

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public



Version Control

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|----------------------------|----------------|--|
| 16 th July 2021 | 10 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

This update has been reviewed to reflect step 4 of the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 19th July onwards. As step 4 sees the easing of all legal restrictions it is recommended that risk assessments currently in place are re-run to ensure they fit the new circumstances. The Church of England's [guidance on step 4](#) may be a helpful reference point.

It is recommended that you carry out a separate risk assessment for each activity type e.g. public worship, use by community groups, concerts etc. and that these are regularly reviewed with reference to local Covid infection rates and other relevant circumstances. You may decide to have different mitigations or safety measures in place for different events. Where activities run simultaneously or back-to-back, each iteration of the risk assessment should address the shared or consequential risk.

Risk assessment templates for outdoor worship and for contractors and construction workers are also available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#).

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Private prayer
 - Public worship with or without congregational singing
 - Funerals, weddings, baptisms, ordinations
 - Livestreaming or recording services
 - A choir or music group singing indoors as part of a public, livestreamed or recorded service
 - Formal childcare or where part of a school
 - Essential voluntary and public services
 - Use as a vaccination or testing centre
 - Community and support groups
 - Provision of youth services
 - Opening shops/cafes
 - Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction
 - Opening for concerts, plays etc

2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
 - Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual
 - Shared or consequential risks of activities running simultaneously or back-to-back (e.g. crossover of people at entry/exit points)

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 as long as they are properly managed, but having any significant numbers of people coming through your building makes the possible impact – in particular someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller churches with fewer people. Consider your particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate. Gathered congregations and major services may attract people from far afield, which is likely to add to the risk profile. Consider whether you need to consult your wider membership and users.
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

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|---|---|--|--|
| Church: St John the Evangelist | Assessors' names: Sue Glover, Mick Franklin, Revd Stephen Buckman | Date completed: 1 September 2021 | Review date: When the advice changes again |
| Events or services this assessment relates to: | | Regular public worship and private prayer | |

| Risk | Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event) | Additional information | |
|--|---|---|------------|
| Aerosol or droplet transmission of Covid-19 | Increase ventilation in your building: natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or mechanical ventilation if appropriate/necessary. | Consult HSE guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas Do not prop open fire doors. | SG, MF |
| | Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. | e.g. Harvest Festival (to allow singing) and Remembrance Sunday | SB |
| | Request or consider requiring people to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. This may particularly apply to activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing. | No singing inside building, but face coverings are encouraged at all main services; disposable face coverings provided for those without them | SB, SG, MF |
| | Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing | Family groupings in pews for larger congregations, spaced out seating naturally implemented by regulars | SB, SG, MF |
| | If practical in your building, 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 door for exit. | Separate entrance/exit not possible, but people are encouraged to socially distance entering and leaving the church | SB, SG, MF |
| | For events where the building is likely to be especially busy, or the activity is particularly energetic, pay particular regard to the need for additional mitigations such as social distancing and face coverings. | Social distancing and face coverings are encouraged at all times | SB, SG, MF |

| Risk | Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event) | Additional information | |
|---|--|--|--------|
| Surface transmission of Covid-19 | Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands. | Hand sanitiser provided in porch and throughout church | SG |
| | Identify where you can reduce the contact of people with surfaces, e.g. by leaving open doors that are not fire doors, using electronic documents rather than paperwork. | Porch and main door left open | SG, MF |
| | Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. | Deep clean every week. Following scientific advice, antiviral disinfectant available to spray/clean used pews | SG |
| | Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people. | Prayer books are quarantined for 48 hours after each use; hymn books not used (no singing); special services have single-use booklets | SG, MF |
| | If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, either place these on pews or ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them. | When used, service sheets are placed on the pews (helps to encourage social distancing too); sheets can be disposed of at end of service in receptacle provided, or taken home | SB, SG |
| | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on). | Not applicable | |
| | Put in place a cleaning rota/system for children's materials and toys, and consider providing cleaning materials for these if safe to do so (keeping all such materials out of the reach of children). | Not applicable | |
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Not applicable | |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Done | MF |

| Risk | Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event) | Additional information | |
|---|---|--|------------|
| Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending. | Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options. | QR code in place; printed forms provided for others | SG |
| | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements or requests such as bringing a face covering and options for those who may be anxious. | Done | SG |
| | Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired. | Done on an individual basis, one to one | SB, SG |
| | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services. | Booking system in place for Sunday services; write-in form provided for midweek HC | SB, SG |
| | Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. | Rector coordinates worship patterns across benefice; benefice admin helps other churches with practical provisions | SB, SG |
| | Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. | Posters in porch and inside building | SG |
| Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | PHE guidance will be followed | SB, SG, MF |
| | If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | Public Health England guidance available here. | |
| | If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. | Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here. | |