

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 Etheldreda Guilsborough | Assessor's name: Allison Twigg - Associate priest Hilary Worton, Paul Jacobs CW | Date completed: V4 9 th July 2020 V3 15 th June 2020 V2 10 th June 2020 | Review date: 30 th September 2020 Following change of guidance |
|---|--|--|---|

| 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 not using this church in this way. Main door only available. Door handle to be cleaned following unlocking. Door to be propped open during building use. | AT Churchwarden or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | Lone Working Policy Drafted to be adopted by Leadership team following meeting 1.9.20 | AT | On going from 15 th June AT |
| | Buildings have been aired before use. | Building aired in advance of entry | AT Churchwarden | On going from 15 th June AT |
| | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Regular checks CW to contact Cleaners where available for first entry post lockdown. Bat waste swept or vacuumed – surfaces wiped with soapy water/anti bac spray. Spray cloth not surfaces as per cleaning schedule. | AT Churchwarden Or Nominated Cleaner | On going from 15 th June AT |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| | | Wearing facemask where there is an accumulation of Bat Waste and gloves. Cleaning Schedule made available | | |
| | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies | | |
| | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies To include several flushes of toilets, of running taps, particular attention to be paid to the flushing through of Hot water systems such as hydroboil and boiling water tap. | Churchwarden Or AT | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Font empty no stoop present | Churchwarden Or AT | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | N/A Live streaming from Vicarage at present | Churchwarden Or AT | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| 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 No relevant local businesses | Churchwarden Or AT | On going from 9 th July |

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|--|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | Administrator contacted to share information. Share in group email and by letter where no email contact | Churchwarden Or AT +KJ | On going from 9 th July |
| | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Not thought necessary in the first instance | Churchwarden Or AT +KJ | On going from 9 th July |
| | If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | Apply here. Uplands Churches not drawing many tourists | Churchwarden Or AT +KJ | On going from 9 th 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. | Completed in advance of opening | AT CW | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | 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. CW to contact Cleaners where available for first entry post lockdown. Bat waste swept or vacuumed – surfaces wiped with soapy water/anti bac spray. Spray cloth not surfaces. Wearing facemask where there is an accumulation of Bat Waste and gloves. Cleaning Schedule written and shared with cleaners. | AT CW Cleaning team | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | 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. | Main door only, to be kept propped open during times of private prayer, danger of trip hazards at other door. Minimal numbers expected. | AT CW Cleaning team | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |

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|---------------|---|---|------------------------|---|
| | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Main door only, to be kept propped open during times of private prayer, danger of trip hazards at other door. Welcomers to check queue is spaced at 2m and offer direction if needed | AT CW Sides men | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | All available doors and windows open | AT CW Cleaning team | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Removed by CW in advance of opening Encourage people to print and bring their own leaflets. Those without can take a service booklet – and then keep it for re-use. Books will need to be laid out 72 hours in advance of worship. | AT CW | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | 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 Covered by exclusion zones. | | |
| | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed in advance of opening by CW | AT CW | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Covered by exclusion zone or removed from use | AT CW | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
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| | 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). | 2 m stick. Seats for congregation to be marked at suitable spacing with tick card in pew. Seating at 2m At the point of receiving communion social distancing will be reduced to 1m+ Clergy to wear face shields and will take communion to those in the pews, moving away swiftly and there will be no words at the point of reception. | Churchwarden | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Seats for private prayer to be marked at suitable spacing with tick card in pew Exclusion zones marked with tape with no entry signs on pews. | Churchwarden | On going from 15 th June AT or CW |
| | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Private prayer capacity 3 people monitored by daily supervisor. Low numbers envisaged in village church. For worship services- Welcomers to direct worshippers to seats filling church to avoid people having to pass each other. | AT CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---------------|---|--|---------------------------|---|
| | Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed. | Exclusion Zones Marked with tape and monitored by supervisor. Directing people to the arranged places. | AT CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Handsanitiser and safety signs by the door 5L sanitiser in reserve with CW Small handsanitiser needed on credence table for communion. | AT CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . | | |
| | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices at the door by hand sanitiser – prompts given by supervisor if needed. AT to print and laminate CW to display Daily Supervisor to check all in place. | AT CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |

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|---------------|--|---|------------------------|---|
| | Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Daily Supervisor will clean at end of session. CW to ensure they know what they have to do. Disinfectant cleaner and paper towels or cleaning wipes. Door handles and Light switches, and used areas to be cleaned after supervised session by supervisor wearing gloves at the end of the session Following Cleaning Schedule | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June |
| | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Toilet /Serving area closed Hand sanitiser available | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Toilet /Serving area closed | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Bin must have a liner for safety of emptying. Bag sealed at end of session and placed in outside bin. | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |

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| | If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days | Congregations asked to complete GDPR consent for Track and Trace as per UK Gov. advice in advance of arrival for worship. Welcomers to keep a list of who is in church for 21 days. Kept in Safe and shredded by wardens after 21 days. | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 9 th July CW or daily supervisor |
| | 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. | Shared in email, by post to those that have no email. On church and village social media. | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 9 th July CW or daily supervisor |
| 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. | It is planned that there will be 72 hours between each usage of the church | CW | On going from 15 th June CW |
| | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | It is planned that there will be 72 hours between each usage of the church. | CW | On going from 15 th June CW |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---------------|---|---|------------------------|---|
| | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Daily Supervisor will clean at end of session. CW to ensure they know what they have to do. Disinfectant cleaner and paper towels or cleaning wipes. Door handles and Light switches, and used areas to be cleaned after supervised session by supervisor wearing gloves at the end of the session Following Cleaning Schedule | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June |
| | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Gloves purchased and provided in advance of opening for daily supervisors to use when cleaning | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Suitable cleaning resources stored in toilet cupboard. Daily supervisors to let CW know if any need replacing | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Sealed in plastic bin bags, removed to outside bin. Daily Supervisor to complete | CW or daily supervisor | On going from 15 th June CW or daily supervisor |
| | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Sealed in plastic bin bags, removed to outside bin Daily Supervisor to complete | CW or daily supervisor | Sealed in plastic bin bags, removed to outside bin |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|--|---|--|-----------------|---|
| Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | It is planned that there will be 72 hours between each usage of the church | CW | On going from 15 th June CW |
| | If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | It is planned that there will be 72 hours between each usage of the church | CW | On going from 15 th June CW |
| | If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. | It is planned that there will be 72 hours between each usage of the church As noted in cleaning schedule | CW | On going from 15 th June CW |

Please note this risk assessment is to be read in conjunction with Cleaning Schedule, Procedure for entering church to worship, procedure for setting up for communion.