

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 th 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 8th August.

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: Deane	Assessor's name: Beccy Clark (Administrator), Jane Hampson (Churchwarden)	Date completed: 12 th September	Review date: 1 st October 2020
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name	Review comments
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	One point of entry and exit to be marshalled by designated people – congregation to queue at 2m distance outside the building and to the side of the main door	Warden/designated people		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.		N/A		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	High level windows and lower level windows on north and south aisles have been open throughout the closure of the building.	BC		Windows remain open
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Full clean completed 8 July	BC/JH	8 th July	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Water has been run for at least five minutes, weekly, during the closure of the building.	BC/TC		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating system annual service completed on 26 th June 2020.	BC	Heating – 26 th June	

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	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		N/A		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	N/A. Services are not being livestreamed. A pre-recorded video will continue be made. Will be available via YouTube.			
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.	Times are as pre March 2020	No action required		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Details of re-opening and how to register for services made available on www.deanechurch.org and on Deane Church Facebook page.	BC	Completed 18 th July 2020	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Following questionnaire to parishioners a booking system will be necessary.	BC	Completed 18 th July 2020	Registration via a dedicated page on website. Managed in blocks of 3 weeks. System is working.
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark		N/A		

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	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Email that is sent to those who have booked in reminds them that anyone over the age of 11 needs to wear a face mask, unless exempt.	BC	From 7 th August 2020	No further action
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 8 th July 2020	
	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 .	JH		
	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.		BC	12 th September 2020	
	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 to be used for IN and OUT supervised by those on duty. Not possible to use a separate exit.			Entry and exit point working well. No changes needed.
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	2 metre markings to indicate queuing places		Completed 18 th July 2020	Queuing system working. No changes needed.

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	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Windows have been open since March.		Completed	Doors are left open during the service.
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Boxed and stored		Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)			Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance			Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Vestry door to be locked		Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	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).	Meeting held in church on Sunday 5 July 2020 of Vicar/Curate/Wardens/Administrator		Completed 5 July 2020 TC	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Marked out in red/white hazard tape		Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building	3 designated people will be on duty to escort individuals and family groups to a specific pew - filling up		Completed 19 th July 2020	System is working well – no

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	to maintain physical distancing requirements.	from the front of the church. Exit will be from back pews first.			changes needed.
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Marked out in red/white hazard tape		Completed 8 July 2020 JH/BC	
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser purchased. Stations will be placed on entry and exit point.	TC	Completed 18 th July 2020	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	N/A			
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices placed on lychgate doors and on main front doors.	BC	Completed 18 th July 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.	Completed 8 July BC/JH – to be repeated on arrival on 19 July 2020 by sidesperson - handles etc..		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.			Completed 8 July BC/JH	Checked weekly
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Toilet available for emergency use only. Soap and hand towels available.		Completed 8 July BC/JH	Checked weekly

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	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.			Completed 8 July BC/JH	Checked weekly
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Booking system will give us the main record of those attending. Cards will also be available to be completed by anyone whose contact details we don't already hold. To be dropped in a box at the back of church.	BC	Completed 19 th July 2020	Cards haven't been needed as yet. Had contact details of everyone attending.
	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.	Information and guidance email/posted to all church members/in church newsletter and posted on social media	BC	Completed 19 th July 2020	
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.	Church will be cleaned after 9am service 10-10.30am ready for 10:45am service (where applicable).	Designated people		Cleaning between services working well. No changes needed
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Checked	JH		

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Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning completed		Completed 8 July JH/BC	Building cleaned on Wednesday each week.
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Gloves purchased and under sink in the kitchen		Completed 8 July JH	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	New materials purchased and in cleaning cupboard – Sensitive washing up liquid (diluted) to be used on wood surfaces		Completed 8 July JH	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Warden/designated person to dispose into church bin at graveyard – do not take home	Warden/designated person		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Removal each Sunday after services	Warden/designated person		
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Church to be closed for 72 hours from Sunday at 1.00pm	TC		
	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 .			
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Church will be cleaned on Wednesday each week	JH to set up a new rota	Completed	