

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 Mary's Droylsden	Assessor's name: Pat Catterall and Beth Cutler-Churchwardens	Date completed: 24/06/2020	Review date: 24/07/2020
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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	Entry via Emmaus Room-North side			
	Lone working policy is in place if required			
	Buildings have been aired before use.	External and internal doors at West and South sides to be opened 30mins before PP/streaming/service		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Completed weekly and prior to service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Completed weekly and prior to service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	Completed weekly and prior to service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Completed weekly and prior to service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Safe useage checked and maintained prior and during streaming/filming	Service leader	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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 applicable		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Update	Pat Catterall Rev Sue	Pat 02/07/20 Sue 02/07/20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not at this time	Keep under review	Ongoing
	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.	Church officer to open and complete above checks	Beth Cutler or Designated church officer	Ongoing
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Appropriate cleaning as per guidelines and completed below		
	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.	West door identified as entrance door		
	Where possible use a different exit.	External notices required	Pat Catterall	01/07/2020
		South (red) door identified as exit External and internal notices required	Pat Catterall	01/07/2020
Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Social distancing leading to Entrance Notices required	Pat Catterall	01/07/2020	
Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Designated church officer opening building to open all	Designated church officer	Ongoing	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		internal and external door 30 mins before service to allow flow through nave and church room		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Cover over book cases, book stall and store leaflets. Remove and store bibles from the pews	Beth Cutler	Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	N/A		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew carpet seating to be removed	Beth Cutler	Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas		Beth Cutler	Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	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). Max 30 people	Entry will be by the centre aisle with through pews being utilised. Signs required	Pat Catterall	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Unused pews to be cordoned off. Stickers for pews to indicate safe seating required Fabric chairs to be positioned at 2 metre distance	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Entry via centre aisle.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Exit via North aisle, along the front in front of the platform and down South aisle Signs required	Pat Catterall	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	No access to chancel unless for emergency evacuation. Closed signs on toilets and kitchen	Pat Catterall	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Sanitisers to be purchased and placed inside external entrance and exit doors on tables with open topped, lined bins for any throw away items	Beth Cutler Pat Catterall	Beth Cutler Pat Catterall 01/07/2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Block pews not in use Remove fabric chairs as required One way use of aisles	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices to be purchased/created and displayed	Pat Catterall	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	The aim is to leave 72+ hours between access to the building and/or services to avoid need for covid cleaning. If less than 72 hours full cleaning in accordance with latest guidelines will be completed		

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Toilets and kitchen to be closed Notices to be purchased and displayed Adequate soap, paper towels and bins provided in case of emergency	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020 Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Toilets and kitchen to be closed Notices to be purchased and displayed Adequate soap, paper towels and bins provided in case of emergency	Pat Catterall Beth Cutler	Pat Catterall 01/07/2020 Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Bins to be placed at entrance and exit	Beth Cutler	Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Names and contact details to be recorded by designated officer. Lists to be destroyed after 21 days	Designated officer	Ongoing
	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.	PCC, congregation etc updated via email, telephone, face to face web site and social media Notices displayed on church yard noticeboards	PCC secretary Churchwardens Rev Sue Pat Catterall	PCC secretary Churchwardens Rev Sue 02/07/2020 Pat Catterall 01/07/2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Stewardship	Worshippers may bring regular giving envelopes or cash donations	A slotted box to be placed at the entrance to the nave for individuals to place their donations	Beth Cutler	Beth Cutler 01/07/2020
		The box to be placed in the safe at the end of each service for 72 hours	Pat Catterall	Ongoing
		Counting to be undertaken by 2 from the finance team when available in line with Stewardship guidelines. Banked as appropriate.	Pat Catterall + ANOther.	Ongoing
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	Church will remain closed with no access to church officers		
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Checks will be made		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Beth and Pat plus invited others will cover as required		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Gloves will be provided		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Guidance will be followed		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Bins to be emptied after each service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Bins to be emptied after each service	Beth Cutler	Ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Church will remain closed with no access to church officers		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	The guidelines will be followed		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	The guidelines will be followed		