# Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public During Lockdown

**Version Control**

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| 4th November 2020 | 6 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

*This update has been reviewed in the light of new guidance from the* [*Health and Safety Executive*](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/risk-assessment.pdf) *and is intended for use during the period of national lockdown from 5th November. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly. The additions here are to support parishes in make decisions around remaining open for private prayer and other permitted purposes.*

From 5th November churches are permitted to open for specific purposes:

* Private prayer
* Funerals and commemorative events celebrating the life of a person who has died
* To broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast
* To provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services
* For childcare provided by a person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006

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-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-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, the template 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. Specific guidance linking to advice on the lockdown period is 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
	* Livestreaming or recording services
	* Funerals
	* Formal childcare or where part of a school
	* Essential voluntary and public services
	* Other exempted activities such as some support groups
2. Consider the hazards:
	* Transmission of COVID-19
	* Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual

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:****SCS** | **Assessor’s name:****K Smeeton** | **Date completed:****30/11/20** | **Lockdown 2 and Return to Tier 3** |

| **Area of Focus**  | **Controls required**  | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name**  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access to church buildings for purposes of recording and/or livestreaming services (with no congregation present)****Risk:** contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services | Consider if anyone required for recording or broadcasting is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Ensure you have enough people who are safely able and willing to attend the church building to allow for livestreaming or recording to take place. | Streaming from SGO in lockdown.Services streamed if cameraman available.Camera located in pew near front on Epistle side. | KS | 05/11/20 |
| Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible. | Exit only suitable in emergency. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). | N/A |  |
| Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building. | Non-liturgical use – entry by consultation with vicar so ensure no-one in at same time. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Font empty, no stoops |  |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | CD,player plugged into 1 socket. Music operated by KS so no infection risk to others. Music before service and during administration. ‘Phone used as camera. Tripod to side in pews – taped off | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can’t wash their hands. | At entry to church, before communion point, at exit to hall from church. Also in toilets. | KS | Ongoing |
| 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)**.** | Church/hall deep cleaned before original return after lockdown 1. Spray disinfectant in use - ongoing | Ongoing |
| Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt. | Email sent out to all with email address and letter to those without informing of need for face mask.Facemasks procured so available for those who forget.Sign printed. | KS | 18/08/20 |
|  | Identify where you can reduce the contact ofpeople with surfaces, e.g. by leaving open doors that are not fire doors, using electronic documents rather than paperwork. | Disposable service sheets renewed each week.Doors left open to ensure good ventilation. | KS | 30/11/20 |
|  | Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. | . QR code printed and on board. Paper version of T&T available with quarantine system for pens. |  |  |
| **Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer and other permitted activities** | Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible. |  |  |  |
| Check if any clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their household who do, and ensure there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building. | N/A |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | N/A |  |  |
| Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. |  |  |  |
| **Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes****Risk:** Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas. | Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | Confirmed | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. | To be updated when formal announcement made lockdown over and Tier 3 resumes. | KS/RJ | 30/11/20 |
| 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)**.**Read and reviewed. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt. | Advice on [face coverings can be found here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20face%20coverings%20v3.0.pdf). Signs up advising must use face covering unless exempt. | KS | 18/08/20 |
| 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. | Notices printed and laminated indicating need to use hand gel and keep distance.One point of entry. Requested early arrival so entry can be staggered. Same point of exit but exit staggered – congregation dismissed in rows. If congregation collect to chat revert to leaving after receive communion. Priest goes to vestry after service until building otherwise empty and can lock up. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Tape/chalk marks on steps and in car park. | KS | 04/07/20 |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Double doors kept open during worship | KS | 04/11/20 |
| If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in. | Guidance on [church heating can be found here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/COVID%2019%20Church%20Heating%20v1.0_1.pdf).Checked | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets. | Removed. | KS | 28/06/20 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Service booklets and hymn books taped off. | KS | 04/07/20 |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces. | Removed  | KS | 28/06/20 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas. | Children’s bags removed to vestry. | KS | 04/07/20 |
| 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).  | Pews taped off, taped markers on floor to ensure distance maintained. Aisle taped on to floor to ensure maximum distance kept when receiving communion**.** Facing forwards. Seated throughout most of service, wearing of facemasks tracks govt/CofE adviceAltar rail not in use, congregation dismissed in rows. If congregation collect to chat revert to leaving after receive communion.. Standing communion station only.1m + in operation – face coverings to be used.Standing permitted for limited parts of the service (Gospel/Peace) Peace to be shared vocally – congregation to remain in places. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Pews marked out. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Aisle marked with tape and tape arrows in place. | KS | 30/11/20 |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Public not to move into quire, but cannot tape off as access for priest to come down from vestry. No entry signs in place | KS | 22/08/20 |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. Hand sanitiser in toilets, at entrance/exit, near communion point, exit from church to hall and at altar | KS | Ongoing |
| 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).None | KS |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Printed 18/08/20 | KS | 18/08/20 |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Advice on[cleaning church buildings can be found here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.****Church cleaned according to advice on cleaning church buildings document.**Spray sanitiser in place | KS | Ongoing |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | KS | 22/08/20 |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | KS | 22/08/20 |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Bin bags in place | KS | 22/08/20 |
| **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)**.****Risk:** Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities. | If the church building has been closed for 48 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces. |  |  |  |
| If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  |  |  |
| Identify surfaces that are frequently touched andby many people (often common areas), e.g.handrails, door handles, shared equipment, toilets, and specify the frequency and level of cleaning and by whom. | Spray sanitiser in place |  |  |
| Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to cleanand reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects. |  |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. |  |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.Spray sanitiser in place |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After each service | Sidespeople | Ongoing |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | **Resume streaming from vicarage if cleaning cannot take place or clergy need to isolate.** |  |  |
| If 48-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 48 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)**.** |  |  |