

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 Dearnley	Assessor's name: Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	Date completed: 2 nd July 2020	Review date: Ongoing
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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	North door (fire exit)	Rev Rachel Battershell & Rev Anne Gilbert	29 th March
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Actioned	Rev Anne Gilbert	?
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Actioned	Rev Anne Gilbert	12 th July
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Actioned	Church Wardens	12 th July
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Weekly basis, as per HSE guidelines	Verger/Church Wardens	Ongoing until normal services resume
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Actioned	Rev Anne Gilbert	29 th March
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font empty and no stoup in church	NA	NA
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Live streaming will be done pre-charged I Pad on a static tripod which will be in place before	Rev Anne Gilbert Churchwardens	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		the service and not in a place people need to walk past		
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.	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Will be actioned once a date has been agreed	Rev Anne Gilbert	TBC
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	standrewsbooking@oulook.com	PCC Secretary	6 th July
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	N/A	N/A	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.	Yes	Rev Anne Gilbert	12 th July
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		COVID-19 cleaning team	12 th July
	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.	Main entrance to enter Side door to exit	Church Wardens	12 th July
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	2 metre social distancing markings on the floor	Church Wardens	16 th July
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Main entrance, North Door, South Door	Rev Anne Gilbert	12 th July
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Covered with plastic sheeting	Church Wardens	12 th July

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	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Remove the candle tea lights	Church Wardens	12 th July
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Removed from pew seating and placed out of sight	Church Wardens	12 th July
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Already kept in a storeroom	N/A	N/A
	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).	Actioned	Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	2 nd July
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	New seating plan has been organised with at least 1m+ space between each row of seats and no face to face	Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	2 nd July
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Floor markings and wall signs indicating the direction flow	Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	2 nd July
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Vestry door locked, kitchen no entry sign, Steps up to church barriered off	Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	2 nd July
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	On the table at the main entrance	Janice Perkins	12 th July
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	N/A	N/A	N/A

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	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	A4 & A3 laminated posters	Janice Perkins	16 th July
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Tables removed from the parish room. Anti-bacterial spray and wipes available for cleaning touch points	Janice Perkins	12 th July
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Anti-bacterial handwash & paper towels re-filled, and bin emptied on a weekly basis	Church Wardens	12 th July and ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Disabled toilet cleaned and anti-bacterial handwash & paper towels re-filled, and bin emptied on a weekly basis	Church Wardens	12 th July and ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Done	Church Wardens	12 th July and ongoing
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Individual GDPR forms and pens will be provided. Pens will be kept separately for 72 hours after use	Church Wardens	Once services resume and then 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.	'Return to worship' document produced with guidelines for those attending services	Rev Anne Gilbert & Janice Perkins	14 th July
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no	Accepted	N/A	N/A

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known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	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.	COVID-19 cleaning team are all under 70	Janice Perkins	12 th July onwards
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	COVID-19 cleaning team set up	Janice Perkins	12 th July onwards
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Initial box of 100 yellow disposable gloves provided	Janice Perkins	12 th July
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Various anti-bacterial sprays, wipes and cloths provided	Janice Perkins	12 th July
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Rev Anne Gilbert	Ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		After each service	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.	This will be in place	N/A	N/A
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	2 planned services per week with a 72-hour window in-between will accommodate this	N/A	N/A
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	COVID-19 cleaning team is in place	N/A	N/A

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Service of Holy Communion	No singing, organ music will be playing before and after the service and during distribution	When practising the organist will enter at the east end of church and remain in the chancel area, cleaning all they have touched as they leave	David Wright and other organists	Ongoing
	Priest presiding to set up and clear away communion vessels after sterilising hands and to be the only one to handle the communion vessels during the service.	There will be 72 hours between the communion vessels being used	Clergy Team	Ongoing
	Wafers to be used with the congregation should remain covered during the service. The presiding priest will cover face, sanitise hands and put on a clean pair of disposable gloves prior to distribution of wafers (communion will be shared in one kind only). No words will be said during distribution and the wafer should be gently dropped into the hand.	Should hands come into contact both the priest and member of congregation should sanitise hands. Whilst this involves being closer than the recommended social distance it is deemed the risk is minimal as a face covering is being worn and it is for a very short amount of time	Presiding priest Congregation	Ongoing
	Communicants should receive communion standing and line up at a social distance following the one way system in church.	Stewards will guide the congregation to communion row by row to ensure a social distance is maintained.	Stewards	Ongoing
	Collection will be placed in the plate as people enter church and be brought up during the offertory hymn by a steward wearing gloves and placed on a stand in the chancel. Contactless payments will be available.	Collection will be bagged after the service by someone wearing gloves and left for 72 hours before it is counted	Stewards	Ongoing

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	Members of the congregation will have their own copy of the service booklet which they pick up on their first time in church take home and bring back with them.	No used copies should be left in church, any left accidentally should be picked up using gloves and recycled.	Stewards	Ongoing
	Weekly notice sheets will be given out at the beginning of the service by a steward wearing gloves and taken home at the end of the service		Stewards	Ongoing
	The service itself will be shortened to reduce time in church.	One reading only, no Gloria or creed and a short homily	Presiding priest	Ongoing
	Those doing the readings or intercessions should do so in front of the mic in the chancel.	There will be no lectern	Those on the rota	Ongoing
Funerals and internment of ashes	<p>Max of 30 in attendance</p> <p>The extremely vulnerable can attend but not if there is someone self-isolating but must maintain 2 metres distance and do so at their own risk.</p> <p>Those who are self -isolating can attend but not if there is someone extremely vulnerable and must maintain 2 metres distance.</p> <p>Only close family can attend.</p> <p>If there are no close family close friends may attend.</p>	<p>At the point of booking a funeral the family will be sent a letter, the outline of which has been provided by the diocese about who can attend and safety provisions put in place.</p> <p>If requested the service can be streamed to YouTube live</p>	Celebrant and Funeral Directors	Ongoing
	Mourners will have to come straight into church be seated and not wait for the coffin to this will allow for controlled entry into church.	The exception to this will be those arriving after the coffin in a funeral car	Steward/verger funeral directors	Ongoing
	Music will be allowed either organ or electronic but no singing		Celebrant Funeral directors	Ongoing
	Service sheets can be placed on seats before the service and must be taken out after the service, and		Steward/Verger	Ongoing

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	left accidentally should be removed by someone wearing gloves and immediately placed in the recycle bin		Funeral Director	
	Only the coffin will go in and out of the main entrance, the rest of the congregation will keep to the one-way system set up for services.		Steward/Verger Funeral Director	Ongoing
	Mourner should maintain a social distance outside the church as the hearse leaves		Steward/Verger Funeral Director	Ongoing
	If there has been or will be a service within 72 hrs of the funeral in church the church should be cleaned following the Church of England guidelines before and or after the service.		Verger / Funeral director	Ongoing`
	For burial of ashes a social distance should be maintained around the plot, with numbers limited to close relatives to allow for this and no order of service should be used. Ashes should only be handled by one person who will be responsible for placing them in the ground		Celebrant	Ongoing