

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 George, Stalybridge | Assessor's name: The Revd Penny Warner (PW) | Date completed: Latest draft 03.07.2020 | Review date: 10.07.2020 |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

| 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 | Front door (fire exit at rear) One way system in place to enter/exit with physical division between sides | PW | PW 10.06.20 |
| | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | Doors locked on entry and phone to be carried. | PW | PW 10.06.20 |
| | Buildings have been aired before use. | Doors to be wide open before opening to public and remaining open throughout private prayer/worship. | PW | PW 10.06.20 & ongoing |
| | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Regular checking on entry throughout the week | PW | PW 10.06.20 & ongoing |
| | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | Regular checking on entry throughout the week | PW | PW 10.06.20 & ongoing |
| | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Ongoing as part of church checks. Maintenance & repair in progress. | PW | PW 10.06.20 & ongoing |
| | Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Font is empty. | PW | PW 10.06.20 |

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| | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 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. | Discussion at Deanery Chapter with clergy colleagues. Local shops and businesses are reopening. Usual pattern for timing and practical arrangements creates no conflicts. | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | Website Facebook Email Newsletter Twitter Phonecalls as widely as possible | PW Volunteers | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Discussed with PCC via email correspondence. Additional service planned at 9am to disperse numbers. Booking not expected to be needed but the situation is to be monitored weekly. | PW & PCC | PW & PCC 02.07.2020 |
| | 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 | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | Completed and monitored on an ongoing basis. | PW | PW from 10.06.2020 |

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| purposes, including worship and tourism | Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below). | Completed below | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Front door for entry & exit. Signage displayed | PW in discussion with wardens | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Chalk markings outside at 2m apart before services. Taped marking in hallway and lounge at 2m apart. | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | All relevant doors opened on staff arrival and remaining open throughout. Rooms not in use remain locked and signed closed. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 & ongoing |
| | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Pew bibles, leaflets etc removed. Hymn books not in use Single use orders of service for public worship, weddings, funerals, baptisms. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Any additional literature removed. | PW | PW 01.07.2020 |
| | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed on pews in use for each of cleaning so that entire surface can be wiped down. | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |

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| | | Kneelers/cushions removed | | |
| | Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | 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). | Walk through completed. Signage in pews in place. Directions given on signage Instructions given for flow of traffic during services by priest, in service booklet and by the guidance of stewards. | PW in conversation with wardens | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Completed. Signage in place. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Completed. Signage in place & hand sanitizers Physical barrier in lounge to keep entry/exit system flow. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Rooms not in use are locked with “Not in Use” signage – kitchen, toilets, upper room, choir vestry and creche. Vicar’s vestry – Vicar only. Side aisles can be taped off if not in use to save additional cleaning. | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Purchased (at least 70% alcohol) | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |

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| | | On entry, exit and in nave for before Holy Communion. Refill purchased also. | | |
| | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Signage and restrictions in place. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notice in place re social distancing requirement and cleaning hands. Info sent out in advance via social media etc also. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | High risk surfaces wiped after use (anti bac spray and wipes available) | PW & volunteers | PW 10.06.2020 & ongoing |
| | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Kitchen remaining closed. Bins available for used anti bac wipes. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Toilets remaining closed. Bins available for used anti bac wipes. | PW | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Ongoing. | PW & volunteers | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days | Stewards to record names and contact details where possible. To be retained alongside service register for 21 days then destroyed. | PW & volunteers | PW 03.07.2020 |

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| | 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. | Poster on church door. Notices on website, Facebook, Twitter, a Church Near You, including copies of Risk Assessment and our local planning and guidance. Emailed to those we have contacts for. Communicated via phone to those not online | PW & volunteers | PW 03.07.2020 |
| 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. | Used services to be cleaned between uses of the building by volunteers – i.e. after 9am service before 10.30am. Suitable materials and volunteers prepared for this. | PW & volunteers | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | No cleaning volunteers will be over 70 or self isolating. | PW | PW 03.07.2020 |
| | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Volunteer list being kept and volunteers called up as needed. | PW and wardens – ongoing | PW & wardens ongoing |
| | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Purchased and available | PW ongoing | PW 10.06.2020 |
| | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Purchased and available. Anti bac spray and wipes tested on pews etc. | PW ongoing | PW 10.06.2020 |

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| | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | To be removed after cleaning each time, and on exit before locking up by last person to leave. | PW & volunteers | Ongoing |
| | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After each cleaning of church On last person's exit | PW & volunteers | 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. | Closed from Tuesdays to Sundays – unless a funeral takes place in which case necessary cleaning will be completed before and after. | PW & volunteers | Ongoing |
| | 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. See above | PW & volunteers | Ongoing |
| | 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. See above | PW & volunteers | Ongoing |