

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

(Responses in red)

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
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August.

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 **NOT APPLICABLE**
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: Christ Church Ainsworth	Assessor's name: Dave Thomson	Date completed: 3/7/20	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	Not possible. Main entrance available only.	DT	15/6/20 DT
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here . Checked. Lone workers to lock the main door and always carry a mobile phone. Organist notified.	DT	19/6/20 DT
	Buildings have been aired before use.	N/A – regular inspections prior to reopening	DT	15/6/20 DT
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	No animal waste, but in need of a hoovering before we reopen. (Hoovered 1/7/20)	DT	19/6/20 DT
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies Water systems have been flushed regularly during closure.	DT	15/6/20 DT

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Previously switched off at sockets only.	DT	15/6/20 DT
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A	DT	15/6/20 DT
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Livestreaming is from the Vicarage.	DT	1/7/20 DT
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.	N/A	DT	1/7/20 DT
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Done	DT	3/7/20 DT
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	No. Unlikely to be many attending.	DT	1/7/20 DT
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. N/A	DT	1/7/20 DT
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Website updated, announced on social media	DT	9/7/20 DT
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.	Yes. See above	DT	1/7/20 DT
	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. Done	DT	1/7/20 DT
	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.	Done	DT	7/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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 via main door. External door to Clergy (was choir) vestry to be unlocked but bolted when the building is in use as per PCC's fire evacuation policy.	Church Watch team / clergy.	Ongoing
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Unnecessary. Smooth entry & people know to queue 2m apart.	DT	1/7/20 DT
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Leave main doors ajar whenever open.	DT.	Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Done	DT	22/6/20 DT
	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	DT	15/6/20 DT
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Not necessary. See CofE's cleaning guidance.	DT	16/6/20 DT
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Done. Moved upstairs.	DT	22/6/20 DT
	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).	Done	DT	1/7/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Done	DT	1/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Limited space so alternative necessary. Therefore, fill from the front pews first and leave from the rear pews first.	DT	1/7/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Done	DT	1/7/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Done. Stations at the sidespersons' table, font, credence table (for clergy) and table near communion rail.	DT	19/6/20 DT
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No physical changes requiring Faculty or List B needed.	DT	15/6/20 DT
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Done	DT	1/7/20
	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 . Worship: No volunteers. Therefore, building will be left 72 hours minimum between use.	DT	15/7/20 DT

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>NB We cannot open for private prayer until we have cleaning volunteers.</p> <p><u>Funerals:</u> This will be done before or after funerals depending upon whether there has been or will be 72 hours since or before an act of worship.</p>		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Paper towels unnecessary. Government guidance allows hand dryers. However, water flow is poor, so advise using gel too.	DT	29/6/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. As above	DT	29/6/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Standard practice	Pew polishers etc	19/6/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Done	DT	1/7/20 DT
	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.	No need to notify neighbours. Congregation notified via newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, website, ACNY, posters.	DT	3/7/20 DT
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.	Noted	DT	15/6/20 DT
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Some pew polishers are shielding, most > 70. Policy is to a) remain closed for 72 hours where possible and b) recruit more pew polishers.	DT	19/6/20 DT
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Pew polishers clean on Thursday mornings, but more volunteers required. With 72 hours between usage, the number of volunteers we attract, and the times they can operate, will determine how many services we host on Sundays, and whether we can open for	DT	15/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>MWP, private prayer, baptisms, and weddings.</p> <p>[N.B., We have an on-call volunteer to cover funerals.]</p> <p>This is core to our mission. PCC may need to consider paying someone</p> <p>Until we have a team of volunteers, we will open once on Sundays only.</p>		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Disposable gloves available	DT	16/6/20 DT
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Leave for 72 hours, with a normal clean on Thursdays, otherwise: Pews (if touched) spray with dilute Ecover range detergent & water. Wipe dry with kitchen roll.	DT	1/7/20 DT

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>Other hard surfaces (e.g. door handles): as for pews but use disinfectant spray.</p> <p>Pew cushions: vacuum. If soiled, wipe area with dilute disinfectant.</p> <p>Toilet: Spray all surfaces with disinfectant and wipe down with kitchen roll.</p>		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Last cleaner	Last cleaner	Ongoing DT
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Cleaners asked to remove following each clean	Last cleaner	Ongoing DT
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Default position	DT	16/6/20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<p>Public Health England guidance available here.</p> <p>Wipe pews etc with the usual detergent mixture, but with added disinfectant. Wipe other areas with disinfectant. Disinfect the toilet.</p>	DT	16/6/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>Cleaners should wear gloves and aprons.</p> <p>All clothes, wipes, gloves aprons etc to be double bagged and disposed of.</p> <p>See PHE guidance if any surface is contaminated with bodily fluids.</p> <p>If the above is not possible (e.g. if no volunteer cleaners), the building will be closed, and any services cancelled.</p>		
	<p>If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.</p>	<p>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.</p> <p>Default position.</p>	DT	16/6/20

Clergy Prayer / Livestreaming

1. Clergy prayer continues at home, as before lockdown.
2. There is no broadband in church and the 4G signal is poor. Livestreaming utilising OBS from church would be impossible.

Decision: continue livestreaming from the Vicarage.

Private Prayer (General Public)

This is not feasible without sufficient volunteers to sit in the building. Also, in view of the restricted cleaning options, we must preserve the integrity of the building for at least 72 hours prior to Sunday worship.

Decision: do not open for private prayer yet.

Funerals

1. The absence of vergers causes a security risk for those funerals where there is a subsequent committal at a cemetery or crematorium. Who will direct late comers to their seats whilst the minister greets the coffin and leads the procession into church? Who will lock up and tidy away afterwards? **MITIGATION:** With capacity for 30 only, the minister will lock up before driving to the crematorium / cemetery for the committal. For burials in the churchyard, the risk of leaving the building open is minimal. The seating arrangements for latecomers are obvious. The minister will quickly tidy on return, leaving the volunteer cleaner to clean.
2. Track & Trace compliance. **MITIGATION:** Next of Kin will be asked to supply a list of those invited to attend.
3. Guidelines require churches to be cleaned before and after funerals. Who will do this? **MITIGATION:** We have a volunteer cleaner on call.
4. It is evident that some families ignore the attendance restrictions. Others, those with large families, find the limits distressing, so struggle to comply. Both situations render social distancing impossible to enforce and increase the risk that the attendance limit of 30 will be breached. This is manageable for graveside funerals, and not our problem at crematoria. Also, given the relatively small size of our church building, attendance of excessive numbers of mourners will jeopardise the health of the presiding minister. **MITIGATION:** Capacity limits will be stressed to next of kin and funeral directors.
5. Should anyone with COVID-19 attend, the church would need deep cleaning (who?) or closed for 72 hours. This would jeopardise continuity of Sunday worship. **MITIGATION:** We have a volunteer cleaner on call.

Decision: Christ Church will open for funerals.

Weddings

1. With large numbers of guests attending (80 is normal), there is a risk that the COVID compliant seating capacity (30) will be exceeded.
2. How will we ensure Track & Trace compliance?
3. With most weddings taking place on Saturdays, we will be forced to clean afterwards.

Decisions:

Couples will be advised to book their wedding for 2021. Where this cannot be done:

1. Couples will be asked to supply a guest list for Track & Trace.
2. The PCC will pay for a cleaner.

Baptisms:

1. With large numbers of guests attending (60 is normal), there is a risk that the COVID compliant seating capacity (30) will be exceeded.
2. How will we ensure Track & Trace compliance?
3. Unless we can clean following the 10.30am service, the only area of the building available will be that part of the chancel unused earlier.

Decisions:

1. Baptisms will be scheduled for 1pm to allow time for livestreaming at 12 noon.
2. Parents will be encouraged to defer until 2021.
3. Baptisms that cannot be deferred will take place in that part of the chancel unused at 10.30am, using the portable font. This means restricting attendance to the candidate, parents, and godparents only.
4. Parents will be asked to supply godparents' contact details For Track & Trace.

Public Worship:

1. Unless enough volunteers can be found to clean between services, Sunday worship must be limited to one service only (10.30am).
2. If a COVID-19 infected person enters the building, unless there are volunteers willing to deep clean, the building will be closed for 72 hours and any services during that period cancelled.
3. Mid-Week Praise is not currently feasible.
4. Continue livestreaming.
5. Worshippers asked to wear facemasks (unless exempt) and complete a track and trace form.

Seating Capacity

1. Maximum for the COVID regulations: Downstairs 30 (including choir pews) + 3 clergy (Sanctuary area) + 11 balcony + 1 Organist = 45
2. Publicised limit = 30 (to minimise risk).