

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. Michaels, Barton	Assessor's name: W S Pretswell	Date completed: 21 July 2020	Review date: When required by diocesan policy
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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 available by arrangement. Church in interregnum so not used	None	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	N/A.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Yes when building first opened and fortnightly thereafter		WSP 7&8 July
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Checked		WSP 7 July
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	All domestic water taps opened and flushed through		WSP 8 th July
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	All checked and OK		WSP 8&15 July
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Never used and always empty		WSP 8 th July
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Not Applicable- None installed		
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using	No nearby businesses, Church closed to public other than for	CW's	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	the church are compatible.	scheduled worship		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Ullswater churches web site updated	Andy McConkey	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not required church open by special arrangement only	CW's	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	.Not open to tourists	CW's	
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.	Done where applicable		WSP 8th July
	Review CoFE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Guide consulted to satisfy cleaning activities	EPT/EPL	
	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.	Entry and Exit to be managed by guides via Porch door. Emergency exit unlocked during services.	Duty Sides Persons	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Spacious and unobstructed church yard path with Social distancing notice posted at Lychgate	WSP	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Vestry and Porch doors to be open throughout services	Duty Sides persons	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Removed to secure area	WSP/EPL	16 th July
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	None in church		

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	Kneelers discouraged but 72 hour rule will apply	WSP	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Removed to secure area	WSP/EPL	16 th July
	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).	Selected pews closed to facilitate 2m Social distancing Face masks will be worn for mitigation	WSP	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Notices placed on pews	WSP	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Escorted in and out by guides	CW’s Duty sides persons	When open for worship
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Done- No Entry signs posted	WSP	21July
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Done -Placed on table at Porch entry point	WSP	When open for worship
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No changes required	WSP	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices placed at Porch entry	WSP	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Done by cleaners at initial opening. Thereafter 72 hour rule applies	EPL/EPT	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Done and will be replenished	EPL/EPT	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Done -Textile towels replaced by Paper hand towels	EPL	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Normal practice with disposable liners in place		
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Track and Trace forms to be completed by attendees	WSP	
	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.	Nearby village website to be used to advise when a service is to be held	HP	
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.	Understood and will be the practice		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	The 72 hour rule will be followed		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	All cleaners attend in line with standing arrangements	EPT	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Available	WSP	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Available	EPL/EPT	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Member of cleaning party	EPL/EPT after 72 hours	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After 72 hours elapsed time		
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 practice will be adopted	CW's	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Understood - If unavoidable cleaners will be provided with PPE	CW's	
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Preferred practice	CW's	

Note: EPT – Eileen Pitt

HP – Henry Pitt

WSP – Bill Pretswell

EPL- Eileen Pretswell

CW-Churchwarden