# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer and funerals

**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 |

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June.

House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

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-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **St George’s Church Swallowbeck, Lincoln** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Rev Tim Voltzenlogel** | **Date completed:**  **24.06.20**  **1st Review Completed**  **22.10.20** | **Next Review date: 22.01.21** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **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 entrance and prayer room | TV | 15.06.20  Reviewed 22.10.20 |
| 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 22.10.20 TV |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  | Cleaners/TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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 | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. |  | N/A |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | Cleaners/TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| **Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals** | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | Cleaners/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 for entry and exit only is ok for numbers expected and safer than taking through prayer room. | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Will be done prior to each opening. | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.20.20 TV |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Cushions and kneelers removed | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Children’s area and resources removed | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Most chairs removed, a few remain  suitably spaced | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | TV. Registration with Parish Buying not necessary – own suppliers in place | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647). | Not necessary  TV |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. |  | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| If the church has been used in the last 72 hours 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | Cleaners – but n/a immediately as open once a week | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | Handwashing not available – hand sanitizer provided | Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | Toilets only for staff and volunteer use.  TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |  | Cleaners |  |
| **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. | Initially this will be the case |  |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  | N/A |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Cleaners aware and have organised appropriately. | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | TV: see above re Parish Buying | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | N/A |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | TV will do so on closing church after weekly prayer opening. Cleaners otherwise responsible. | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Ditto above | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.20.20 TV |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | As planned for present – will need review if Sunday opening commences | TV | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.10.20 TV |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) | Cleaners | Will be when necessary |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | Cleaners | 24.06.20 Reviewed 22.0.20 TV |