

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer and funerals

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Risk assessment template

Church: St Mary's Wombwell	Assessor's name: John Armstrong	Date completed:	Review date:
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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	Clergy or first person to arrive enter through kitchen door.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.		John	23.6.20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		John	28.6.20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	John	23.6.20
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.		John	23.6.20
Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		John	28.6.20
	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.	John	29.6.20
	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.	Not possible to have a separate entrance and exit as steep steps are involved with the alternative	John	4.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		entrance/exit. Entrance area will be marked to separate people entering or exiting.		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Church building already has very good ventilation.	Weekly	
	Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user.	Will possibly use a single use leaflet with Bible reading on until we are able to use Bibles again. These will be removed by user and if unused then binned. Other than that Bibles and hymn books will be removed.	John/Joan/Steph	4.7.20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items	n/a		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	n/a		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Remove toys, cushions, books etc from Children’s area. Possibly provide single use colouring sheet with set of coloured pencils which will need wiping between weeks. Other than that, parents asked to bring their own toys if required.	Helen Armstrong Removal of items in children’s corner.	28.6.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Re-organise rows of chairs 2m apart. Mark seats on which people can sit, if attending church alone.	John	4.7.20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Exclude chancel area.	John	4.7.20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Use tape to halve entrance area and add arrows.	John	4.7.20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Cordon off chancel area.	John	4.7.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers at entrance, by communion table, back of church, kitchen area.	John	4.7.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	n/a.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Hand-washing signs up in toilets and entrance. Basic hygiene advice at entrance.	Helen	4.7.20
	If the church has been used in the last 72 hours ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes.		Joan/Steph	3.7.20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Purchase paper towels and lidded bins. Ensure sufficient liquid soap.	Helen	4.7.20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an	As above	HA	4.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.			
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Purchase lidded bins for toilets and liners.	HA	4.7.20
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.			
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	If there is a funeral in the week, ensure appropriate cleaning before and after.	John	4.7.20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Consider doing cleaning 72 + hours after last service.	Joan	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Ask cleaners to bring their own gloves.	Joan	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Check on stock	Joan	4.7.20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Cleaner on rota.		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Remove after Sunday service.	John	4.7.20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.			
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public			

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	Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.			
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.			