

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 for Sunday morning services

Church: Christ Church Moreton Hall	Assessor's name: Heather Lovell, Churchwarden	This version completed: 12 th Feb 2002 (further to PCC 31 st January 2022)	Review date: As needed
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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 Our Stepping Stone licensee and Parish Nurse are using the building, plus occasional access by vicar, wardens and cleaners. Other groups will resume using the building from April 2021. A separate risk assessment will be created by those using the building for these other purposes.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	West door entrance		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Yes – aired regularly now		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	The cleaners resumed work on 1 st July 2020 (and will be cleaning weekly on Tues). They will maintain general cleanliness and they would spot animal waste, having alerted us to mice previously!	Cleaners	weekly
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Yes. And building now used regularly again	Cleaners and all users	weekly
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		JC	Done
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		JC, as needed	

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Deciding whether to open to the public We have consulted with the congregation to get their opinions and ideas on re-opening.	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	No longer an issue.		
	Update your website and any relevant social media.	We will update the website and Facebook page to let people know about services. Also, posters outside church and church newsletter	SL/JF/JC/HL	ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	No longer relevant		
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.		JF and wardens	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		JF and wardens	
	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.	West door entrance (front door and main church door propped open, steward to direct people through foyer). South door OR west door now available for exit.	Service leader and stewards	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Steward stationed in the foyer area before service – they will monitor safety.	Service steward	

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	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Air building (open windows and south door) before and during services. On cold days, one window to be open each side. Plus the heaters also draw in outside air to aid ventilation.	Service leader/ stewards	weekly
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Leaflets and booklets now used as appropriate. These have plenty of time to be hygienic before use the following Sunday.		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	N/A now		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Pens/paper and play bags to be available for children now – there is more than sufficient time between services for these to be safe.	stewards	ongoing
	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).	From Feb 22, there are more normal rows towards the front of church, for those who wish to sit together (face covers NOT required in this area). There will be more spaced pairs of chairs towards the back of church (face covers REQUIRED) for those who remain cautious.	JC/HL Service stewards	Feb 22

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	We will continue with entrance through the west door and exit through the south door. But people can now leave by the west door if they wish.	Stewards	ongoing
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Sanitiser at entrance and exit, if people wish to use these. Clear information is displayed re good handwashing.	JF/ wardens/ service leader and stewards	12/7/20 ongoing
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Dettol spray and wipes and paper towels easily accessible on foyer shelf. Stewards will be asked to wipe over key touchpoints before and after services (no longer a formal cleaning schedule).	HL	July 2021
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Yes	HL/ stewards	ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Yes, and extra supplies available in cupboard in ladies' toilet.	HL	ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Liners must be used in all bins (cleaners have also been informed of this) Liners provided on shelf in foyer. Stewards asked to empty bins at end of service if they are getting full.	HL Cleaners/ service stewards	July 2021 ongoing

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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.	Cleaners come each Weds. Service stewards and group leaders are asked to clean key touchpoints before/after each service/group.	Cleaners Service stewards/ all church users	ongoing ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Cleaners have their own cleaning protocol.	Cleaners	ongoing
		Disposable gloves are provided for all cleaning the church, as required.	HL	ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Spray, paper towels, wipes, liners all on shelf in foyer	HL	ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Bins in foyer, toilets and kitchen are lidded and lined	Cleaners Stewards	Weekly After service
Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	All bins to be emptied by the cleaners midweek. Service stewards/ midweek groups should empty bins if they are getting full.	Cleaners Service stewards and group leaders.	As needed	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		JF and wardens	As needed
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		JF and wardens	As needed

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Children’s and family service	Physical distancing	Chairs to be moved along rows into family groups. Families can bring own picnic blankets for seating on floor if preferred. Chairs can be moved to make larger groups. We do not want anyone to feel obliged to sit in a larger group, however.		
	Activity times	Multiple activity tables to be set up. These can be used by children/guardians of mixed family groups. These will be larger tables with aim of 2m distancing. Hand sanitiser on all tables for use before/after. Count made at start of service and additional tables to be put out if needed by stewards according to numbers. No obligation for families to join an activity table, provisions made for activity(s) to be taken to family group area if preferred.		