

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 Mary Magdalene, Stoke Bishop	Assessor's name: Peter Robottom/Carrie Patterson	Date completed: 9 July 2020	Date reviewed: 18 March 2021
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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	Via Halls or with appropriate keys via vestry	Staff Team/Vicar	Peter Robottom 5.7.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	If alone no-one other than minister would be able to access save for other staff team members. Would have mobile phone. If used for 09.00 on Sundays will have technical support.	Staff Team	Peter Robottom 5.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Has been open for private prayer in daylight hours	Rota/usually vicarage family	Vicar/Peter Robottom/Carrie Patterson 6.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Cleansed on each weekday	Lucy Allen as from 19.3.21	Vicar/Carrie Patterson 6.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Toilet and sink will be flushed and cleansed before use of Narthex accessible toilet. Servery	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 6.7.20 & 18.3.21

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		sink has been made inaccessible by chair stacks.		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating has been checked over in March 2021. Electricity has remained on	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 5.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Empty	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 6.7.20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Experience has been gained since March with live streaming from home and subsequently once allowed from church/halls. No load problem. Cable runs made safe 18.3.21	Matt Hurley/Vicar/Hayley Brydges/Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 6.7.20 & 18.3.21
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.	There are no nearby venues	N/A	Peter Robottom 5.7.20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Undertaken by Office Staff	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson 10.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Should not be necessary for weekly public worship sessions (though will be monitored) and booking via the website has been set up for Holy Week and Easter services (as at Christmas)	Vicar/Office team	Carrie Patterson 18.3.2

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Not specifically relevant	N/A	Peter Robottom 5.7.20
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.	Already Undertaken	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 5.7.20
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on cleaning noted and acted upon.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson 9.7.20
	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.	Main South Door with flow in down centre aisle and exit via north side aisle for all but those with limited mobility exiting down the stairs past the hall. Signage to be provided.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford/Wardens to ensure in place on Sunday	Carrie Patterson & Peter Robottom 18.3.21
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Notices can cover, the risk of congestion is likely to be minimal with proposed services and APP check-in by most/	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford/Wardens to ensure on Sunday	18.3.21
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors opened every weekday for private prayer	Vicar/rota	Vicar/Carrie Patterson 6.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	There will be no books in any of the chairs set out	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 12.7.20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Most items have already been removed or cordoned/curtained off. Some may need	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 12.7.20 & 18.3.21

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		reinstating or re-positioning for public worship to make use of AV		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers will not be in use. Selected chairs for use in private worship will be those requiring least cleaning.	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 12.7.20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Will not be available at proposed services	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 5.7.20 & 18.3.21
	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).	Layout was physically tested with measuring stick before 14.7.20. Layout allows singles and couples/bubbles.	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 12.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	The chair layout will follow guidance for individuals, households and bubbles. It will be monitored and adjusted as necessary.	Peter Robottom	18.3.21
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Notices should suffice	Vicar/staff team/office staff	18.3.21
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Already undertaken though to be modified as necessary for public worship	Peter Robottom/office	Peter Robottom 12.7.20 & 18.3.21

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	The church is registered with Parish buying. Supplies are available and will be replenished as necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson 9.7.20 & 18.3.21
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	N/A	Peter Robottom	Peter Robottom 5.7.20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Some notices already displayed. Consideration to augmentation.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford 18.3.21
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on cleaning noted and acted upon.	Carrie Patterson/Lucy Allen	Lucy Allen, Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford + wardens after 09.00 service and 10.30 (& if an afternoon Explore @4) <i>Ongoing</i>
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	The church is registered with Parish Buying. Supplies are available and will be replenished as necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	<i>Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford /Lucy Allen Ongoing</i>
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	The church is registered with Parish Buying. Supplies are available and will be replenished as necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Lucy Allen/Rachel Sandford	<i>Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford /Lucy Allen Ongoing</i>

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Any cleansing need to be noted by duty warden after public services.		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Already standard practice	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford/Lucy Allen	Carrie Patterson 9.7.20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Contact details of worshippers should be known, but cards to note attendance if not using NHS APP venue check-in.	Duty warden at each public service	15.7.20 and updated 18.3.21
	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.	Weekly emails and website	Office staff	Carrie Patterson 10.7.20 and 18.3.21
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	The area used for public worship should be wholly separate from that used for private prayer by cordon and notices	Duty warden after Sunday services	Peter Robottom 5.7.20 and updated 18.3.21
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	As above	N/A although relevant to earlier cleaning criteria	Carrie Patterson 5.7.20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Lucy Allen returning to work on 19.3.21.	Office staff/Lucy Allen	Office staff/Lucy Allen <i>Ongoing</i>

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	The church is registered with Parish Buying. Gloves are available and will be replenished as necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford <i>Ongoing</i>
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	The church is registered with Parish Buying. Supplies are available and will be replenished as necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford <i>Ongoing</i>
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Lucy Allen returning to work on 19.3.21.	Carrie Patterson/Rachel Sandford/Lucy Allen	Carrie Patterson 9.7.20 updated 18.3.21
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested removal after each public worship session as a minimum.	Generally undertaken daily.	Carrie Patterson/Lucy Allen	Carrie Patterson 9.7.20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Would be possible and would be notified by web, email and notices.	Vicar/Office staff	<i>(If notified by Public Health or worshipper)</i>
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	N/A	N/A	Peter Robotom/Carrie Patterson 5.7.20 & 18.3.21
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on cleaning noted and would be acted upon, if became necessary.	Carrie Patterson/Lucy Allen	<i>(If it arose)</i>