

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
17 th December 2020	5.1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

COVID-19 Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
2 nd December 2020	2.7	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

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: Holy Trinity, Hinckley	Assessor's name: Revd Mark Cooper	Date completed: 8 th January 2021	Review date: 1 st January 2022
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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	Entry is the main entrance to the Trinity Centre: with doors open	MC	Ongoing
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	N/A		
	Buildings have been aired before use.		MC	Ongoing
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		SW & KL	Ongoing
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.		SW & KL	Ongoing
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Projector and screen separate from tables where people will sit and clearly marked off	MC	Ongoing
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Building will be cleaned in advance by Church Cleaner. After the service a designated person will clean all surfaces, door handles, light switches and toilets.	SW & KL	25/08/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Face coverings will be required. Signs are in place.	SW	25/8/2020
	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.	Main entrance		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	A welcomer will be positioned outside to encourage distancing.	MC	Ongoing
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors will be open, where weather allows	MC	Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Bibles and Literature removed Separate trays which will be family-specific will be kept safe and include a Bible and craft items	MC, AW, SA	04/09/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seating arranged by tables with one bubble only per table	Leader	Ongoing
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Welcomers will make this clear upon entry	MC	Ongoing
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	In place at entrance	SW	25/08/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices in place	SW	25/08/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Cleaning Regime in place	SW	25/08/20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Cleaning Regime in place	SW	25/08/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Cleaning Regime in place	SW	25/08/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Cleaning Regime in place	SW	25/08/20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Online Registration in place Form provided for others.	SW	25/08/20
	Inform parents regularly – and new families in particular – of distancing regulations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children to stay in family groups - Children to be accompanied to toilets - Any colds / illnesses to stay away for precaution 		Leader	Ongoing
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.	Cleaning regime will match service use. Usually church is cleaned on Monday morning.	SW	25/08/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.		If there is more than one service on a Sunday, surfaces will be cleaned between them		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Cleaners will be selected who are not in such a group	SW	25/08/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	To be done	KL	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	In place	SW	25/08/20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	In place	SW	25/08/20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Patrick Steele	SW	25/08/20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After each service	SW	25/08/20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Will remain vigilant	SW	25/08/20
	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.		
	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.		