

## 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: Barrow Bridge Mission</b>	<b>Assessor's name: Carolyn Rigby</b>	<b>Date completed: 11.10.20</b>	<b>Review date:</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	Use main front door, separate entry not available.		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Not relevant		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Main door , fire door and all internal doors to be propped open and windows to allow air to circulate.	IH/CR at least weekly	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		CR/AH/IH	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a>	CR/AH/IH	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		IH	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	NA		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	NA		

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<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.	No current impact on local businesses. None are nearby.		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		Amanda	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system already in place for specific events.	IH	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	NA		
	<b>Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.</b>		CR/Amanda/IH	
<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.		CR/AH/IH	
	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> .	Leadership Team	
	<b>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.</b>	Signs at entrance to church and outside entrance.	Amanda/ CR	
	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.	One point of entry to church-main door and internal doors to be propped open, minimising need for visitors to touch it.	CR/AH/IH	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into	Notice in place to tell people to wait to be seated.	Amanda/CR	

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	account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Any queue will be managed by the welcomer.		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main door, fire door, internal doors to be propped open. Windows opened.	Key holder opening up	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Signage indicating no access to bibles , hymn books etc put up. Access to leaflets, books restricted.	AH/CR/IH	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	NA		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	NA		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Box of children’s toys in cupboard.		
	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).	Signs indicating chairs not to be used.  Guided seating by welcomers, fill from front of church.  Seats not to be moved by attendees.	CR/AH/IH	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Areas not to be used indicated by signs.		

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Attendees guided to their seats.	Welcomer	
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	NA		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	One 5l hand sanitiser pump dispenser available at entrance.	Amanda	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	NA.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	In place at strategic points through the building.	Amanda/CR/AH	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Sanitiser spray, disposable wipes and kitchen to be available for use during and at end of session.	Amanda/CR/AH/IH	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Kitchen to be closed. Encourage use of hand sanitiser but hand washing facilities available in toilets.  Supplies can be replenished from cleaning cupboard. Monitor stock levels.	CR/AH/IH	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	In place. Supplies can be replenished from cleaning cupboard.	Amanda/CR/AH/IH	

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		Monitor supplies.		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	In place. Supplies can be replenished from cleaning cupboard. Monitor supplies.  Waste bins to be emptied at the end of each session and bag replaced. Disposable gloves to be worn.		
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Welcomer to ask attendees to complete a track and trace form.  Form to be left in Church and collected for 21 days retention in Parish Office.  Notice to be placed at entrance of church advising anyone with symptoms of coronavirus not to enter building and to seek medical attention.	Amanda	
	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.	Publicised on notice sheet, on church social media platforms, signage displayed	CR/AH/Amanda	

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		at church, fellowship emailed.		
<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.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Identify volunteers and ensure that they are eligible for insurance purposes.	Leadership team	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Identify person at/ following each session	?	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Disposable plastic gloves available for use.  Monitor stock levels.	CR/AH/IH	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning products available for use.  Monitor stock levels.		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		?	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	At end of each service/event	?	
	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.			



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<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	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>		