

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 for Sunday morning services (to re-commence from Easter Day, 4th April 2021)

Church: Christ Church Moreton Hall	Assessor's name: Heather Lovell, Churchwarden	This version completed: 29 th April 2021	Review date: End May 2021
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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 Our Stepping Stone licensee and Parish Nurse are using the building, plus occasional access by vicar, wardens and cleaners. Other groups will resume using the building from April 2021. A separate risk assessment will be created for those using the building for these other purposes.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	West door entrance		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Yes		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	The cleaners resumed work on 1 st July (and will be cleaning weekly on Weds). They will maintain general cleanliness and they would spot animal waste, having alerted us to mice previously!	Cleaners	weekly
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	David Barrett (Stepping Stone licensee) has flushed things through most weeks for us in January-March 2021. The cleaners will also have been flushing toilets/ running water on their weekly visits.	DB and cleaners	weekly until April (cleaners to continue)
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		JC, as needed	

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	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		JC, as needed	
Deciding whether to open to the public We have consulted with the congregation to get their opinions and ideas on re-opening.	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Sunday is quiet in the carpark. No issues apparent.		
	Update your website and any relevant social media.	We will update the website and Facebook page to let people know about services. Also, posters outside church and church newsletter	SL/JF/JC/HL	ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	With careful arrangement and stewarding we can safely fit a maximum of 50 people from 25 households/social bubbles. A seating plan has been created. We will be using an email booking system for services for now.	HL	ongoing
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.		JF and wardens	
	Review CoE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		JF and wardens	
	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.	West door entrance (front door and main church door propped open, steward to direct people through foyer).	Service leader and stewards	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		South door exit (steward to open and direct people out)		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Steward stationed in the foyer area before service – they will monitor safety. Posters on small hall outer door & west doors to remind people about safe distancing.	Service steward JC	14/7
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Air building (open windows and south door), weather permitting, before and during services.	Service leader/ stewards	weekly
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All removed/ made inaccessible.	JF/JC	Early July
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	N/A Chairs and table in foyer removed	JC	Early July
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	N/A		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children’s resources to be removed/ put out of reach	JF/JC	Early July
	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).	Seating plan created. People will be told that chairs are not to be moved from these positions, unless by a steward to allow a family/ social bubble to sit together.	JF/JC Service steward	12/7
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seating arrangements in place (marked on floor)	JF and wardens	12/7

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Posters to indicate route through church. Instructions given in weekly newsletter and on website. Service leader and stewards to remind as needed.	JF and wardens Service leader	Mid July ongoing
	Limit access to places where the public does not need to go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	All other rooms to be locked. Main door and church door to be propped open, and south door opened by steward when people leave. One toilet accessible, others blocked by barrier.	JF/ wardens/ service leader and stewards	ongoing
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Sanitiser at entrance and exit; people will be asked to use these on the way in and out. People will also be asked to sanitise hands before entering the toilet, and clear information is displayed re good handwashing.	JF/ wardens/ service leader and stewards	12/7 ongoing
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing, close toilet lid before flushing etc.	Yes	JC	16/7
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Dettol spray and wipes and paper towels easily accessible on foyer shelf, along with a cleaning schedule for use before and after services.	HL	16/7

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Yes	HL (ongoing)	12/7
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Yes, and extra supplies available in cupboard in ladies’ toilet.	HL	ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	HL checked all bins. The cleaning schedule notes that liners must be used in all bins (cleaners have also been informed of this) Liners provided on shelf in foyer.	HL Cleaners/ service stewards	12/7 ongoing
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	Foyer steward to record names, contact details and consent to record these details (on sheet provided). On the back of this attendance sheet is a floor plan to mark where everyone is sitting.	Service stewards	ongoing
	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, Facebook page, posters outside church and church newsletter – clear list of service guidelines. Notice on display in foyer/ main doors with key “rules”.	JF/ wardens/ SL	ongoing
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	Cleaners come each Weds. Cleaning schedules are displayed on the foyer noticeboard, indicating what must be cleaned	Cleaners	ongoing

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		on service days and by midweek users.	Service stewards/ all church users	ongoing
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Key touchpoints will be well cleaned after the service as per the cleaning schedule. The toilet door should be propped open for a few minutes (to aid ventilation) before cleaning.	Service leader and stewards	ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Cleaners have their own cleaning protocol.	Cleaners	ongoing
		Disposable gloves are provided for all cleaning the church	HL	ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Spray, paper towels, wipes, liners all on shelf in foyer	HL	ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Bins in foyer, toilets and kitchen are lidded and lined	Cleaners Stewards	Weekly After service
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Toilet bin and foyer bin to be emptied after services or midweek group use and new bin liners put in	Service stewards and group leaders	As needed

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Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		JF and wardens	As needed
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		JF and wardens	As needed
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.			

Important additional notes:

An instruction sheet is available for all those helping at services (leaders, stewards, musicians...) See ccmh.org.uk/docs
Cleaning schedules (which must be initialled and dated) are on display on the foyer noticeboard.

The foyer steward is responsible for welcoming people, ensuring safe socially distanced entry and explaining key safety points (e.g. a reminder to sanitise hands, stay 2m away from others...). This steward should also oversee the use of toilet facilities and ensure people sanitise hands before entering the toilet (with clear posters inside toilets to remind people about good handwashing, using wipes to clean behind them and closing the toilet lid before flushing).

The church steward will direct people to seats (only this church steward is allowed to move seats, if necessary, to facilitate a family/ social bubble), keep an overall eye on social distancing, answer questions as needed and open the south door/ direct people out (reminding them to sanitise hands) at the end.

All people must stay 2m away from others, except those from their household/ social bubble. The use of face coverings is mandatory from 8th August 2020. The one exception is service leaders, who do not need to wear a face covering whilst leading the service (so long as 5m distance from others is maintained).

Collection bowls will be available near the entrance to the main worship area and at the exit, if people would like to donate money this way. At the end of the service, any money should be emptied into a dated envelope and placed in the safe for counting at a later date (at least 72 hours later). Then hands should be well washed/sanitised.

Music at church

Congregational singing is not allowed, but members of the music group may sing/play, so long as protective measures are in place. These are:

- Clear screens in front of each musician/singer, to protect the congregation (we have 3 screens – therefore 3 people maximum)
- Musicians/ singers themselves to remain at least 2m away from each other on the stage.
- Musicians/ singers need not wear face coverings during music, but these should be worn at all other times to help protect others on the stage.
- If the saxophone is used, this must be with its special protective attachment, and the musician should direct all playing behind their screen.

Stage microphones

- Tie mics should only be used by one person per service. Once used, they should either be sterilised with a Dettol wipe or left untouched for 72 hours minimum.
- Static mics (which may be used by more than one person – though not at the same time) must NOT be touched. If possible, one mic should only be used by one person per service. If this is not possible the lectern area must be cleaned with a Dettol wipe after each use.

Social distancing after the service: The congregation must not gather to talk in the church but dismiss safely and well socially distanced through the south door. If people wish to talk to others briefly on the church grounds after the service, they must respect social distance requirements and never gather in groups larger than six.

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of/ change in their normal sense of taste and smell) should not attend the place of worship due to the risk that they pose to others; they should self-isolate at home immediately, as should other members of their household.

If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in our building they should go home immediately and self-isolate with other members of their household. They should contact NHS Test and Trace to arrange a test. Others at church should wash their hands thoroughly after any interaction with this person, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by Test and Trace.

The church website contains all key church COVID-19 safety documents (people have been directed to this in church newsletters): the most up-to-date risk assessment, information on GDPR/Test and Trace, Guidance for all attending services and Information for those helping with services. There is also a document detailing our safety requirements for anyone/ any group using the church midweek. See ccmh.org.uk/docs