

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: All Saints Church Hackbridge & Beddington Corner	Assessor's name: Rev Lynn Billin	Date completed: 2 nd July 2020	Review date: 23 rd July 2020 31 st July 2020 10 th September 2020
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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	We only have one point of entry – main doors		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Rev Lynn	Rev Lynn
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Buildings are aired and		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	We have a mouse		
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Taps have been turned on and toilet has been used	Alan Creber	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Not applicable		
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Removed in March 2020	Rev Lynn	March 2020 Rev Lynn
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Extension lead is used for laptop, MiFi. Socket is in the chancel area near organ console	Rev Lynn	

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 businesses in New Road		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website has been updated for private prayer – not yet for public worship	Rev Lynn	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	We have established a booking system for services from 2 nd August 2020	Rev Lynn & Alan Creber	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.		
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.	All above has been carried out		
	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.		
	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.	We only have one point of entry – main doors		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	There is space in grounds for people to queue safely at 2m without blocking pavement. 2m markers are in place	Alan Creber	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	No books, Bibles, literature, hymnbooks and leaflets are available		27 th July Rev Lynn & Alan Creber
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	We have no devotional objects available		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers have been stacked in closed pews		14 th July 2020 Alan Creber & Rev Lynn
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	No childrens resources available		27 th July Rev Lynn & Alan Creber
	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).	Physical distancing of 2m has been achieved. Pews have been moved and we have 10 pews available for one person or a household group. The North side nave pews have been move to create 2m social distancing in front of lectern. One way system in place – up side aisles and down central aisle		15 th June 2020 Alan Creber & Rev Lynn
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Open pews clearly marked and numbered for our booking system		15 th June 2020 Alan Creber

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>Following Govt Guidance issued 9th September 2020 <i>Places of worship can stay open for services of more than 6 people. However individual groups of more than one household or support bubble must not exceed 6 people.</i></p> <p>Church website to be updated</p>	Rev Lynn	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One way system in place, we only have on safe entry & exit		8 th June 2020 Alan Creber
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Chancel, Lady chapel altar cordoned off		8 th June 2020 Rev Lynn
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser available with caution notice at entrance to church. Safeseat toilet dispenser fitted to cubicle toilet		8 th June 2020 Rev Lynn Alan Creber
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Temporary changes have been put in place – moving pews. Votive candle stand has been moved to Lady Chapel – pens paper, taper and matches removed	Rev Lynn	22 nd July 2020 Rev Lynn

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		License for temporary minor reordering granted		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices available for sanitising, 2m social distancing		8 th June 2020 Rev Lynn
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	While church open for private prayer Alan Creber can sanitise touch points We have volunteers to sanitise touchpoints in nave after services. Clergy are sanitising touchpoints in chancel and beyond. establishing a cleaning rota	Alan Creber Alan Creber to do rota Rev Lynn	Alan Creber
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	We have our own supplier for sanitiser, wipes etc	Rev Lynn & Alan Creber	8th July 2020
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	We have our own supplier for soap and hand towels	Alan Creber	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	All bins have bin liners & disposable gloves	Alan Creber	

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	We have established a booking system – we have details of church family members We are utilising the Test & Trace consent form	Rev Lynn & Alan Creber	22 nd July 2020
	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.	Rev Lynn has produced written guidance about what to expect at a Covid 19 service This information will also be available on social media and our website	23 rd July 2020 Rev Lynn	
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.	When our church is open for private prayer only, Alan Creber will sanitise touchpoints		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.			
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning rota in progress	Rev Lynn – notice sheet & e-mail	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	We have disposable gloves		

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	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	We have sanitising wipes in church Touch points will be pews, votive candle stand, door handles & touch points in the accessible toilet		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Alan Creber	Alan Creber	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	We don't expect to have enough traffic to need waste to be removed daily		
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	If no pastoral office is due, we can close the church for 72 hours and Rev Lynn can stream a service on Wednesday and Sunday from home		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Follow guidance Covid 19 – cleaning in non-healthcare settings Public Health England guidance available here.	Alan Creber & cleaning team	

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	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 .		