

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
18 th September 2020	5a	St Matthews to include Rule of 6
8th October 2020	5b	St Matthews winter version for services only

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: St Matthew's, Park Hill, Croydon	Assessor's names Revd Simon Foster, Rohini Abhayaratne and Stephen Collingwood	Date completed: 08/10/20	Review date: 08/11/20
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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 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	Main door for entry and exit – their use should be time separated, so one-way system in place for visitors.	Notices - TM	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	The only people who are authorised to be in the building on their own are Simon Foster and Terry Mitchell. They need to phone hourly a nominated person for health and safety reasons.	SF and TM	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	People on duty to arrive 15 minutes ahead of time	Volunteers/ Welcomers	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Volunteers/Welcomers to check on opening	Volunteers/ Welcomers	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	TM to flush through to prevent legionnaires disease	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating required in winter and to dry out damp.	TM if heating required. Celebrant to switch on PA system	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Make sure visitors do not place things in the font	Volunteers/ Welcomers	

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	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	No livestreaming planned.		
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.	Not applicable		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Notices on Website and daily/weekly emails	SF and JH	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not applicable		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Not opening for tourists.		
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Put in weekly notices, guidance for congregation and web site	TM and Jon Highton	
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.		SF	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	<u>Access will be denied to the kitchen, gallery, Lady chapel, church hall, choir and clergy vestry and church office. SF and TM may access the Clergy Vestry and Church Office. The Church Hall may be accessed by groups who have an approved risk assessment and not when a church service is in progress.</u>	SF and TM to clean any areas they access.	

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	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.		SF, SC and TM	
	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 – their use should be time separated, so one-way system in place for visitors – for church services this means “In” before the start and “out” at the end.	Volunteers/Welcomers	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	They will need to queue outside in the direction of the sundial at 2 meter separation.	Welcomers/volunteers on duty	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	All the doors to enter the church to the main auditorium need to be propped open so that visitors do not touch them. After a service the fire doors should be opened for at least 15 minutes to ventilate the auditorium.	Welcomers/volunteers on duty	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All the tables and papers/books in the vestibule need to be removed and stored in the choir vestry with all the soft covered chairs. All literature/books etc in the church need to be removed and placed in the choir vestry	SF and SC	

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	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		SF and SC	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	All the soft chairs, kneelers, seat cushions, linen, table cloths need to be removed.	SF and SC	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Remove	SF and SC	
	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).	Create a barrier with hard chairs for those areas that are denied access. (We don’t want tape on the floor)	SF, SC and ST	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seating will be placed. Visitors must not move the chairs.	SF, SC and ST	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Create a corridor with hard chairs from the main door into the praying/service location. (We don’t want tape on the floor).	SF, SC and ST	
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Access will be denied to the kitchen, gallery, Lady chapel, church hall, choir and clergy vestry and church office. SF and TM may access the Clergy Vestry and Church Office. The Church Hall may be accessed by groups who have an approved risk assessment and not when a church service is in progress.		

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	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers will be available in the foyer.	Welcomers/volunteers on duty	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	SF, SC and RA	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		TM	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Only necessary if church is being occupied within 72 hours. However, the lectern needs wiping between readers during the service.	Church contract cleaners SF	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Soap and a waste bin lined with a plastic bag should be available in all the toilets.	Welcomers/Volunteers to control and clean up afterwards. Double bag waste, store in clergy vestry.	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Soap and a waste bin lined with a plastic bag should be available in all the toilets. Contract cleaners should clean the toilets between services.	Welcomers/Volunteers to control and clean up afterwards. Double bag waste, store in clergy vestry. TM to arrange for contract cleaners to clean the toilets between services.	

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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.	Volunteers on duty to wear gloves and remove and dispose of waste – double bagged in the clergy vestry for 72 hours then in the bin outside the church. They should put fresh liners in the bins.	Welcomers/Volunteers to control and clean up afterwards. Double bag waste, store in clergy vestry.	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Worshippers will bring their details and place in a box on arrival. This will be kept for 21 days. Regulars will be ticked off on a sheet.	SF, TM and welcomers	
	Where worshippers and visitors enter or leave ensure that they do not mingle in groups larger than 6 people.		Volunteers to ensure large groups do not form.	
	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.	Guidance produced and circulated. Also should be made available on the church website.	SF, Church Wardens, PCC and JH	
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.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		TM	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Identify people willing to help via daily email and set up rota. They must have completed the risk form and be “low risk”.	SF and TM	

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	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Washing up gloves are fine as they can be thoroughly cleaned afterwards. Church needs to provide gloves, cleaning materials, soap, towels, rubbish bags and access to the cleaning cupboard.	TM to provision and check cleaning contractor availability. They should provide risk assessments for their staff.	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Govt guidance indicates soapy water is fine for non clinical settings.		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Waste collection contractors. Waste should be double bagged.	TM to check contractors. They should provide risk assessments for their staff.	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After each visitor session/service the Welcomers/Volunteers put the waste in the clergy vestry, then to bins after 72 hours and the contractor empties it weekly.	Volunteer & TM	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This may be difficult as infected person may not know immediately. Use log to work out when 72 hours started and contact the volunteers and contract cleaners		
	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.	See above re rota of cleaners and contract cleaners.	

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	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 .		
In addition from Southwark	Does anyone whom you are asking to participate in reopening for public worship have health issues? Be appropriately sensitive in making any inquiries.	Likely to be available from the Church of England coronavirus page	Wardens and incumbent to ensure	