

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: White Waltham	Assessor's name: Helen Atallah	Date completed: 26/07/2020 Updated and finalised 30 th August 2020	Review date: Monthly and / or when guidelines change
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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	Clergy or Church Warden enter through vestry and unlock main entrance door from inside	DA (Priest-in-charge) LA (Church Warden)	Ongoing – usual mode of entry
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here . We do not envisage lone working currently	N/A	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	To be done during deep clean prior to church opening	LA	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	To be done during deep clean prior to church opening	LA	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies This has continued to be done regularly throughout lockdown	LA	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating	To be done during deep clean prior to church opening	LA	

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	systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.			
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	To be done during deep clean prior to church opening		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Checks to be completed prior to church opening	JC & DA	
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.	Ongoing communication with neighbouring residents and businesses to continue. Church use will be at the same times as pre-covid.	LA / BC	
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website continually updated pre-covid and throughout lockdown. This will continue.	BT & KC	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Church members will be strongly encouraged to inform the church office via email or phone if they are planning on attending Church. Visitors who are unaware of the system will be admitted unless it is deemed unsafe to do so. Families with children will be required to book ahead in order to attend Sunday School groups.	DA	Questionnaire sent to all Church members to ascertain numbers hoping to return. All families

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				spoken to. DA 29/08/2020
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. Not currently applicable		
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.		DA	
	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.	LA	
	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.	Entry will be through the South door as pre-covid. Emergency exits will be open throughout the time the church is occupied. Two meet and greeters will be indicating appropriate seats to those arriving for the service in order to maintain social distancing with fellow congregants. Exit will be through the same door as entrance as this has more space around in order to maintain distancing. As people will be arriving before the service, and leaving afterwards there should be no crossover.	DA	

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		Those involved in setting up the Treehouse for children's groups will use the chapel room door to exit.		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	A further meet and greeter will be standing outside the south door to welcome and ask those arriving to be sure to maintain social distancing. They will guide to ensure one person or family enters at a time and that there is a suitable gap before the next or individual or family enter.	DA / LA	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	South and West doors will be left open for the duration the church is occupied. Parents of young children will be made aware of this.	DA /LA	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Literature and books to be removed from entrance. Bibles to be left in pews to be used by one person only each week. With one service a week this ensures adequate time between uses for there to be no virus left on the Bibles.	LA	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Priest in charge to check on this in preparation for opening.	DA	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers will be removed and stored in the vestry as per government guidelines.	LA	

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	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children's resources to be removed. Chapel room cupboard contents not to be used.	HA	
	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).	<p>Priest-in-charge and Church Warden to do a walk through the church to plan where people can sit.</p> <p>Families will be seated in one section in alternate pews to ensure social distancing.</p> <p>Individuals or couples will sit alternate ends of pews.</p> <p>Pews nearest the entrance will be reserved for the meet and greeters to prevent several people passing closely to those seated there.</p>	DA / LA	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Signs to be made to be put on the pews to indicate where to sit and not sit. Meet and greeters will also assist people to sit appropriately spaced.	DA / LA	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	<p>Meet and greeters will assist those arriving to make their way safely to their seat.</p> <p>Priest-in-charge will verbally indicate the way children leave for Sunday school (through the chapel room), and for the congregation to leave following the service.</p>	DA	
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Public do not access non-essential places.	DA	

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	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Hand sanitisers purchased and will be placed in the porch for those arriving to use. Further bottles will be available in the church near the entrance.	DA	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No temporary changes required.	-	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices will be printed and displayed.	DA	30/08/2020 DA
	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 . Church cleaning team will be following current cleaning guidelines	LA	
	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. Church cleaning team will ensure adequate supplies are in situ each week.	LA	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Church cleaning team will ensure adequate supplies are in situ each week.	LA	

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	towels, are available.			
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Church cleaning team will empty bin liners and replace weekly.	LA	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Wife of Priest-in-charge to make note of those attending each week. Those not known will be asked to provide name and contact details. This information will be kept locked in the vicarage study and will be shredded after 21 days.	HA	
	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.	Church members are already aware of the current plans to reopen for Sunday morning worship on 06/09/2020. Website to be updated by the end of August.	BT	
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church	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	Church building used just once on a Sunday. Cleaning team will clean between Wednesday morning and Thursday morning to ensure at least 72 hours between service and cleaning, and cleaning and next service, therefore no extra cleaning duties required.	LA	

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buildings can be found here.	surfaces.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	N/A		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Rota will be reinstated	LA	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Disposable gloves will be made available for all cleaners.		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Church Warden to ensure adequate supply of cleaning materials.		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Wife of Priest-in-charge to remove bin liners, put into second bin bag and dispose of in outdoor church wheelie bin each week.	HA	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	This will be done weekly, after each Sunday service. The church is not used between times.	HA	

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Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	The church is used on a Sunday morning for worship, and the cleaning team will clean between Wednesday morning and Thursday morning. This will ensure gaps of at least 72 hours.	LA	
	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. Not applicable		
	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. Cleaning team will be informed.	LA	