

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

Church: St Barnabas Church, Horton-cum-Studley	Assessor's name: Andrew Payne	Date completed: 8 August 2020	Review date:
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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	The South Door is the only point of entry	N/A	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here.	N/A	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Main door to be left open for 30 minutes before official opening, and beyond if able.	Duty Warden	On-going
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Check for and clean up bat droppings	Duty Warden	On-going
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	No water or lavatory facilities inside Church. Hand sanitizer provided.	Duty Warden	On-going
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Master control panel activates systems	Duty Warden	On-going
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No holy water stoup present. Font is covered and empty.	N/A	
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Livestreaming is not be performed.	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.	No relevant venues or businesses nearby.	N/A	
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Updated	PCC Secretary	1/8/20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not considered necessary based on historical use.	N/A	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	N/A	
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.	Confirmed above.	Churchwarden	On-going
	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.	Rota in place	On-going
	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.	The South Door is the only point of entry.	Churchwarden (during public worship)	On-going
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Sidesperson will ensure social distancing supported by Churchwarden	Churchwarden	On-going
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Door to be left open for 30 minutes before service begins	Churchwarden	On-going
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All books have been removed from pews. Printed service sheets provided and removed	Churchwardens	On-going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Hazard tape used to prevent access to bibles/hymn books.	PCC Secretary	June
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Not required due to gaps of 72 hrs between church openings	N/A	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Hazard tape used to prevent access	Churchwarden	June
	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).	Sufficient capacity to allow adequate social distancing for congregation who remain in situ for entire service.	Churchwarden	On-going
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Kneelers are placed to indicate seating positions to ensure social distancing congestion expected.	Churchwardens	On-going
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	When busy people to queue socially distanced at door until entry is clear. At the end of the service, people to be asked to go out one row at a time from the rear.	Churchwarden and Vicar	On-going
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Considered not necessary, due to small size of church	N/A	
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	One on table inside door next to service sheets	N/A	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Place collection plate for cash donations	Place collection plate on table by door	Churchwarden	On-going
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . None needed	N/A	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices are in place both outside and inside the church	PCC Secretary	June, updated July
	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 . Wipe entrance door handle	Churchwarden	On-going
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	N/A	N/A	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	N/A	N/A	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	N/A	N/A	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Names (and contact details of visitors) are recorded on register at each service, kept locked in the vestry and discarded after 21 days.	Churchwarden	On-going
	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.	Communication via spoken word, newsletter, telephone, email & A Church Near You website	Vicar and Churchwardens	On-going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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.	Church will be closed for over 144 hours between periods of opening	N/A	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Noted	N/A	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Check church before each opening	Duty Warden	On-going
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Noted	N/A	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Noted	N/A	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Dustbin outside Porch is filled as necessary , tidy check in place after each service	Duty Warden and Team	On-going
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Dustbin outside Porch is filled as necessary	Duty Warden and Team	On-going
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Weekly opening on Sundays only	N/A	
	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.	N/A	
	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.	Designated person	

Opening Checklist

Action	Checked
Open main door and leave it open for at least 30 minutes before official opening of church.	
Wipe entrance door handle.	
Check for and clean up bat and any other droppings.	
Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	
Check that hand sanitiser(s) is/are in the agreed position	
Check that notices are in place to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand sanitizer etc.	

Service Checklist

Action	Checked
Assigned Sidesperson to greet and guide people at the door. They ask people to wait at the entrance door until previous person or group is seated if congested.	
Assign one inside volunteer to guide people to seating when required. Likely to be the bell-ringer /Warden	
Place kneelers on pews at 2m distance before the service for people to social distance when congestion expected.	
Churchwarden on duty to check off all and new attendants against register. Register to be locked in the vestry and discarded after 21 days.	
Leave main door open during service where possible.	
At the end of the service, people to be asked to go out one row at a time departing from rear pews first.	