

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

*This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8<sup>th</sup> August.*

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>White Waltham Church – The Tree House Building</b>	<b>Assessor’s name:</b>  <b>Helen Atallah</b>	<b>Date completed:</b> <b>15<sup>th</sup> August 2020</b> <b>revised 30<sup>th</sup> September</b> <b>2020</b>	<b>Review date:</b>  <b>30<sup>th</sup> September or</b> <b>sooner if required</b>
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<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Controls required</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Action by whom?</b>	<b>Completed – date and name</b>
<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	Only one entrance door. Group to arrive and depart at same time.	HA	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	No lone working required		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building will be aired before use	CP	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Building will be checked and cleaned	CP	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> Water supply has continued to be flushed regularly throughout building closure.	LA	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system	Systems will be checked	LA	

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	checks as necessary.			
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		
	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.	Building will be used at same time as it was prior to lockdown		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website to be updated	BT	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system for Sunday school will be in place	KC	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here.</a> N/A		

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	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Face coverings are currently not required for children under 11 years nor in school or out of school settings.		
<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.			
	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>		
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.			
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits			

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	available at all times. Where possible use a different 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).	Children will be brought up to the tree house and should not be congregating outside either before or after the session		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Windows will be opened prior to use and shut on departure	Sunday school leader	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All books will be removed. Craft supplies will be provided and handling limited	HA & KC	
	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	N/A		

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	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Only resources required for that week will be out	KC & Sunday school leader	
	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).	With booking system in place, appropriate numbers of tables and chairs will be put out prior to session. Siblings will be grouped round tables. Separate family groups will be at least 2m apart.	KC & Sunday school leader	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Chairs will be placed appropriately	KC & Sunday school leader	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Children and helpers should not be arriving and departing at the same time, therefore should not be passing each other.		
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Children remain in the main room at all times. One child allowed to use bathroom at a time.	KC & Sunday school leader	

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	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser purchased and will be on table by kitchen. All persons to use on arrival and prior to using facilities.	Sunday school leader	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> . Not required		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices reminding everyone to socially distance as much as possible and to wash hands to be displayed in main church building	DA	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Door handles and tables to be cleaned prior to and after use	Sunday school leader	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Weekly check of supplies to be done by cleaner and checked prior to Sunday school	Sunday school leader	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	As above	Sunday school leader	



Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Sunday school leader to ensure plastic bins (one for recycling, one with liner for tissues and general waste) in situ and empty after session.	Sunday school leader	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Register will be kept as usual and in accordance with current safeguarding policy	KC	
	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.	Vicar to communicate	DA	
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	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.	The tree house will only be used once a week for Sunday school on a Sunday morning at the current time.		

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	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.			
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.			
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.		
	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.		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Sunday school leader to remove recycling and general waste after each weekly session and place in church wheelie bins by gate.	Sunday school leader	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Weekly – following each use of The Tree House for Sunday School session	Sunday school leader	
<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			

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	permitted.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>		
	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>		