# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july) 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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**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).

1. 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **Holy Trinity Tunstead** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Rev Derek Allen – Team Vicar** | **Date completed:**  **20th July 2020** | **Review date:** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information**  **Actions in Green** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible | Single door entrance into Parish Room |  |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). |  |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | West door, tower door, parish room door to be opened frequently |  |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Main hazard is vermin |  |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | Kitchen, Vestry wc, tower wc, disabled wc – taps to be run and wc’s to be flushed |  |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Check boiler pilot light and heating controls and test |  |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Not Applicable |  |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Not applicable at this time – no internet connection to building |  |  |
| **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 issues – Church building is in a predominantly residential area |  |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | Service times, risk assessment and other relevant public health information to be uploaded to ACNY site. Service times to be posted to Facebook page. |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Not required |  |  |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | Not required |  |  |
| **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. | Confirmed |  |  |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** |  |  |
| 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. | Signage to direct people to West door to access building; arrows on floor in central aisle directing people to parish room door to exit the building |  |  |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | 2m distancing marks to be marked on flags in chalk from West door along South elevation and to steps; chalk markings to be done prior to each service |  |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | West door to be left open and internal doors to be wedged open during service where weather permits. |  |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Hymn books and bibles to be boxed up and placed in designated area; Common Worship service books to be kept in box for 48hr quarantine period between services |  |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Chancel and choir stalls to be marked off as no access; door from Parish Room to chancel to be marked as not to be used |  |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Kneelers removed form genera pews and placed together in pews identified as not for use |  |  |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | All childrens’ toys, books etc to be placed in designated area marked as non access |  |  |
| 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). | Alternating pews to be used and marked/taped off;  2m marking using tape in central aisle |  |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Pews taped off for non access; green ‘tick’ signs placed/fixed to pews identifying where people can sit to distance 2m |  |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Signage at chancel steps directing people to parish room exit door. People will be asked to fill pew seats from the front working back and then at the end of the service people at the front will leave first with the rest following maintaining social distancing at 2m |  |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Use of chairs and hazard warning tape |  |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | To be placed on two tables in entrance at West door; to be placed on single table in parish room at exit door |  |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647). |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices will be displayed at key positions within the building |  |  |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | These will be wiped clean after the service, starting at the West door and working methodically to the Parish room exit door. |  |  |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Liquid soap dispensers provided with paper towels and waste bins. |  |  |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Liquid soap dispensers provided with paper towels and waste bins. |  |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Waste bin liners to be provided and used – to be removed and safely disposed of after each service. |  |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Designated person will record using the electoral roll with space for ‘visitors’ |  |  |
| 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. | Post on ACNY and Facebook; use the benefice e-mail contact address; telephone and post details to non- internet users; sign on West door |  |  |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | 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. | Worship only takes place once a week; funerals to take place on Wednesday pm where possible |  |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | C of E national guidance indicates that those in the Clinically Vulnerable Group may now undertake voluntary work i.e cleaning providing that they observe Government and C of E guidance on social distancing etc. Agreed by Team Vicar and PCC 8.7.20. |  |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Utilise existing cleaning team where this is possible recognising limits for some. |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Disposable gloves or volunteers to bring their own for their sole use and to be taken home and cleaned afterwards. |  |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | General surfaces only – no issues for historic surfaces |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | J Blythe and D Walton |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After each use of the building |  |  |
| **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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** |  |  |