THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
2nd December 2020	7	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 3rd December onwards. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly.

From 3rd December, regardless of tier, churches are permitted to open for all purposes that can be carried out in a Covid-safe way. There may be specific local regulations, especially in tier 3 areas, that place additional restrictions on certain activities. There are varying limits on mixing of households that apply in different tiers. Before completing this risk assessment you can see what is permitted in your tier by checking this document.

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.

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.

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
    - Private prayer
    - Public worship
    - Livestreaming or recording services
    - Funerals, weddings, baptisms
    - Formal childcare or where part of a school
    - Essential voluntary and public services
    - Other exempted activities such as support groups
    - Opening for visitors/tourists, including opening shops and cafes

2. Consider the hazards:
    - Transmission of COVID-19
    - Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual

    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.

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Risk assessment template

Church: **St Mary the Virgin, Witney**	**Assessor's name:** **Jeremy Lasman**	**Date completed:** **13th July 2020, with reviews** **31st August 2020** **10th December 2020** **13th January 2021**	**Review date:** **22nd February 2021 or end of current lockdown whichever is sooner**

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. Check that those attending for livestreaming or recording can do so within the limits for places of worship in the relevant tier.	At present, livestreaming of services is not taking place. Upon easing of restrictions, attendees required for any livestreamed services will be reviewed to address this control	Toby Wright/Jeremy Lasman	Review by 22nd February 2021
	Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible.	The public will enter via the West Door. This entry point will be roped off to create entry and exit lanes. The North Door will be used by clergy, wardens and vergers. Access to the Parish Office is only permitted for clergy and officers of the	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey-Wells	Michelle Bailey-Wells 17th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		church. Notices have been put on the North Door to advise the public to enter via the West Door.		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	The Witney PCC Health and Safety policy agreed in 2019 includes a section on lone working in all of our buildings. This remains applicable through the current pandemic.	Completed 2019	Agreed Witney PCC 8th October 2019
	Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building.	Attendees are asked to wait outside the West Door until 10 mins before the start of any service, maintaining social distancing rules. The on duty warden manages the flow of attendees into and out of the building to maintain social distancing	Duty Wardens. Notices to that effect are in place.	Jeremy Lasman 13th July 2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Done at start of lockdown. A final check was completed to support risk assessment sign off.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Where equipment is brought in from outside of the building, this must be cleaned prior to use and only used by the owner. Equipment must be manned	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		at all times to minimise the trip hazard.		
	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Hand sanitisers have be placed at the West and North Doors and inside the Toilet block. These are regularly checked and refilled accordingly	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Done.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020 and on-going
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce or download signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law and requiring these for all except those exempt.	Notices have been put up to remind visitors. Signage is in place at the West Door (used by attendees). An informational video has also been created	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas/Michelle Bailey Wells	Kayleigh Lucas 22nd July 2020
	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.	Services are paper free. Access doors opened and closed only by the duty warden. Chairs which have been used/moved left for 48hrs before resetting. Books removed. Literature stand content minimised and signage put up requesting that any literature than has been handled is taken away	Jeremy Lasman/Duty Wardens	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.	QR code in place at all entrances to the building. Paper track and trace forms completed for those not able to use the QR code, and kept for 21 days	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey Wells	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey Wells October 2020
Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities	Consider how the tier system applies to the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider whether anybody attending would be likely to be traveling from a higher or lower tier	Kept under regular review by the Ministry Team. Last reviews Dec 20 and Jan 21 to confirm church closure for all services and individual prayer	Toby Wright	Ongoing
	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Not applicable		
	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.	Not currently applicable. Services Rota enables us to check those involved in physical services in due course to address this concern.	Toby Wright/Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey Wells	Ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Where Funerals are due to take place track and trace information will be gathered in advance. A booking system for attendance at church services including Baptisms and Weddings has been implemented to ensure that	Michelle Bailey-Wells	Michelle Bailey-Wells 13th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		we have details for track and trace purposes. Data for attendees for all types of services is being kept for a minimum of 21 days in accordance with Government Guidelines. This will be re-instated when required		
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Via Deanery meetings	Toby Wright	ongoing
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes **Risk:** Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Will be actioned once decision is made to allow live stream services	Ministry Team	At next full review of restrictions
	Update your 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 the tier in which the church is located (or provide a link to https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know).	The Benefice Website is updated to reflect the current position with regard to Church opening. The Parish Administrator is part of the Ministry Team and is kept up to date with changes in our operations. She is the current liaison point with Funeral Directors and will cover Covid security requirements with them to pass on to families. St Mary's is configured for 22 attendees if all are from separate household and up	Ministry Team	At next full review of restrictions

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		to 30 if there are more than one from the same household.		
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Done.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020
	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.	Done.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020 reviewed 10th December 2020
	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.	The West Door has been set up with a one-way system for entry and exit with rope divider and floor signage.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	The West Door has been set up with a one-way system for entry and exit with rope divider and floor signage. As the area outside of the West Door is public thoroughfare the public will be requested to queue to the right-hand side of the West Door along the railing. Guests will be advised to take into account members of the public who may be passing by.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh 22nd July 2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	The West Door, the doors into and out of the Winchester Room and the	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Toilet block will be opened for a period prior to the public entering, to air the building - all clergy and vergers have been made aware of this requirement.		
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in.	The heating system remains switched off.		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets.	Completed. Signage has been produced to request that users dispose of single use materials themselves (to cover the small amount that remains in the church)	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Completed	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7th July 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces.	Cushions and Kneelers removed to the chancel	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7th July 2020
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas.	Not applicable; Junior Church materials stored in cupboards in the Winchester Room as a matter of course		
	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).	Chairs have been laid out in the nave of St Mary's observing the 2m rule, tape has been laid out to indicate the distance between rows.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7th July 2020 and 10th December 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		We will allow people from the same household to bring their chairs together on the understanding that they remain responsible for the veracity of this claim. Any chairs that are moved by members of the same household will only be reset after 48 hrs		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	The Nave of St Mary's is the area that we have identified for seating. The side chapels have been roped off. We will use the North and South Aisles as exit routes.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 23rd July 2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	A flow into the church up through the centre of the nave, turning left or right to access the socially distanced seating. Exit Flow will then be out via the respective Aisles to the West Door, where a one-way system is in place. Floor markings are laid out to this effect.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas/Michelle Bailey Wells	Kayleigh Lucas 23rd July 2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed.	Completed for the St George's chapel, All Saints Chapel and the Chapel of	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		the Annunciation, leading into the Winchester Room		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers have be placed at the West and North Doors and inside the Toilet block	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14th July 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Not required.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices have been put up to remind visitors. An informational video has also been created.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas/Michelle Bailey Wells	Kayleigh Lucas 22nd July 2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	The current planning assumption is that we will space events in the church by 48 hours. Vergers will be informed to wipe all door handles as they exit the building.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Hand sanitiser is available at all entrances and exits. Vergers will be instructed to check levels and top up as required prior to opening to the public.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22nd July 2020
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Toilets will be opened for Sunday Services only. Hand sanitiser is available in the entrance to the toilet block,	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 5th October 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		together with associated notices requiring use. Welcomers will ensure that any queue for the toilets will adhere to the 2m social distancing requirement. The cleaning rota will be revised to ensure the safety of the contract cleaner		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Already part of existing provision. Melissa is aware of the requirement for all bins to have liners.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020
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. **Risk:** Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces,	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.	This is our agreed approach		
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	An external cleaner is hired, they are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	No further action required.	
	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.	Door handles in the toilet block and toilet/hand washing facilities. Cleaned in line with existing rota, and allows for 48 hrs between usage		
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.	Completed		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
equipment and shared facilities.	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Disposable gloves available. Melissa is aware of the requirement to use them.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning products are already sourced that meet these requirements.	No further action required.	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Confirmed with Melissa that she this as her responsibility (see below)	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	A schedule has been agreed with Melissa that reflects timings of usage of the church building, such that waste removal takes place within 24 hrs of the event.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22nd July 2020.
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	This is our agreed approach		
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Not applicable		
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	This is our agreed approach		

Approved by:

Rev. Toby Wright, Team Rector
Kayleigh Lucas, Churchwarden
Jeremy Lasman, Churchwarden

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

23rd July 2020

Updated Risk Assessment Approved in October 2020 by :

Rev Canon Toby Wright, Team Rector
Kate Banks, Churchwarden
Jeremy Lasman, Churchwarden

Updated Risk Assessment Approved January 2021 by :

Rev Canon Toby Wright, Team Rector
Kate Banks, Churchwarden
Jeremy Lasman, Churchwarden