to queue. Warden or other to supervise.	Clergy/Warden on duty will put in place.	On-going.
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main door to be opened at least 30 mins before worship.	Clergy/Warden on duty.	On-going.
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Already done for PP.		On-going.
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	N/A		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Removed from pews that will be used.	DW, DM, HM, KS, EO'D, HM	DW
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Done		DW
	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).	Walked through church, measurements taken. Calculate can accommodate 36 individuals.	DW, DM, HM, KS, EO'D, JA	7/07/2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Signs remain in place.	DW	On-going
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Two people on duty to direct people to seats – seat from front. Explain before service how we will exit following service. Remind before final prayer. Exit begins from back.	Couple identified by Clergy/Wardens before service begins.	On-going.

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	People to remain seated in pews. Only place they can go is to light candle or toilet.	People supervised by duty team.	On-going
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Already in place near door and candle station.	DW, DM, HM, KS, EO'D, HM	7/07/2020
	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.	Signs place.	DW, DM, HM, KS, EO'D, HM	DW 7/07/2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Materials available. Surfaces wiped following service.	Clergy/Warden to organise small team following service	On-going.
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		Wardens to check before service begins.	On-going.
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		Wardens to check before service begins.	On-going
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Wardens to check before service begins.	On-going
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days		Person identified by clergy/Wardens to do this before service.	On-going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.		Information shared via electronic newsletter and Facebook	DW 9/07/2020
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.	Following Sunday service, church can be left until Thursday for Private Prayer (PP).		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	If funeral in week church will be cleaned before open again.	When Clergy book funeral, notify appropriate people to clean before and after funeral.	On-going
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	As we progress with Sunday worship additional people needed for cleaning.		On-going
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Regular check on items.	Wardens	On-going
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Regular check on items.	Wardens	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Person identified before service.	Clergy/Wardens	On-going.

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After each service. Person identified before service.	Clergy/Wardens	On-going.
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Preferred option.	Incumbent to make decision.	On-going
	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.		On-going
	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.		On-going.

Additional Information:

People asked to arrive at church for worship by 10.15am for 10.30am start (people on duty e.g. clergy, Wardens to arrive earlier to open up and air building.

Where possible doors left open during worship.

No singing allowed.

People remain seated for service.

Communion offered in one kind only.

Distribution of wafers: people remain in pews; Clergy distribute wearing mask and gloves.

Names and contacts numbers required from those attending worship to assist with any Track and Trace. Contact details kept for 21 days.