

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

*** This template has been amended for the use of Holy Trinity Parish Church, Horwich and is issued as HT version 4a.**

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: Holy Trinity Parish Church, Horwich, Bolton.	Assessor's name: D.H.G.Hartley, Churchwarden.	15th July 2020.	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	The clergy will use the main west doors, as will the congregation, but will arrive earlier (at the discretion of the officiating clergy).	Clergy.	17/06/20 DHGH
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	If the clergy is last to leave the church they must send a message to the churchwarden named above. If such a message is not received the churchwarden will investigate further.	Clergy/Churchwarden.	17/06/20 DHGH
	Buildings have been aired before use.	The building has been aired on four occasions prior to reopening for private prayer.	Clergy/Churchwarden.	13,22/06/20 DHGH
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	This was carried out prior to opening for private prayer.	Churchwarden.	13,22/06/20 DHGH
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	The water systems, both hot and cold, have been run for five minutes each week. The toilets were also flushed weekly.	Churchwarden.	13,22/06/20 DHGH
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	The electrical system was checked and found to be functioning normally.	Churchwarden.	13,22/06/20 DHGH
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	N/A.
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	If this is to be used the operator will be made aware of these condition which will be adhered to.	System operator/churchwardens.	06/06/20 DHGH

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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.	The opening at the times given below will not impact on nearby businesses or venues.	No action is required.	N/A.
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	The approved version of this risk assessment should be posted on the website.	The webmaster.	Done 18/07/20 MB
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	A booking system will not be used initially as two services will be held, one at 09.00 and one at 10.00. If it is subsequently found that a booking system would be advisable this will be referred to the PCC for a decision.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	See below.	Not applicable.	N/A.
Maximum occupation for the various services held.	Ensure that maximum specified numbers are not exceeded. All numbers have been determined taking into account social distancing rules.	For church services a maximum of 72 can be accommodated based on two families of four seated at each end of the designated pews. The presence of single persons or couples will reduce the capacity accordingly and they will be asked to be seated on marked areas of the pews. For weddings and funerals a maximum of 30 will be allowed to attend. In all instances the congregation will be guided to the respective pews, starting from the front and working towards the rear and will enter down the centre of the aisle.	Clergy/churchwardens/ verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
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.	Tourism will not be allowed as this would impede on access numbers for services.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Review CoFE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	The diocesan advice on cleaning church buildings has been consulted and incorporated into this document.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH

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	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.	The point of entry will be the west door. The point of exit will be the south door. Should the steps not be able to be negotiated then the ramp at the west door will be used but social distancing rules will be observed. The North door will be unlocked during occupation of the church, as a designated emergency exit.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	A notice on the lych gate will advise on social distancing in queues and will be overseen by the churchwardens.	Churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	The west and south doors will be kept open. If the north door is also to be left open then this will require two persons to be on warden duty.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All have been removed.	Clergy.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	The cross from the chapel has been removed to the main altar.	Clergy/churchwardens.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	The remaining kneelers will be removed as will the pew runners. Pew runners cannot be cleaned between the two Sunday services.	Churchwarden.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Lucy's room has been locked and a notice fixed to the door.	Clergy/churchwardens.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	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).	Such a walk has been carried out by clergy and the churchwardens, measurements have been taken and signs put in place.	Clergy/churchwardens.	02/07/20. DHGH/CK/ NB.
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	This has been carried.	Clergy.	13/06/20. DHGH/NB

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	The route though church up and down the main aisle is be on along the centre of the carpet.	Clergy/churchwardens.	13/06/20. DHGH/NB
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Areas have been blocked out with chairs and signs added.	Clergy/churchwardens.	13/06/20. DHGH/NB
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitizers for public use have been fixed to the two doors leading from the hall to the narthex and signs fixed.	Volunteer.	13/06/20. Steven Greenhalgh
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	The archdeacons advise is that permission to fix hand sanitizers is not required as they are not permanent fixtures.	Churchwardens.	22/06/20. DHGH
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	This has been carried out carried out after confirmation of opening for private prayer.	Clergy/churchwardens.	13/06/20.
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	This will be done immediately before the church is closed.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	13/06/20.
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	The situation is to be checked at the end of each use of the church.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Use of toilets- Only one person/ group from the same household at a time (due to space constraints in the north porch area).	Churchwardens.	22/06/2020 DHGH
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	These have been provided by the curate.	Clergy.	13/06/20. NB
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	The names and contact details will be taken on entry to the church for each service.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and	This has been done with the commencement of private prayer and the holding of one funeral services.	N/A	10/07/20. DHGH

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	worshippers will know what to expect when they come.			
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.	This information has been passed to clergy, churchwarden and the vergers.	Churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	For the time being cleaning will be shared between clergy, churchwarden and the vergers.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	See above.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	All cleaning materials have been provided.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	All cleaning materials have been provided.	Clergy/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	All paper towels are to be sealed in plastic bags provided and placed in the dustbin. The person to then wash their hands(in accordance with government guidelines) after wiping down all surfaces.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	To be removed prior to church closing.	Clergy/verger/churchwardens.	10/07/20. DHGH
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 done and taken into account should a funeral need be arranged. Food collections will also be stopped if they fall within the 72 hour period. A “No Entry Until further notice” sign will be placed on doors.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH

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	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England guidance has been consulted and relevant information has been included in this document.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	The diocesan advice on cleaning church buildings has been consulted and incorporated into this document.	Clergy/Churchwardens /verger.	10/07/20. DHGH
Clergy, Lay Ministers and Volunteers in the Clinically Vulnerable Group (including those who are over 70) may now undertake church work or voluntary activity which involves direct contact, providing they observe Government and Church of England guidelines on social distancing etc.	If able to participate one will need to observe Government and Church of England guidelines on social distancing etc., and guidance given in this document. If one is in a Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group the advice is to continue to shield and not engage in volunteering outside of their own home at this time.	Anyone in this group must make their own decision about whether to officiate or volunteer following relaxation of the rules by the Government and the Diocese and must not feel under any pressure to do so.	Clergy and volunteers in the Clinically Vulnerable group.	15/07/20. DHGH

Legend

DHGH = Grenville Hartley Churchwarden.

CK = Chris Knowles Churchwarden.

NB = Nicola Butterworth Curate.