

## 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> St Luke, Farnworth	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Revd R Pearson	<b>Date completed:</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	<b>Review date:</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2020
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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	Vestry Door	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be <a href="#">found here</a> . Vicar has recently taken training course on lone working/working from home. Copy of Parish Lone Working policy included with this assessment.	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	All doors opened for one hour.	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	None present. Deep clean of dust, cobwebs etc to be completed by cleaning team including vicar.	Cleaning team inc Vicar	Cleaning team of eight on 15.7.20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> Taps in vestry and near front entrance run.	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20

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	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electricity functioning normally. No heating on.	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No stoups. Font empty	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Zoom camera running on battery (no leads). Screen Projector cables secured beneath carpet.	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20
<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.	Not felt necessary. No shortage of outside space.	PCC	PCC 13.7.20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Details have been agreed at PCCs on 14.7.20 and 15.7.20	IT Team - Sandra, Rob and Clare	IT Team 13.7.20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not felt necessary unless numbers exceed safe capacity of 60/70. Expected maximum is 40 and will be reviewed as necessary.	PCC	PCC 13.7.20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here</a> . Not open for tourism at present. Discussion to be had re Heritage Day in September.	PCC	PCC 13.7.20
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	All steps carried out	Vicar	Vicar 27.5.20

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<b>permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Deep cleaning to be completed by cleaning team including vicar on 15.7.20 wearing full PPE. This will follow video made by LML Lesley Firth (NHS Trainer) on correct usage and disposal of PPE. All people who clean will watch the video.	Cleaning Team and LML Lesley Firth	Agreed at PCC 14.7.20
	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.	Entry Point: Front door Exit Point: Churchyard door Congregation to be dismissed one row at a time to avoid accidental contact.	Service Leader	Agreed at PCC 13.7.20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Before entry to church worshippers to be asked to read and abide by regulations re social distancing etc. Copy of notice at entrance to church included with this assessment.	Two welcomers at front door before services	Each service
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors to remain open during services	Wardens/sidespeople	Each service
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All removed or made inaccessible by coverings.	Cleaning Team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20

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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)	None present in main church. Bold Chapel doors to remain closed.	Cleaning Team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Removed and stored in Bold Chapel	Cleaning Team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Creche Area in Cuerdley Chapel screened off	Cleaning Team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20
	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).	Site meeting on 2.7.20	Vicar and wardens	Vicar and wardens 2.7.20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	All seating marked out with signs reminding of 2 metre rule. Only every other pew to be used. Copies of signs – keep apart and sit here included with this assessment.	Cleaning Team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Wardens/sidespeople to direct worshippers in addition to signage.	Wardens/sidespeople	Each service
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	Only seating areas to be accessed by worshippers. Monitored during services.	Wardens/sidespeople	Each service
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Warden	Warden Barry

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		Automatic (non-contact) sanitizer station placed in prominent position near entry.		Horabin June 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> . None considered necessary apart from signage and direction from wardens/sidespeople.	Not necessary	Vicar and wardens 2.7.20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices placed at various points inside and outside church and in local shop. Copy of safe practice notice included with this assessment.	Vicar	Vicar on 15.7.20
	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> . All areas cleaned with disposable wipes. This to be repeated following funeral on 17.7.20 because 72 hours will not have elapsed since before Sunday service. With careful planning this exception should not be necessary again.	Vicar and members of cleaning team	Cleaning Team on 15.7.20 and on 17.7.20 by vicar and two others.

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	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. No handwashing facilities available in church. Hand gel cleaning by automatic hand sanitizer.	No handwashing facilities available so n/a	n/a
	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.	No toilet facilities available so n/a	n/a
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Any waste left behind to be removed by vicar/service leader and placed in home bin after double bagging. Cleaners will double bag their items and take home to be disposed of in home bin.	Vicar/service leader and cleaning team	Agreed at PCC on 13.7.20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Warden to record names and telephone numbers at each service and leave in church safe for 21 days before disposal.	Warden	Agreed at PCC on 14.7.20
	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.	Announcement of opening of church and copies of notice at entrance to church place in local shop and on wall near entrance to church. Same information on church	Vicar, IT Team, Magazine editor and Lay Reader	On 15.7.20



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		Whatsapp groups, website, facebook and will be in the next edition of church magazine. This information also printed and delivered to members of the congregation who do not have access to computers and social media. Copy of announcement included with this assessment.		
<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.	Intention is to limit services to one each Sunday leaving Wednesday or Thursday for funerals, and therefore no need for special cleaning.	PCC	Agreed at PCC on 13.7.20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	See previous.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning rota for cleaning team will be emailed when necessary.	Vicar	When necessary
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	All PPE including disposable gloves, masks and aprons available at back of church. Vicar and Wardens placed PPE items in church for the cleaners to use. Stocks will	Vicar and wardens	Vicar and wardens on 15.7.20

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		be replenished when necessary.		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning materials including antibacterial wipes available at back of church. Vicar and Wardens placed items in church for the cleaners to use. Stocks will be replenished when necessary.	Vicar and Wardens	Vicar and wardens on 15.7.20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	No hand towels present. Any potentially contaminated waste after double bagging will be removed and taken home to be disposed of in home bin.	Vicar and Service leader	Agreed at PCC 13.7.20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After each service.	Vicar and Service leader	Agreed at PCC 13.7.20
<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.	Services will only be permitted after a minimum of 72 hours has elapsed since previous.	Vicar and wardens	Agreed at vicar & wardens site meeting 2.7.20
	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> In exceptional circumstances if 72 hours	Cleaning Team	Agreed at vicar & wardens site

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		not possible a deep clean by cleaners wearing full PPE will be undertaken		meeting 2.7.20
	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> . See above	Cleaning Team	Agreed at vicar & wardens site meeting 2.7.20