

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

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: St Pauls Pooley Bridge	Assessor's name: Amanda Strong	Date completed: 1st July 2020	Review date: When Threat is reduced to level 2
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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	Vestry door. Church currently to be kept locked and is not used for recording services	N/A	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building has been aired weekly	AS/AMcC	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Weekly check/clean	AS/AMcC	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	AS as part of weekly check, run Quooker	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Organ fan run and checked Quooker checked	AW AS	30 th June 23 rd June
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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.	Liaise with Village Hall Committee if any events planned for Sundays in the Parkin Hall	VW	Not currently open
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		A McC	As needed
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services		TB discussed, unlikely to be 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.			
	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.	AS	30 th June 2020
	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.	Only main doors suitable for entry/exit as wide and step free. Vestry door is kept unlocked through service		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Signs outside on path to remind people to keep 2m apart		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Keep Main door and glass partition doors open during the service.	Church wardens	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Completed	AW	30/6/2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Service every 2 weeks, not necessary to remove cushions on seats as any virus will have died		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Separate packs made up for childrens activities		
	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).	Alternate pews blocked off Alternate ends of pews and place family groups together	AW	30/6
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Plan for seating is in place which allows for 2m distance where possible with 1m minimum, face mask to be worn as mitigation. Max 30 people in the building to allow for personal distancing. Lectern moved in front of the communion table to maximise distance between Leader and the congregation. Encourage readers to sit in the front pews to minimise passing others during the service.	AW	30/6

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Leave collection plate at the entry point. No collection bags to be used.		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Verbal instruction will be given by CW, guiding congregation into pews. At the end of the service the leader will give clear instruction on exiting safely	AW	
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	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Prosan Gel at entry points (Vestry, Main door).	70% Hand gel to be applied at entry under supervision AS?KMcC	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Covid notices are in place	AS KMcC	March 2020
	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 .	Clinell wipes for all touch surfaces before and after the surfaces – ie	

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			door handles, pew tops etc	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Vestry sink – remove towels and replace with paper towels, ensure Bin has liner	AS	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.			
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Print list of usual congregation prior to service and mark off as they enter, add additional names if visitors attend -	? Lizzy	
	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 Parish Email service and church Notice Board	AW to email Jill and put up notices	
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.	This church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open therefore 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.	This may occur in exceptional circumstances and then PPE would be required (mask, plastic apron, gloves) before cleaning	AS	

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	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Normal practice		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Anyone who is considered vulnerable and with an underlying health condition should be encouraged to stay at home and not assist in cleaning at this time.	VW – once we have agreed service dates at 2 weekly intervals we can agree on a cleaning rota.	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	BIO D is a suitable Viricidal cleaner	AS to source	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Leave in situ for 72 hours prior to removing – then no risk		
		soft furnishings do not need to be cleaned other than as part of your usual cleaning processes, which may include vacuuming with a soft brush attachment		
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 normal practice at St Pauls unless unusual services are required		

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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 available here.	AS/A McC/AW	Unlikely to be required. Should this scenario arise then we will follow the current guidelines at the time.
	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.	As above	