

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
13 th January 2021	8	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed in the light of new guidance from the [Health and Safety Executive](#) and is intended for use from 13th January onwards. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly and checked against this latest version of the risk assessment.

England entered a third national lockdown from 5th January 2021. This replaced the three-tier system introduced in late 2020 and later augmented with a fourth tier. During the lockdown, churches are permitted to open for communal worship, private prayer and a number of essential purposes where they can be carried out in a Covid-safe way. There may be specific local regulations recommended by local authorities, that place additional restrictions on certain activities. Before completing this risk assessment you can see what is permitted by checking [this document](#). Guidance on opening cathedral and church buildings to the public during COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

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, the template 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. Specific guidance linking to advice on the lockdown period is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

The government acknowledges that places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities and generations together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus. In drawing up a risk assessment for your church, or revising it in the light of the current situation, you will need to think carefully whether the public benefits you achieve by opening are justified by the risks involved, however much you can mitigate them. This judgement will vary depending on the location and nature of your church building and the make up of your congregation and visitor profile. You will need to discuss the factors with your governing body, whether the PCC or chapter. Remember that this is your collective choice whether to open: while our churches are permitted by

government to open, they are not obliged to do so. If you decide not to open, you can continue to have a valuable role serving the community in a number of ways. Guidance on this can be found 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.

Separate risk assessments for outdoor worship and for access by contractors and construction workers are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Risk assessment template

Church:	Assessor's name:	Date completed:	Review date:
St Andrew the Great	Laura Murray	18 th January 2021	18 th February 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for purposes of recording and/or livestreaming services (with no congregation present) Risk: contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services	Consider if anyone required for recording or broadcasting is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Ensure that the people who need to attend the church building to enable the livestreaming or recording to take place are willing to do so and can do so safely. Make sure that only those essential for livestreaming or recording enter the church.		Matt MacGreggor & Rachel Foley	
	Buildings have been aired before use.		Laura Murray	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.		Laura Murray	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems. Commission system checks as necessary.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Main doors will remain closed and locked, side door to be used for controlled entry ahead of public worship.		Laura Murray	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Exit from the building will be through the East Doors in the Auditorium.			
	A lone working policy is available for staff and volunteers who may have to attend the church building on their own, for the purpose of livestreaming.		Laura Murray	
	Staggered arrival times for teams involved in livestreaming to allow people from multiple different households to arrive at the building in a safe way.		Laura Murray	
	Equipment checked to ensure safe use of equipment for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		Matt MacGreggor	
	Hand sanitiser available upon entry to the church building, within washrooms and located around the church. Washroom facilities equipped with anti-bacterial soap and hot water for handwashing.		Laura Murray	
	Church cleaned in line with CofE guidance on cleaning church buildings.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Signage located at the main entrance and throughout the building, in line with CofE guide on face coverings and social distancing.		Laura Murray	
	Service plans and information to be shared electronically with those involved in the broadcasting of the service. Paper copies to be removed where possible.		Matt MacGreggor	
	Non fire doors will be left open to minimise the risk of contacting surfaces.		Sarah Wolstencroft	

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	The NHS Track and Trace QR code is available upon entry and printed around the church building. Attendees to services are encouraged to sign up to attend with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.		Rachel Foley	
Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities	Livestreaming will continue to be offered to those who are unable to attend in person.		Matt MacGreggor	
	Constant review of the National Lockdown and alert levels within Cambridge and surrounding areas, conducted by Senior Staff and Wardens. In particular, the circumstances of StAG, church family, and the worship or other activities envisaged.		Senior Staff	
	Check if any clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their household who do, and ensure there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building.		Rachel Foley	
	Update the website, and any relevant social media to indicate how people can book to attend services.		Rachel Foley	
	Booking system in place for attending public worship on Sundays. Seating allocated in accordance with Tier restrictions. Seating held empty for some who arrive on Sunday without having booked. Details of attendees to be kept in line with GDPR and Test & Trace guidance provided by the CofE.		Rachel Foley	
Preparation of the Church for access by members of	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		Sarah Wolstencroft	

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<p>the public for any permitted purposes</p> <p>Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.</p>	Update StAG website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. Clearly state the limits on attendance for weddings, funerals, commemorative events and any other permitted activities where upper limits apply (or provide a link to this document).		Rachel Foley	
	Update your website to remind people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 to stay at home as much as possible and observe social distancing guidance, and either strongly discourage them from attending church in person during this time or indicate a time for them to attend for individual devotions.		Rachel Foley	
	Church building cleaned between services in accordance to the CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. See cleaning section of risk assessment.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Signage located at the main entrance and throughout the building, in line with CofE guide on face coverings and social distancing.		Laura Murray	
	One point of entry into the church via Lion Yard (west end) to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Exit from the building will be through both the East Doors in the Auditorium.		Laura Murray	
	Temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building by the West Door (Main		Laura Murray	

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	Entrance), including signage, spacing and supervisors.			
	Make any temporary arrangements for managing the approaches to the entry points and any parking areas to ensure social distancing can be observed (taking into account any consequential risks arising from changes to circulation).		Laura Murray	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.		Laura Murray	
	In cold weather heating system operated before building used, in line with CofE COVID-19 Church Heating guidelines. Doors will be open ahead of service starting and at the end of the service. External doors at the east end of the church will be closed during the service (as per guidelines) but opened on to Lion Yard at the end of formal worship for the safe exit of the public from the building (as per one-way system).		Laura Murray	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets unless they are absolutely essential and participants cannot bring their own. Hardcopy literature will be quarantined for at least 72 hours between use.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Access routes through the church to ensure physical distancing is maintained at 2m where possible, or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary (one-way systems in corridors).		Laura Murray	

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	Seats are numbered and allocated before the service or at the door upon entry, to ensure safe distancing maintained inside the building.		Rachel Foley	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		Laura Murray	
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed.		Laura Murray	
	Hand sanitisers placed around the church building, including the entrance and washroom facilities for visitors to use.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Laura Murray	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
Use of the church for baptisms, weddings,	Specific guidance in place for these activities, where conducted, with additional assessment of controls and limits on attendance in place.	Advice on baptisms can be found here .	Laura Murray	

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funerals and commemorative services		<p>Advice on weddings can be found here (scroll down to Can weddings go ahead?).</p> <p>Advice on funerals can be found here.</p> <p>The government’s advice on commemorative events can be found here.</p>		
<p>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</p> <p>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.</p> <p>Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities.</p>	If the church building has been closed for 48 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.		Laura Murray	
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		Laura Murray	
	Identify surfaces that are frequently touched and by many people (often common areas), e.g. handrails, door handles, shared equipment, toilets, and specify the frequency and level of cleaning and by whom.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets deemed essential for services will be quarantined for 72 hours after use.		Sarah Wolstencroft	

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	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		Sarah Wolstencroft	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		Laura Murray	
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		Laura Murray	
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.		Laura Murray	