

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 James, Milnrow	Assessor's name: W Tann	Date completed: 1 st July 2020 Replaces Risk Assessment V2 completed 10 th June 2020	Review date: 5 th July 2020
----------------------------------	--------------------------------	--	---

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	Main door	WT/AW	10/06/2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	- No current policy due to volunteer status.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building has been regularly aired throughout lockdown period.	WT	On-going
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	- Pets Control schedule up to date up to time of lockdown. - Traps checked; nil noted. - No evidence of animal waste. Kitchen cupboards cleaned wc 18/06/20	WT	On-going
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	- Toilets flushed weekly (if not more frequently) - Handwash basin taps to be run weekly for 5 mins. - Toilet water heater to be run at max temp weekly for 5 mins. - Kitchen sink taps to be run weekly for 3 mins. - Kitchen water heater to be boiled and emptied weekly. - Vestry tap to be run weekly for 3 mins. - Vestry water heater to be run at mx temp for 3 mins weekly. Check weekly log sheet.	WT	On-going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	- Heating system set to run Wed 08:30-10:30 and Sun 07:30-09:30. - No additional checks needed due to normal usage since lockdown. -	WT	On-going
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	NA		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	- Incumbents mobile phone, small tripod and table. - No trip hazards.	JP	10/6/2020
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 nearby businesses. - School next door closed on Sundays. Normal attendance on Wednesday morning 10-12 with parking available top rear of church building. Most attendees walk.	W T	1/7/2020
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	- Website news updated. - Announcement on church Face Book Page. - A Church Near You updated,	WT	1/7/2020
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	- Due to pre-lockdown attendances, booking system not required. - Main entrance will be marshalled. Any attendance greater than 30 will be reviewed on a one by one basis.	WT	1/7/2020
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	N/A	WT	1/7
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.			
	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 . Guidance noted and complied with.	WT	10/6/2020

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.	- Entrance to building via main door. - Door to be manned at all times to marshal footfall.	WT/AW	10/6/2020 WT/AW
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	- Main entrance will be marshalled. Given pre-lockdown attendance figures, no additional actions felt needed. - Marshalls will monitor social distancing in the event of any queues.	W T	1/7/2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	- Main door to be hooked open at all times building open to public.	WT	On-going
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	- Hymn books, bibles and other reference material have been removed from public spaces.	AW	13/6/2020 AW
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	- Congregation can light a candle using electronic lighter. Clear signage instructing hand sanitizing before and after use.	WT	10/6/2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	- All kneelers / cushions etc have been removed from public use. - Choir stalls to remain closed.	WT	10/6/2020 WT
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	- Children's quiet corner cleared of all resources and area closed.	WT	1/7/2020
	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 from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	- Walk through conducted. - Yellow physical distancing tape applied to floor in entrance and up main aisle. - Notices to be created to direct one way system: - Enter by main door. - Approach pews via centre aisle. - Leave pews by side aisle. - Main entrance to be manned to marshal footfall.	WT / AW	10/6/2020 WT/AW

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	- Two pews closed front and rear of pews in use. A3 'Do Not use' signs in place on all closed pews.	WT/AW	10/6/2020 WT/AW
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	- Advise all attendees to leave pews via side aisle. - Main entrance to be manned at all times to marshal flow.	WT/AW	13/6/2020 WT/AW
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	- Nave has one-way system and restricted use of pews. - Chancel has 'one at a time' signage. - Sign for toilet queues in place.	WT	1/7/2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. - Registered with Banner and Lyreco.	WT	10/06/2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No changes needed.	WT/AW	10/6/2020 WT/AW
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notice positioned at main entrance.	WT	13/6/2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	- High touch surfaces cleaned before each service – door handles, pews, toilets using approved cleaning products.	WT	On-going
	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. Key holder to check before building is open to public.	Registered keyholder	On-going
	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. Key holder to check before building is open to public.	Registered keyholder	On-going
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	- Bin liners available in kitchen cupboard. Key holder to check before building is open to public.	Registered keyholder	On-going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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 record available to record contact details.	WT	1/7/2020
	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.	- Letter posted to all known attendees and those on electoral roll 1/7/2020. Highlights actions/behaviour in church and gives reassurance of cleaning and precautions taken to maintain everyone's safety.	WT	On-going
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.	All use of building to be clearly communicated and recorded in the church diary in advance of use.	ALL	On-going
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	All cleaners are not in vulnerable group.	WT	5/7/2020
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	- High touch surfaces to be cleaned before building is opened to the public. - Full regular church cleaning every 2 weeks starting 6/6/2020.	WT	6/6/2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	- Gloves available. - Disposable cleaning clothes available.	WT	6/6/2020
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	- Natural detergent available. - Antiviral cleaning solution available. All pews and high touch surfaces sprayed and left for 5 mins. - Further cleaning with Chlorine based cleaner.	WT	6/6/2020
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	- Certified key holder.	Registered keyholder	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.	- Waste to be removed after each time the building is used.	Registered keyholder	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.	- Church remains closed between Wednesday 11am and Sunday 9am. - Church closed between Sunday 11am and Wed 10am.	WT	1/7/2020
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	- All pews and, high touch surfaces and public areas cleaned with Chlorine/detergent based cleaner before each service.	WT	1/7/2020
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	- As above procedure using approved cleaning products.	WT	1/7/2020
	Document how building prepared before each service.	- Complete pre-service checklist before each service and retain record.	WT	1/7/2020