# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july) 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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**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).

1. 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **St George’s Church Swallowbeck Lincoln** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Tim Voltzenlogel** | **Date completed:**  **22.07.20**  **Reviewed 22.10.20** | **Next Review date:**  **22.01.21** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information/Action taken** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible | Access via office entry and prayer room as required | TV | 15.06.20 |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | St George’s Lone working Policy dated 09.12.19 | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 and ongoing |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  | Cleaners/TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) | Cleaners/TV |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. |  | N/A |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | Cleaners/TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 TV |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Not yet applicable – will be done if and when livestreaming begins | AK 22.09.20 for ordination and continuing | 22.09.20  Reviewed  22.10.20 TV |
| **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. | None applicable |  |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. |  | LS |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Booking System set up. Services limited to 40 participants + 2 leaders | TV/BD/CD | 20.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **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. |  | TV |  |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | C of E advice on cleaning of church building given to cleaners and cleaning regime discussed and agreed. | Cleaners/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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 entry and exit. This should not present a problem as people will not be entering and exiting at same time and can be monitored by welcomers. This is considered better than taking people out through back corridor, prayer room and office entrance/exit. | TV  Welcomers to monitor. | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Probably not necessary but welcomers will monitor and make arrangements as necessary. | TV/Welcomers | 26.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 and ongoing |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | There are no opening windows in the church building but front and emergency doors will be kept open as much as possible | Welcomers/TV | 26.07.20 and ongoing  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Removed | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Removed | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Removed | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| 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). | Excess chairs removed, stacked and cordoned off. Chairs needed placed at distance of 2 metres. At the start of services households and ‘bubbles’ will be allowed to move chairs together provided 2m distance kept from other worshippers. | TV  Will be monitored by welcomers. | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 and ongoing. |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | With removable chairs marking is not necessary. Chairs have been placed accordingly and will be monitored by service leaders and welcomers. | TV  Service leaders and welcomers | 24.06. 20  Reviewed 22.10.20  and ongoing |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Furniture arranged to facilitate. | TV | 24.06.20, reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. |  | TV | 24.06.20 reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Hand Sanitisers placed at main door and outside toilets | TV | 24.06.20 and reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Not required |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. |  | TV | 24.06.20 and reviewed 22.07.20  22.10.20 |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Cleaning regime agreed and wipes to be available for individuals to use in toilets. | TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. |  | Cleaners/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 and ongoing |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Toilets will be closed during opening for private prayer. They will be open for Sunday worship but use discouraged as much as possible. | Cleaners/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 and ongoing |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |  | Cleaners/TV | 22.07.20 Reviewed 22.10.20hjand 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 | Booking is required for Sunday services. A list of those booked will be given to Welcomers who will check and record attendance, adding names of anyone who turns up and is admitted without booking. They will be told to book next time! Lists will be kept for 21 days | BD/TV/Welcomers |  |
| 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. |  | TV | 22.07.20 |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | 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. | Cleaning regime discussed and agreed to take account of this. | Cleaners/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  | TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Discussed and agreed 22.07.20 | TV/Cleaners | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Cleaners responsible for ordering | Cleaners/LH/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Cleaners responsible for ordering | Cleaners/LH/TV | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Cleaners responsible. Refuse bins provided. | Cleaners | 22.07.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Removal at first cleaning after use | Cleaners | 22.07.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Will be monitored and actioned as necessary | TV | As necessary Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | Will be monitored and actioned as necessary | TV/cleaners | As necessary Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. | Will be monitored and actioned as necessary | TV/cleaners | As necessary Reviewed 22.10.20 |