

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August.

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) Yes
 - Livestreaming services (clergy only) Yes
 - Private prayer (general public) Yes
 - Public worship Yes
 - Rites of passage services Yes
 - Opening for visitors and tourists No

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. Bartholomew's Otford	Assessor's name: Russell Edwards (RE) Philip Gardner (PG) Janet Hunt (JH) Clive Southgate (CS) Heather Stanley (HS)	Date completed: First Review 10/8 Second Review 31/7 Third Review 11/7 Fourth Review 28/8 Updated 14/9 Two Services on a Sunday	Review date: 2/10/2020
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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	North door will be entry point to Church		19/6 opening for prayer CS
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	No lone working when opening for Services. Door to office corridor kept locked during working hours.	Ongoing CS
	Buildings have been aired before use.		Aired before opening for prayer	19/6 All
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		Before opening and ongoing	19/6

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	Water systems to be flushed	14/8 CS / RE
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating not required et to be done before use to heat Church for Autumn/Winter	Lights tested	15/6 RE
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.			15/6 JH
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Russell has checked loads	Camera's mounted loads tested	9/8 RE
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.	N/A but will advise Chanty Cottage and the Chantry		9/8 CS
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		CS to do	4/9 CS
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system set up by	HS	CS to run weekly for services
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	Not planning to open for tourists but unable to prevent visiting Church when open for prayer.	11/8

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Instructions to go out to those booking a space in relation to face covering	HS has drafted, and gone out on weekly e-mail	CS to send out with confirmation of place at each relevant service
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.			10/7 JH
	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.		10/7 JH, CS
	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.	Signage to remind people of the need for facemasks to be worn in Church	CS	11/8 CS
	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.	North door entry – South door exit. Inner north doors to the Church to be held open, if weather permits outer doors as well.	Signs on South door external to guide people to North door for entry	11/8 CS
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Instructions give when completing booking for Church Service	Please wait here sign for outside of building	15/8 CS
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors into Church from lobby to be held open during service	External doors held open if	Each Service

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
			weather permits.	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Prayer books to be made available for Wednesday Service	Congregation can take away and bring with them weekly.	10/7 JH
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Done for opening for prayer – no further items required for a Service		10/7
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions to be returned to Church as pews only used on Sunday and Wednesday for a Service. Kneelers removed for time being.	CS & JH	11/9
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	All removed to Church Centre	CS	10/7
	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).	Plan of Church so that social distancing is taken into account when booking places for attendees at a service	HS	15/8
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Pews will be marked with spaces available indicated	HS	15/8 HS & CS
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Arrows on floor to show direction of travel round the Building – exit through south door	Review 11/8	JH / HS/ CS, reviewed and working well

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	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	None required for a service	Areas roped off for private prayer	10/7
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	By north and south doors	11/8
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	No changes to building	11/8 HS
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices in place for opening for prayer		10/7
	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 .	Cleaned daily – and after all Services – and between Services if more than one per day	11/8 14/9
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Plenty of soap and towels available – bin for used towels	11/8 CS
	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 for procurement options.	Plenty of soap and towels available – bin for used towels	11/8 CS

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	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Bins have liners	Emptied at end of service CS to oversee
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Details of attendees taken at time of booking – consent forms completed for Test and Trace to include bell ringers and organist.	Ongoing – to be sent out via e-mail where possible before service. Supply available for completion prior to service.	CS weekly
	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.	Via weekly notices and on Church Website		9/8 CS
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.	Cleaning undertaken daily when closing the building – Services - Wednesday 10.00 Sunday 8.00 & 10.00.	Cleaning will be required after all Services – and especially between Services	Review W/C 28/8
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	No cleaners in self-isolation		10/7 JH/RE
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	New rota to be agreed from beginning of September.	JH reviewing - considering	2/10

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
			need to set up AV & Brasses for Sunday	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.		10/7
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.		10/7
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Daily cleaner to bin in church centre corridor	Each person cleaning to remove from Church. CS to move to external bin for collection by SDC	10/7 CS ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Removal after Sunday Service		CS 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.	Church building would be closed if known exposure recorded or advised.	A review of current guidelines would be undertaken on advice of exposure.	ALL
	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.		10/7

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	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 .	By whoever is scheduled to open building in conjunction with the office.	Ongoing as and when required.
Risk Assessment in relation to the resumption of Bell ringing	Have the Tower Captain and Steeple Keeper completed a risk assessment, prior to the resumption of ringing?		Bobbie Fairclough & Martin Whitehead to complete. Copy to be attached to this RA.	Awaiting update from Martin Whitehead Diary for 2/10
Covid-19 Risk Assessment : Music in live Services - Choir	Has the risk assessment produced by the RSCM been completed prior to the resumption of singing by members of the Choir in Church?		Kevin Grafton will draw up initial RA	2/10
			Then review with this group.	
Covid-19 Risk Assessment L Music in live Services – Music Group	Has the risk assessment produced by the RSCM been completed prior to the resumption of and playing by the band in Church?	RE to complete RA in relation to playing and singing of Band members		18/9