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**

* 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
* 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).

* 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.
* 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:**  **St Georges Community Centre** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Ged Rowles** | **Date completed:**  4th August 2020 | **Review date:**  Monthly |

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| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
| **Access to church community centre by the general public, volunteers and cleaner** | One point of entry to the centre building clearly identified | Done | Centre manager | 4th August 2020 |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | PCC | PCC |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | yes | cleaner |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. Of car park and exterior paths | yes | Cleaner and centre manager |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | Yes frequently by cleaner | Cleaner and centre manager |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Checks up to date. | Centre manager |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Preparation of the Centre for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes** | Confirm that all steps (above) have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | done | Centre manger  Hirer at start of each session. | Review at start of each session |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | Hall being cleaned in line with government guidelines**.**  **Chairs-** plastic chairs to be used where possible and cleaned after use by hirer**.**  If fabric chairs are used, they must be marked to say when used and left unused for 72 hrs. until next used. Fabric chairs have been marked for the use of individual groups. Each set will be used 1 x per week and left for >72 hrs to decontaminate naturally. | Centre manager and cleaner  Hirers and cleaner | Review at start of each session |
| Choose one point of entry into the building to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit. | Front entrance only for entry. Centre users (hirers) to manage flow on exit. | Centre manager | 4th Aug |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Centre users (hirers) to manage outside queue. | Users informed by centre manager | Hirers at start of each session |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | This will be done where possible | Centre Users (hirer) | At start of each session |
| Remove books/leaflets | done | Centre manger | 4th August |
| Walk through the centre to plan for physical distancing in seats, both rooms and foyer including safe flow of visitors. Remember 2m in all directions from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary). | Walk through building carried out.  Signage in place to remind users about social distancing and hand hygiene. | Centre manager | 4th August |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | done | Centre manager | 4th August |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Signage in place | Centre Manager | 4th August |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go | **Store room** – social distancing not possible. One person only at a time  **Kitchen-** Social distancing not possible, One person at a time | Signage in place – Centre manager | 4th August |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Hand sanitisers available at entrance and throughout the building. | Centre manager / cleaner | 4th August |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | none required |  | n/a |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | done | Centre manager | 4th August |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Where possible a gap of 72 hrs will be left between hirers.  Where not possible the hirer will be responsible for wiping high- risk surfaces and touch-point before and after use. Sanitiser spray and wipes will be provided.  Regular cleaning to continue | Centre – manager providing a special conditions contract to hirer.  Hirer and cleaner. | At start and end of each session |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | In place | cleaner | Each time cleaned |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | In place | cleaner | Each time cleaned |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | In place.  Hirers to remove all rubbish at the end of their event and disposed of appropriately | Cleaner  hirer | Each time cleaned |
| visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Hirer to provide form for track and trace and to retain information from their event in line with GDPR. | hirer | At each session |
| Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors will know what to expect when they come. | Centre manager to communicate with hirers and promote on social media as appropriate. | Done | 4th August |
| **Cleaning the centre before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)**  **.** | ***If the centre 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.*** |  |  |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Cleaner not in vulnerable group | Centre manager | 4th August |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Not required. |  | n/a |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | In place | Centre manger | 4th August |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | In place. | Centre manger | 4th August |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Hirer to remove all rubbish immediately after their event. | Centre manger | Each hirer will recieve copy of risk assessment |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | See above |  |  |
| **Cleaning the centre after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | This is the intention .  Small number of groups using the centre in August and September with suitable time scale in between each group. | Centre manager | 4th August |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | n/a |  |  |
| If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. | Guidance in place. | Centre manager and cleaner | 4th August |