

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 <sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> August.*

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> 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**

<b>Church:</b> ALL SAINTS BISLEY	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Nigel Rogers	<b>Date completed:</b> 23/09/2020	<b>Review date:</b> Monthly
-------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  <a href="#">General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</a>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Entry via south door minimise risk to meeting room	NR	10/06/20 NR
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Policy adopted 11/02/20 New risk assessment done	NR	08/06/20 NR
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Meeting room North and South doors opened 45mins	NR	08/06/20 and at times since
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Some mouse droppings cleared	SB	12/06/20 SB Regular checks
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Water had been run toilet flushed on regular basis during lock down Run for 20 mins when supply turned on Water run on regular basis since	NR	08/06/20 NR And regularly since
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electrical systems turned on and checked Boiler heating run up during service	NR	NR 04/06/20 Engineer 3/9/20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font empty	NR	14/06/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Not streaming at present checks will be completed if needed	NR	
<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Note taken of nearby venues church seen as minimal impact on other business	NR	Aug 20 NR
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Bisley Benefice and facebook updated Pewslip on line	SM	ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not considered necessary at present	NR	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Being considered when fully open	NR	
	<b>Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.</b>	Posters in church entrance and on pewslips update website	NR/SM	
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	All steps completed	NR	14/06/20
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	DONE NR	14/06/20
	<b>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.</b>	Signage added to Entrance and sanitising point	NR	Sept 20
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with	South door provides both entry and exit route with wait here signs at end of one way	NR/SB	13/06/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	system to check entrance prior to exiting		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Plenty of space outside to queue and maintain social distance. Special care with porch suggest a wait here sign outside as well as one in porch	NR	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Suggest both doors open Where possible open N and S Doors prior to service	NR	14/06/20  Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All removed hymn books and bibles taped off in bookcase.	NR	14/06/20
	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 objects in public areas	NR	14/06/20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Cushions and kneelers removed from pews in use	NR	14/06/20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Area blocked off	NR	14/06/20
	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).	One way system marked out with pews taped off and staggered to give 2 mtrs separation. Seating now at 1m+ with masks	NR	14/06/20  Sept 20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.			

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.	Floor and wall stickers placed at regular intervals showing one way and spacing	NR	14/06/20
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Temporary cordons to be placed dependent on numbers to minimise areas used	NR	14/06/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Sanitisers now available on entry and in vestry and Altar	NR	14/06/20and later
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No changes required	NR	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Relevant notices in place and monitored	NR	14/06/20 NR
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Spray available warden to use as necessary Cleaning advice printed off	NR	Ongoing warden
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Handwashing facilities not available at present supplies in place when back in use	NR	14/06/20 NR
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Toilet facilities not available at present supplies in place when back in use	NR	14/06/20 NR
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Bin by South door complies	NR	14/06/20 NR

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	Provision made after the sanitiser station so keep pen clean	NR	Aug 20
	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.	Notice given via Website, notice board and pewslips	Various	ongoing
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	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.	Where possible the church to remain closed for 72 hrs To maintain regular cleaning . Further sanitisation required if less than 72 hrs.	NR	Sept 20 updated
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Volunteer cleaners checked	NR	Sept 20 updated
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Volunteers contacted willing to resume cleaning	NR	Updated Sept 20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Check with JB availability	NR	Sept 20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	check suitability of current products with JB	NR	ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	N/A at present	NR	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily when in use	NR	14/06/20 Warden duty

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Plan to keep closed if no other call on building.	NR	14/06/20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	Noted NR	
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	Noted NR	