

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: St Peter's Meavy	Assessor's name: Sarah Gordon, Mary Helby, Jonathan Frappell	Date completed: 9th July 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	Entrance through South door Drake door also unlocked.	AT	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	.	AT	
	Buildings have been aired before use.		C/W	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		C/W	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	No refreshments at present so no need to use kitchen.	N/A	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		C/W	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Always empty except font for baptism	C/W	
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		N/A	
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	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	RA to be displayed on MC website by all churches	SG/BG	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not needed unless poss MC service	AT	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark		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.		C/W	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	.	C/W yes	
	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.	South door One sidesperson to be outside	C/W	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	One sidesperson to be outside for direction/help	C/W	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Yes		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Service booklets and Service books may now be used but need to be unused for 48hrs following a service before further use.	Done/Covered	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be		Done C/W	

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	touched or closely breathed on)			
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Removed to South Transept	Done C/W	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Removed to South Transept	Done C/W	
	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).	Carried out with view for Morning Worship and Communion service.	C/W	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Pews taped off		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. 2m at all times or 1m+ with mask.	Flow in South door/up north aisle, out via Drake aisle Arrows/tape needed. To receive communion (bread only) social distance up to altar rail, stand to receive bread and return through Drake aisle to end and back to pew up north aisle. Hand sanitiser will be available.	C/W	
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Areas of chancel/Drake chapel taped off	C/W	
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser available in porch for use on entry and exit	C/W	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	.	N/A	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Minimal signs to be prepared 2 sidesperson on duty preferred to signs. Current government advice states that it is up to each individual to decide whether they wish to wear a face covering.	C/W	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	72 hour rule to be used.		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		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	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Done C/W	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	One sidesperson will list names of attendees. If not known will ask.	C/W	
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers		AT /C/W	

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	will know what to expect when they come.			
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.	After Sunday service church will be cleaned/hoovered ready for next Service 72 hr rule used.	C/W	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		C/W	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.		C/W	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Available in Kitchen	C/W	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Available in kitchen	C/W	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		N/A	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		N/A	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Yes	C/W	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		N/A at this time	

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	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.		C/W	

** Clock winding - Phil Helby – will take place on Wednesday and Sunday to comply with 72 hr rule.

Flower arranging - Sue Frappell and others – will take place on Wednesday to comply with 72hr rule.

** We consider 2 sidespersons on duty at each service to help with seating, name taking, direction help – better than too many signs.

Use service sheets/booklets. Organ can be played or use music box.

We must put a sign on the outside door/porch with the maximum number allowed at a service to be able to do social distancing. 30

For communion – clergy ONLY to prepare wafers. No wine. No assistance.

Collection – retiring collection only. Contents of plate into bag and not touched for at least 72 hours. Possibly count on the following Sunday. Or take home and count at home with second person present.