

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. Peter's Halliwell	Assessor's name: Amanda Blease	Date completed: 07/07/20	Review date:
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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	Use main front doors, separate entry not possible		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Circulate policy to all clergy	Amanda	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Vestibule door and west link corridor doors to be propped open and windows opened where possible. Ceiling extraction fans operated	By designated person (Elian) at least once weekly	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		By designated person (Elian)/Amanda	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	By designated person (Elian)	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		By designated person (Elian) once weekly	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		Elian and Tech team	
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.	No current impact on local businesses at times when we are open. Amanda to review and engage with businesses, as appropriate.	Amanda	
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		Amanda/Comms Team	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system already devised and in place for Sunday said service	Paul H / Wardens / Amanda	Paul G 07/07/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	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.		By designated person (Elian) or key holder responsible for opening up	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		Wardens/Amanda	
	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 - main front door and internal entry door into church to be propped open, minimising need for visitors to touch it.	Key holder/stewards	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>West Link corridor door to be used as exit point.</p> <p>Disabled access to be via West Link corridor door with assistance from key holder/stewards.</p>	Key holder/stewards	
	<p>Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).</p>	<p>Notice in place at entrance to tell people to wait to be seated.</p> <p>Any queue will be managed by the welcomer/steward on main front door.</p>	Wardens	Wardens 30/06/20
	<p>Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.</p>	<p>Vestibule doors and west link corridor doors to be propped open and windows opened where necessary. Extraction fans to be run at end of each session</p>	Key holder opening up	
	<p>Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets</p>	<p>Signage indicating no access permitted put up, restricting access to leaflets/books etc on rear shelf/in cupboards under balcony</p>	Wardens/Amanda	Wardens/Amanda 30/06/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Any order of services from funerals/weddings to be removed by attendees	Key holder/steward to remind attendees not to leave sheets behind	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Chancel area taped off Ensure cordons kept in place whilst church is open	Eliau Stewards	Eliau 30/06/20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	N/A		
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Box of children's play bags placed in vestry	Amanda	Amanda 30/06/20
	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).	Thorough walk through completed. 2m distancing in place from each seating pod.	Wardens/Amanda	Wardens 06/07/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seating re-configured. Upholstered chairs removed to church lounge and replaced by 60 plastic chairs (in 30 pods of 2) Guided seating by stewards, fill from front of church	Wardens Stewards	Wardens 06/07/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Seats not to be moved by attendees, only by stewards if required Signage available on each pod to indicate if a pod is available for use or is out of use. Stewards to ensure it is properly designated out of use	Stewards Stewards	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Side aisles taken out of use. Use widened central aisle.	Wardens	Wardens 30/06/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Chancel, lounge and kitchen taken out of use Access to Chancel limited to Clergy and Wardens Access to balcony only permitted to Tech Team and Sidespeople / Stewards Access to vestry only for clergy and wardens Ladies and Gents Toilets closed. Disabled Toilet	Signage to be put up by Wardens/Amanda	Wardens 30/06/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		available for use on request.		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	2 x 5l hand sanitiser pump dispensers available – one at entrance, one at exit	Amanda	Amanda 30/06/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	N/A		
	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 building		Wardens/Amanda 30/06/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Sanitiser spray, disposable wipes and kitchen towel available for use during and at end of session	Stewards/Amanda	
	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 handwashing facilities available in Disabled toilet. Supplies can be replenished from cleaning cupboard. Monitor stock levels.	Stewards/Amanda	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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. Monitor stock levels.	Stewards/Amanda	
	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 stock levels. Waste bins to be emptied at end of each session and bag replaced. Disposable gloves to be worn.	Stewards/Amanda	
	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/steward to record on 'Track and Trace' form name and contact details of attendee at entrance. Form to be left in church and collected for 21 days retention in Parish Office after each service/session/event. Notice placed at entrance to church advising anyone with	Amanda	Wardens 30/06/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		symptoms of coronavirus not to enter building and to seek medical attention		
	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 and public social media platforms, signage displayed at church. Video produced outlining what visitors can expect when attending church	Paul H / Wardens / Amanda	30/06/20
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.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Identify who volunteers and stewards team are and that they are eligible for insurance purposes	Clergy/Wardens/Amanda	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Identify person at/following each session	Amanda	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Disposable plastic gloves available for use. Monitor stock levels.	Amanda	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning products available for use.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Monitor stock levels.	Amanda	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Stewards/Amanda	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	At end of each service/session/event	Stewards/Amanda	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.			
	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.		
	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.		