# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public  **Worship v2.3**

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date  | Version Number  | Issued by  |
| 22ndMay 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 13thJune.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 – For Public Worship**

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| **Church:****St Mark’s Heyside v2.3** | **Assessor’s name:****John Corbishley** | **Date completed:****15th July 2020** | **Review date:****27th July 2020** |

| **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 | Notice “Clergy Only” on outer Vestry door and Church Vestry doors (3off) | JC |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). N/A |  |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.  | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. **One cold water tap in vestry**  | 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)22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Holy waterstoups 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.**Decision required on Filming Service for Broadcast** | Battery power only, no cables |  |  |
| **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. | Check opening times of the “Duke of York” public house to avoid multiple groups congregating on the car park | JC/DB |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | N/A as we do not open for visiting public |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | N/A as we do not open for visiting public |  |  |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/).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. | Notices to be posted to bar access to Vestry. | JC |  |
| 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)**.** | TBC |  |
| 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.**Maximum number of congregation, numbered seating, instructions in pews.** | Main doors will be access in and out of Church controlled by Church Warden. Vestry door only to be used for Emergency exit. | JC/DB |  |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Notices to be posted outside Church, advising of queuing maintaining Social distancing.  | JC |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Main doors to be pegged open throughout the service. | JC/DB |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leafletsIssue service folders to designated seating positions, to be left at end of service. Folders to be exchanged on Wednesday for others, allowing the 72 hours for virus to disperse.Laminated Pew numberings and information should be wiped clean if we do not have 72 hours to next occupation. | Notices to explain this practice. JC | JC |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Tape off : Chapel, Book of remembrance, Organ, book shelves, book case. | JC |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed, March 2020 prior to Church cleaning. | JC | JC |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Removed July 2020 | JC | JC |
| 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).  | Seats to be numbered and allocated to individuals or households. | JC/DB |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | As above. | JC/DB |  |
| In the event of an unspecified number of people arriving together at Church we should prepare a waiting area with 2m distances marked out to remind parishioners of the need to social distance. | Notices and lines to be marked outside. | JC/DB |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Notices to be printed, laminated and deployed | JC/DB |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | As above | JC/DB |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. **Note : Sanitiser purchase and dispensers and bottles refilled.** | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.Deploy in entrance and around Church, with Notices. | JC |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing N/A | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647). |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices to be printed, laminated and deployed. | JC |  |
| Covid Symptoms : parishioners to be reminded of the symptoms and warned to stay at home if they suspect they are exhibiting any (Dry Persistent cough, dry sore throat, change in sense of smell or taste)If anyone develops these symptoms during the service they should leave and go home immediately, maintaining social distiches on the way out. | Include in the information sent out to parishi0oners for booking and display on posters round Church.Attendees register to be printer, retained in folder for 21 days | JC/DB |  |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitizer spray or disposable wipes.One person to be identified with sanitizer to watch for surfaces being touched in general areas of Church. Also to watch for any encroachment on other peoples 2m social space and inform Church Warden. | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**The Church will be vacated after the Service and left closed for at least 72 hours. After any access to Church, 82 hours will pass before Church is opened again | Susan Corbishley |  |
| 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. |  |  |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.**Consider: Non-opening of Church hall toilets as cleaning will be required after every visit.**  | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.Hand cleaner and paper towels available in lower Hall Toilets  |  |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Bin, liner and paper towels available for Church and Vestry. | JC |  |
| Parishioners to be informed to keep all personal belongings with them at all times in their pews., e.g. do not leave Umbrella’s in the porch, on tables or on window bottoms..  | Notice provided for sending out with Booking info and in Pews. | JC |  |
| Congregations giving : Retain security of offerings and maintain a safe zone around the collection. | A box, lined with a plastic bag will be placed at the rear of Church. The Collection can be blessed by the Priest after the distribution of the wafers at the end of the service. Collection, in the plastic bag removed to the safe and left for 72 hours before opening to count and bank by treasurer. | JC/DB |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Church wardens to record known worshippers whose details are known. Visitors should have booked in and will have data collected at booking. | JC/DB |  |
| 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. | Facebook, Website, A Church Near you and email to all known Parishioners. | JC |  |
| **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. | If basic cleaning is deemed necessary it will be undertaken on Wednesday to allow 72 hours each way. | JC/DB |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | 72 hours closure between services and openings is possible unless service pattern changes | JC/DB |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | N/A |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).**Note: Gloves, masks and Shields available as required** | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. |  |  |
| 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. |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After every service | JC |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Agreed | JC |  |
| 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) |  |  |
| 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)**.** | JC |  |
| **St Marks Specific Risk Assessment:****The preparation, consecration and distribution of the Sacraments.** | Preparation. Church wardens normally prepare the bread and wine for Communion. CW will prepare by cleaning hands and work surface in Vestry. Remove receptacles from Safe – Platten, small chalice, large ciborium and two flagons.CW will put on face mask, shield, gloves. Using tongs, place wafers into ciborium and replace lid. Place priests wafer on platen and cover. Fill water and wine flagons.Take to sanctuary table.Remove shield and gloves, clean shield dispose of gloves and mask |  |  |  |
|  | Priest will sanitize hands prior to starting Consecration of the elements. Priest will consecrate Priests wafer and wine covering while they are being consecrated, and will consume all of those.The lid will remain on ciborium at all times as contents are blessed for the congregation |  |  |  |
|  | At the dismissal, the priest will put on face mask and Face shield and sanitise hands. Then take the ciborium and tongs down the central aisle. At the rear of Church, the vicar removes the lid from the Ciborium as the congregation exit. A wafer will be removed from the ciborium using the tongs and dropped onto the hand of the person to consume and move out of Church. Congregation to retain 2m Distancing from each other. Priest to consume remaining wafers. Priest takes the Ciborium into vestry and then collects the other chalices from the altar and washes in hot soapy water and leaves to drain. |  |  |  |
|  | Those who are shielding should do so until 30th July. Those from this group who attend do so at their own risk. |  |  |  |
| **Congregation seating process** | See diagram of seating layout. Maximum of 24 household groups. If group exceeds 2 members then adjacent locations become unusable.Seats will be allocated by Church Warden as group arrives and is confirmed correct on Booking form.Seats are filled from the front.Congregation remain in seats until end of service.Church Warden direct Congregation to leave from back first, in household groups. | For first week of re-opening we will operate with a reduced number of positions to allow the working party to assess suitability of the Risk assessment and the processes suggested and make any changes necessary, | JC/DB |  |

