

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 Edmund, Allestree (Re-opening for Public Worship, one service on a Sunday, and Private Prayer for 2 hours on Wednesday afternoons)	Assessor's name: Peter Barham, Vicar Michele Aspinall (Warden) Julie Hutchinson and Chris Jack (PCC Standing Committee) Much of the work was originally done before ceiling work start in June (Geoff Bailey, PCC Nominated person, in charge)	Date completed: 21 July 2020	Review date: After first service, and again in mid August
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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	Vestry door has been used since this was allowed	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 150620
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 150620
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Doors open while church was being repainted	Geoff Bailey	Geoff Bailey 210720
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Checked before cleaners started	Geoff Bailey	Geoff Bailey 210720
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	Geoff Bailey	Geoff Bailey 210720
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		Geoff Bailey	Geoff Bailey 210720

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No stoups, font always empty	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 090620
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	No plans to livestream at present		
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.	Red Cow pub for parking	Michele Aspinall	Phone call to be made 210720
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website and social media done, ACNY needs administrator back	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 210720 and ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Considered, and decided not to be necessary	Peter & Planning group	Peter & Planning group 210720
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. Not 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.	Peter Barham and Geoff Bailey	Peter Barham	Peter & Planning group 210720
	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.	Peter Barham	Peter & Planning group 210720
	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 by main door. Emergency via vestries	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into	Will be greeted outside on Sunday – Chris Jack to do 2 Aug, then rota sorted	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720

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	account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).			
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors were opened while cleaning and will be opened before/during service. No opening windows	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Everything removed. Peter Barham producing single use leaflet	Done before building work	Done before building work
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Not applicable		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions and kneelers have been thoroughly cleaned, as has wood underneath. Kneelers to be left on pews we are not using	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas		Done before building work	Done before building work
	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).		Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Every other pew has a “No sitting” notice – will also guide people to a seat	Peter Barham	Peter Barham to do next week

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Stewarding will be used	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.		Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Main door	Peter Barham
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	None will be needed	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Peter Barham	Peter Barham 270720, and final check before service
	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 .	Peter Barham & stewards to check before/after service. Michele to brief Tony the cleaner	Peter & Planning group 210720
	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.	ditto	Peter & Planning group 210720
	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.	ditto	Peter & Planning group 210720

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.		Ditto	Peter & Planning group 210720
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Worshippers will be greeted by welcomer with a clip board, records will be kept in safe for a month	First Sunday Chris & Elizabeth Jack	Peter & Planning group 210720
	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.	Use of last week's noticesheet, magazines, website and facebook – Michele to call Red Cow	Peter Barham and Caroline Audley (administrator)	Peter & Planning group 210720
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.	Major cleaning has taken place after building work – the church has never been cleaner!	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Tony the cleaner is not in either category	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Tony the cleaner will be briefed by Michele	Peter & Planning group 210720	Peter & Planning group 210720
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Michele to check	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Michele to check	Peter & Planning group 210720

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	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Tony when he cleans (at least twice a week)	Michele to check	Peter & Planning group 210720
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Tony when he cleans (at least twice a week)	Michele to check	Peter & Planning group 210720
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		Peter Barham	Peter Barham 210720
	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.	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 210720
	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.	Peter Barham	Peter Barham 210720

We will be open on Wednesday afternoons, 2 to 4 pm. We will have two people on duty on each occasion, and Michele is organising volunteers.

Church will be opened and closed by Michele or Peter once cleaning is over. This ensures we can check the building and arrangements, assure the stewards are briefed, and pick up on any concerns at the end of the service. Peter Barham will prepare the altar, lead the service and give communion.

We will advertise opening on the church facebook page and website, and by word of mouth. If we have too many for one service at 10 am, we will repeat it at 11 am – having emptied the church and done a clean (wipe) round before the second.

We will have no other service during July or August, and review at the beginning of September.

St Matthew's Darley Abbey has had two services, so we have found some of the problems.

Peter Barham, 21 July 2020.