

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 ANDREW'S CHURCH LIMPSFIELD CHART	Assessor's name: DR DIANA DAVY CBE, CHURCHWARDEN MR GARETH MORGAN, CHURCHWARDEN	Date completed: 24 JULY 2020	Review date: 16 AUGUST 2020
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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	Entry via Main Doors.	Churchwardens and PTO until incumbent appointed (post 30 August)	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Churchwardens to issue a reminder of the H & S policy on this point	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Main doors and rear emergency exit doors to be opened 30 minutes before each service. Windows cannot be opened	Churchwardens or nominated stewards	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Routine vermin control has continued under lockdown	Churchwardens	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	In Hand; Churchwardens	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as		In Hand; Churchwardens.	

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	necessary.			
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		Churchwardens	25/0720 Diana Davy
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Live streaming will not be used initially; To be reviewed once the new incumbent is in post. Wifi system already tested and working, throughout the church(except vestries). All microphones to be tested before initial service on 9 August.	Churchwardens	
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.	Not relevant. However, parishioners to be warned that parking in the street is likely to be a challenge given the increased number of walkers and families visiting the Chart.	Churchwardens	
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		In hand: Churchwardens	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Parishioners to be warned this may be necessary. It will be tested on initial opening on 9 th August which will be free access for a non-communion service.	Churchwardens	

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		Expected to be necessary for the incoming Minister's inaugural service on 30 th August and certain special services.		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	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.		Churchwardens	
	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.	Churchwardens	Sanitisation completed before opening for prayer. Appropriate weekly cleaning in place. Diana Davy
	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 and exit via main doors. Emergency exit door open during services. A fully briefed Steward with clipboard will be located in the porch to take names and telephone numbers for Test and Trace.	Churchwardens to oversee	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to	Parishioners to be provided	Churchwardens and	

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	wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	with a Protocol, by News Letter, social media and by a Notice in the Porch. They will be warned in advance of the need to arrive in good time to go through access processes and be shown to marked seats. They will be reminded of 2m distance in queuing.	Stewards	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main entry doors and rear emergency door to be left open during the service.	Churchwardens	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Bibles and hymn books already removed and stored in boxes at the rear of the Church. Paper copies of Service sheets to be available at the Church for services from 9 August. Parishioners will be advised to take them home. Access to an electronic version to be available via the weekly Pew Sheet once circulation starts again.	Churchwardens	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		Churchwardens	

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	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	All kneelers have been sanitised. The majority of the Tapestry kneelers will be “stored” in the pews which “closed”, to retain some sense of familiarity. A small number of leather kneelers will remain in the pews which are being used for worship and will be cleaned after the service.	Churchwardens	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children welcomed to attend services. Parents responsible for ensuring they adhere to social distancing. Traditional child-led Family services and Children’s Church suspended until the Autumn.		Removed before the Church opened for private prayer Diana Davy
	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).	We estimate a maximum of 30 seats in order to adhere to the 2m social distancing rule. Stewards will ensure that individuals /family groups sit in the designated places. This will be kept under review. We prefer not to mark out a one way	Churchwardens	

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		<p>system on the floor. It will be explained in the Protocol, and be managed by Stewards (see above). They will need to ensure that exit as well as entry is orderly and follows the 2 m rule.</p> <p>Face Masks: Government rules will be followed. Face masks available at the entry point.</p> <p>Communion will be administered directly to people in their pews by the Priest.</p>		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	<p>Pews that are “closed” to be marked by a notice. People will find their way to “free” places, assisted by a Steward if necessary. Initially 2 individuals per</p>	Churchwardens	

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		pew or 1 family group per pew, every alternate pew)		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	We prefer not to mark the floor. The one way system will be explained in the published Protocol and Stewards will oversee.	Churchwardens	
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Access will be limited to the main body of the Church, excluding the choir stalls. If it proves necessary, the Choir stalls could accommodate a maximum of 4 people with restricted vision.	Churchwardens	
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	One hand gel station is already available at the point of entry; a second has been placed at the top of the central aisle. Churchwardens . Hand gel also available in the two Vestries.	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	N/A	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Appropriate Notices to be posted where visible and reinforced in the Protocol	Churchwardens	

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	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 .	Covered by the cleaning schedule already in place. Intermediate backup in the availability of sanitising cleaner/wipes. Churchwardens	
	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.	Hand washing liquid and paper towels for the Minister available in the Priests Vestry. Also for those using the Choir vestry, including Flower arrangers. For parishioners, Hand washing is only available in the Toilets in the Church Hall; Churchwardens to liaise with the Hall managers to ensure access to and regular cleaning of, the Disabled toilet, as from 9 August.	
	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.	As above	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to	Lined Waste bins to be provided in both vestries.	Churchwardens	

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	those responsible for removing them.	Cleaner responsible for removal of waste.		
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	A Steward with Clipboard will take names and phone numbers on a dated sheet, at the entrance.	Sheets to be kept and destroyed after 21 days by Churchwardens.	
	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.	Notification of the resumption of worship at the Church as from 9 August to be made available via weekly News Update, Social Media (including Facebook Page), the Main Church Noticeboard. Also to be posted on the appropriate public Noticeboards(including the local Public House) and via Notices at Churches in the Team.	Churchwardens	
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found	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.	Full sanitisation of the Church was carried out before the first opening for private prayers. A weekly cleaning schedule has been put in place and will be reviewed once the new Minister arrives and	Churchwardens/incoming Minister	04/07/20 Diana Davy

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here.		if/when the pattern and frequency of worship changes		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		Churchwardens	04/07/20 Diana Davy
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Covered by cleaning contract	Churchwardens	04/07/20 Diana Davy
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Cleaner provides own PPE .	04/07/20 Diana Davy
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Cleaner provides appropriate cleaning materials	04/07/20 Diana Davy
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Churchwarden agreed with the cleaners as part of the contract.	04/07/20 Diana Davy
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		Weekly while the church is only open once per week. To be reviewed when the frequency of use and cleaning is reviewed. Church wardens	04/07/20 Diana Davy
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		Churchwardens	
	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.	Churchwardens	

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	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 .	Churchwardens	