

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 Nicholas, Wickham	Assessor's name: Revd Dr Ruth Howlett-Shiple	Date completed: 8 Aug 2020	Review date: 8 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	Access via North Transept door	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	N/A – two persons present for recording.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Aired every day and will be aired throughout service by leaving main door and North Transept doors open	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Church regularly cleaned for bat faeces	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Church Room and toilets locked and not being used. Bottled water to be used.	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electrical systems working. Heating not required and will be serviced in September before use.	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No stoups and font always empty unless baptism – N/A	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets,	N/A	Ruth Howlett-Shiple	14 Jun 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	cables/tripod causing trip hazard			
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 change from normal Sunday use.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Updated every week with relevant information	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Discussed with ministry team and churchwardens. Considered and not deemed necessary or appropriate for congregation although this will be monitored after each service. Very few people have presented for private prayer so unlikely to be large numbers. No special services being held.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020
	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.	All steps above have been taken	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 20
	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 . Reviewed and measures complied with. Church has been cleaned every day since opening for 2 hours per day.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020

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	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.	Very clear signage using main door as entry point and North Transept doors for exit. One-way system in place. Three stewards to direct to seats.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	5 Jul 2020
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Doors will open at 0945 for the 1000 service. People will be advised to socially distance and steward outside to control entry into church.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	5 Jul 2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	All doors will be open throughout the service	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All Bibles /literature/hymn books and leaflets removed and safely stored	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 June 2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	No devotional items are out and books / bibles have been removed	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pews not in use for private prayer. Kneelers left in place as only used on Sunday and will not be used again for at least 72 hours. In reality it will be 14 days until church open for public worship again.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	No children’s resources left out.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020

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	<p>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).</p>	<p>Three people will be on duty to steward people into church and determine appropriate seating for household groups. Pews will be filled from the front to minimise people passing in the aisles. People will be placed in seats and asked not to move around. Overflow seating grouped in pairs or threes depending on households will be placed in the transepts giving 2m clearance between seats.</p> <p>Use of 1m distance in pews with mitigation of all facing the same way if absolutely necessary.</p> <p>Stewards will be clearly briefed prior to services.</p> <p>From 8 August, the wearing of face coverings is mandatory. All of the congregation will be asked to wear a face covering. Those refusing to wear a face covering will be denied access</p>	<p>Ruth Howlett-Shipley</p>	<p>8 Aug 2020</p>

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		to the building. The ministry team does not have to wear a face covering as long as they maintain an appropriate distance (> 2m).		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Clearly marked	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	Adrian Jordan 4 Jul 2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Clearly marked and will be reinforced verbally just before the service starts. On leaving the building, stewards will direct order in which congregation vacates the building. Those with limited mobility will be asked to remain in their seats until the rest of the congregation is outside.	Stewards	5 Jul 2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Chancel gates are closed. Lady chapel not available. Vestry cordoned off and only accessible to clergy	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Completed and sanitisers on wall of church at entry. Freestanding sanitiser unit available on exit. Steward to monitor people on arriving in	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020

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		church and point to sanitiser point.		
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No temporary permissions required	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices on front door (main entry point)	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	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 . Appropriate wipes and sprays being used routinely	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	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. No change from normal operating	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	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. One toilet will be available during public worship with wipes and soap, towels and bin	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Normal practice	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	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 telephone number will be recorded by churchwarden on entry and	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020

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		shredded after 21 days		
	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.	All are aware	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	4 Jul 2020
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 is open daily for 2 hours of private prayer in designated seats in the crossing. These pews and all door furniture wiped as well as tops of edges of pews and any other furniture that may be touched for support	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Only completed by < 70 and not shielding	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Set up and managed ministry team.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Purchased as required	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Removed by cleaning team	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Removed by cleaning team	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Public Health England advice will be followed and if appropriate the Church will be closed for > 72 hours if we are aware of a case with notice placed on church doors. It will also be posted on the website	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England advice will be followed and if appropriate the Church will be closed for > 72 hours if we are aware of a case with notice placed on church doors. It will also be posted on the website. Public Health England guidance available here . Deep cleaning will be undertaken as per Public Health England guidance if 72 hour closure is not possible.	Ruth Howlett-Shipley	14 Jun 2020
	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 . As above	Adrian Jordan	14 Jun 2020