

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 Cuthbert's Thetford	Assessor's name: Rodney Back	Date completed: 2 nd July 2020	Review date: 30 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	Clergy could enter the church via the clergy vestry door which is not used for public entrance. Bolt on the inside of the door will be opened on 6 th July so clergy are able to use a key to enter and leave	Rod Back	6 th July Rod Back
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here . "The PCC are in the process of adopting a policy based on the diocesan policy"	PCC Secretary Caroline	PCC Secretary Caroline 12 th July
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building has been aired on 21 st June 2020 and 29 th June 2020	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	No animal waste and building is clean	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies All water systems have been	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June

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		flushed through on 21 st and 29 th June		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Electrical systems checked and working. Heating system not working as pump has failed in boiler room. Heating engineer visited and confirmed we need a new pump which he has ordered. We do not normally need the heating system during July and August so this should not prevent services taking place. The water for cleaning and hand washing is operated by a different system and is working.	John Richens & Rod Back	John Richens & Rod Back 29 th June
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Checked and all are empty	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	No live streaming taking place	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
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 conflict with other venues and businesses as Sunday service is at 9-00 am and most businesses are closed. Wednesday is limited to small numbers for private prayer. Funerals are limited to 30	Rod Back	Rod Back 2 nd July

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	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website being updated	Rev Peter Herbert	Rev Peter Herbert 12th July
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system being considered and method of doing this	Rev Peter Herbert	Rev Peter Herbert 12 th July
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	Apply here. No specific opening for tourists	Rod Back	Rod Back 2 nd July
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 will be complete by 6 th July	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	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. Guide has been reviewed	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	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.	The Well Street door will be used as a single point of entry and the King Street door will be used as an exit. There are one way directional signs showing the way. Entrance and Exit signs will be put outside each door	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Stewards will monitor waiting area outside entrance and indicate social distance for people who are waiting to enter	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Where possible, doors and windows should be	Doors can be opened during	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th

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	opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	services		June
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All hymn books, Bibles leaflets and printed material has been removed	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips and Alan Miller	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, Alan Miller. 21st June
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Items moved to Chancel away from public access	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips and Alan Miller	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, Alan Miller. 21st June
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Cushions & Kneelers removed & stored	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips and Alan Miller	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, Alan Miller. 21st June
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	All children’s play items have been removed & stored There is a children’s table and chairs if children attend services for them to use their own resources	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips and Alan Miller	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, Alan Miller. 21st June
	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).	Walk through completed	Rod Back & John Richens	Rod Back & John Richens 29 th June

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	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seating has been marked out to allow 2 m distancing and excluded seats have been marked	Rod Back & John Richens	Rod Back & John Richens 29 th June
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Directional signs have been put on the floor and “Keep Your Distance” signs put on the glass doors	Rod Back & John Richens	Rod Back & John Richens 29 th June
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	We believe this is not required	Rod Back & John Richens	Rod Back & John Richens 29 th June
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Hands free sanitiser units placed at entrance and exit with notice to ask visitors to use on the way in and out. Additional hand sanitiser placed outside the toilets	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips and Alan Miller	Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, Alan Miller. 21st June
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No temporary changes needed	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices have been put up	Rod Back & John Richens	Rod Back & John Richens 29 th June
	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 . A cleaner has been engaged to carry out this task	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 29 th June

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	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. Adequate hand soap, paper towels and bins have been provided.	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	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. Adequate hand soap, paper towels and bins have been provided.	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	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 disposable liners	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	This will be monitored by Sandra and a record kept for 21 days	Sandra Phillips	Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	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.	Website will be updated. Weekly email will notify people and announcement made on live stream	Rev Peter Herbert & Rev Tony Heywood	Rev Peter Herbert & Rev Tony Heywood 5 th July
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church	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.	This will be implemented & monitored by Sandra	Sandra Phillips	Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	This will be implemented & monitored by Sandra Phillips & Rod Back	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 2 nd July

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buildings can be found here.	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Paid professional cleaner employed to carry this out	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 2 nd July
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Disposable gloves in stock	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 2 nd July
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Sensitive cleaning material has been ordered	Rod Back	Rod Back 29 th June
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Paid cleaner will be responsible for this	Sandra Phillips	Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Contaminated waste will be removed each time the building is used. This will be arranged with the paid cleaner	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 29 th June
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This will be monitored by Sandra Phillips & Rod Back	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips	Rod Back & Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England guidance available here. This will be monitored by Sandra	Sandra Phillips	Sandra Phillips 29 th June
	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. This will be monitored by Sandra	Sandra Phillips	Sandra Phillips 29 th June

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