

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
25 th March 2021	9	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed to reflect the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 29th March onwards ('phase 1b'). It incorporates sections on singing, workplace testing, and planning for wider use of buildings including for non-worship purposes. At all times churches should check national and, if relevant, local restrictions to ensure the activity planned is currently permitted. 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 the government's roadmap out of lockdown on 8th March with the re-opening of schools and other education settings, and an increase in permitted reasons to leave home to meet one person outside for social purposes. As they have been throughout the third lockdown (from 5th January) 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 the guidance on permitted activities on the national church coronavirus webpage. Guidance on opening cathedral and church buildings to the public during COVID-19 can also be found [there](#).

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](#).

Guidance indicating how churches might arrange access and events in a Covid-safe way has been produced as part of a government initiative to encourage re-opening in a safe and reasonable way. This includes a number of case studies that may help you think about your church building.

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
 - Funerals, weddings, baptisms, ordinations
 - Livestreaming or recording services
 - A choir or music group singing indoors as part of a public, livestreamed or recorded service (congregational singing may take place outside, but at present is not permitted indoors)
 - Formal childcare or where part of a school
 - Essential voluntary and public services
 - Use as a vaccination centre
 - Other exempted activities such as support groups
 - Provision of youth services
 - Opening shops/cafes (may be permitted in Step 2, depending on access arrangements)
 - Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction (not permitted until Step 3)
 - Opening for concerts, plays etc (not permitted until Step 3)
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 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 and go against the general guidance that people should stay local for any activities outside the home. 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

Church: St Michael at the North Gate	Assessor's name: Miss Myriam Frenkel	Date completed: 06/05/21	Review date: 17/05/21
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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. Can someone else fulfil their role in the recording/livestreaming? 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.	Advice on livestreaming and recording can be found here .	Vicar	Reviewed ahead of each live stream Anthony Buckley
	Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible.		Vicar	Reviewed ahead of each live stream Anthony Buckley
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Vicar	Reviewed ahead of each live stream Anthony Buckley
	Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building.		Director of Music	Reviewed ahead of each live stream

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
				Tom Hammond-Davies
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		Vicar	Reviewed ahead of each live stream Anthony Buckley
	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	We have hand sanitiser at every entrance and throughout the building.	Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	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 .	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel weekly
	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.	Advice on face coverings can be found here .	Vicar, Church Administrator	Anthony Buckley 08/08/20
	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.	Door handles regularly cleaned where doors need to be shut. Where possible doors are left open.	Church Caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace, several times a day.
	Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.	The track and Trace QR code is displayed at entrances. Alternative online and paper systems are in place.	Vicar or deputy	Anthony Buckley 25/09/20, 01/01/21

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities	Consider how the national lockdown applies to the particular circumstances of the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider the implications of where people travel from and the distance involved.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley ahead of each service
	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley 15/06/20, 05/07/20, 04/01/2021 01/05/2021
	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.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley 03/11/20, 04/01/2021
	Consider whether to discourage clinically extremely vulnerable members of the congregation or visitors from attending services altogether or setting aside a time for them to attend for individual devotions.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley, 23/11/2020, 04/01/2021
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services		Church Administrator, Church Caretaker, Vicar	Myriam Frenkel, Rachael Peace, Anthony Buckley 04/07/20
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.		Vicar	In constant communication

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				with the Deanery Anthony Buckley
Deciding whether to have a choir or music group singing/performing Risk: Aerosol spread of coronavirus may be increased by singing and playing of wind instruments	Check current guidance on singing to establish what is permitted. This can be found in the Church of England guidance on conducting public worship and on in the Government guidance for places of worship .		Vicar, Musical Director, Church Administrator	Tom Hammond-Davies, Anthony Buckley 05/01/21 01/05.21
	Ensure that singers from different households can be socially distanced from one another, and from anyone else present (including a conductor, camera or microphone operator or, if present, a congregation).		Musical Director, Vicar	Tom Hammond-Davies, weekly
	Put in place measures to create a physical barrier between singers and any congregation.	Choir are a long way from the congregation (more than 4 meters)	Vicar, Musical Director	Anthony Buckley, before services
	Remind any members of congregation present that at present they are not allowed to sing indoors.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley weekly as required
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley 05/11/20, 04/01/21
	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		Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel 05/11/20,

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high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.	attendance for weddings, funerals, commemorative events and any other permitted activities where upper limits apply (or provide a link to this document).			14/01/21, 12/04/21
	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 .	Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 09/11/20, 04/01/21, 05/05/21
	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.	Advice on face coverings can be found here .	Vicar, Church Administrator	Anthony Buckley 08/08/20
	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.	Entrance and exit through South door, to avoid congestion and confusion at the main entrance with Fairtrade shop. Signs to encourage social distancing.	Signs at main entrance, staff member/volunteer on hand to monitor church.	Rachael Peace 15/06/20, reviewed and updated as required
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Ship street marked as required to encourage social distancing.	Church Administrator, Church Caretaker	Myriam Frenkel, Rachael Peace weekly review
	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).	There is no public parking: car park is managed carefully and only allows 4 spaces. Church path is wide and clear lines of sight make social distancing easy to encourage.	Church Administrator, Church Caretaker, Vicar	Myriam Frenkel, weekly review with staff and volunteers in church

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	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	South doors to remain open whenever possible.	Volunteer or staff member on duty	Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in.	Guidance on church heating can be found here .	Wardens and Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 01/10/20
	Remove items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	Hardcopies are quarantined for a week between uses.	Church Caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace 10/06/20 and after every service
	If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, either place these on sheets or ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley as required
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		n/a	n/a
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces.	We have signs advising our kneelers should not be handled	Church caretaker, Vicar, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Anthony Buckley, Myriam Frenkel 12/06/20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas.		n/a	n/a
	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).	Safer churches guidance, including ideas on floor plans, is available here .	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 12/06/20

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	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon as needed.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 10/06/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 09/06/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Church Caretaker and Administrator	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	We have a hand dryer	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day

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	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
Use of the church for baptisms, weddings, funerals, commemorative services and ordinations	Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place.	<p>Advice on baptisms can be found here.</p> <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>	Vicar	Anthony Buckley Ahead of any necessary events.
Use of the church for permitted activities other than private prayer or worship	Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place. Check that any external group using the church has COVID-secure working practices in place, including their own risk assessment where necessary, and will comply with what is required by the church.	<p>The government’s guidance on the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities for permitted activities (including formal childcare and support groups) can be found here.</p> <p>Advice on use of churches as vaccination centres can be found here.</p>	Church Administrator, Vicar	13/06/20, 04/01/21 12/04/21 and ahead of all bookings Myriam Frenkel

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		The government's guidance on the use of hospitality spaces can be found here .		
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, equipment and shared facilities.	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.		n/a	n/a
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel under regular review
	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.	Lists of handholds are given to all those with cleaning responsibility and are on display in the offices, church and parish room.	Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 02/07/20, 03/07/20
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace or deputy daily
	Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets deemed essential for services should be quarantined for 48 hours after use.	Hardcopies are quarantined for a week between uses.	Church Caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace 10/06/20 and after every service
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace weekly
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace weekly
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace daily

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace daily
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		Vicar and Wardens	
	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.	Church Caretaker	
	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.	Church Caretaker	
Additional risk assessment specific to St Michael's				
Contamination of, or through, the kitchen area	The kitchen is cleaned regularly. It is only used by church staff and is currently closed to other groups. We have replaced hand towels with paper towels and have appropriate signage reminding staff about good practice during COVID.		Church Administrator and Church Caretaker	30/07/20 and weekly Myriam and Rachael
Too many people attempting to enter the church at one time	The weekly emails and a notice on the website asks for people to let Anthony know by email if they plan to attend.		Vicar & Administrator	2 nd July onwards Anthony & Myriam
	Someone to be positioned by the door before services to keep an eye on the path and direct people to wait as need be		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
	Clear signage on paths and pavements		Caretaker	15 th June Rachael
Too many people wanting to come to the service. We think	If numbers look to be too large, an additional services may be added to split the congregation.		Vicar	5 th July Anthony

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we can fit 40 under current social distancing guidance.	Some would be encouraged to come back then. (A reserve of about ten places will be held for unexpected additional congregants, including those who do not tell Anthony ahead that they wish to attend.)			
	Anthony will keep in good communication with expected attendees and those who arrive		Vicar	4 th /5 th July Anthony
People sitting too close to others	People sitting in specified places, as already marked for Private Prayer. Sidesperson to direct as need be.	People will be seated in the Nave. If really necessary, the Lady Chapel	Caretaker for marking Vicar for directing	15 th June Rachael weekly Anthony
Coins/notes passing hands	There will be no collection.	Anthony will announce that people who wish to give are encouraged to do so online. Any who nevertheless wish to give cash can do this by placing money in the collection box which is fixed at the back of church. They will be asked to sanitize their hands before and after doing so, and the cash exclusively counted by the Finance Manager, who will wear gloves. Contactless donations possible via our contactless device.	Vicar & Finance Manager	5 th July Anthony
Multi-touching of books and leaflets	There will be no leaflets. People will be encouraged in the emails and website to bring their own prayer books if they have them. Pre-quarantined (at least 3		Vicar & Administrator	3-5 th July Anthony

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	days) books will previously be placed in pews, by someone with clean hands, for those without their own. At the end of the service these books will be left in the same place, collected and put back into quarantine (at least 3 days)			
Breaking social-distancing when coming forward to receive Communion	Clear announcements at the beginning. A one-way system of coming forward and returning. People will receive standing, waiting behind each other. They will have been reminded of appropriate distancing		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
Shared touching of the altar rail	People will receive standing, waiting appropriately behind each other. No-one will kneel at the rail.	If anyone cannot come forward, Anthony will go to them	Vicar	5 th July Anthony
contact through receiving the elements of Communion	Only wafers will be distributed. The wine will not be shared. The Priest will sanitize hands immediately after the prayer of consecration (and before getting out the Communion vessels before the service). The wafers will remain covered until the Eucharistic Prayer.		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
Presence of someone with symptoms	We will remind people in our communications that anyone with symptoms should not attend. There are also signs outside the church which remind people not to come in if they have symptoms. If anyone enters who seems to have symptoms of the virus, or if anyone develops symptoms during the service, we will ask them to return home and seek medical help, pointing them to the appropriate Government guidelines.		Vicar and Administrator	3 rd -5 th July Anthony & Myriam
Not knowing who is attending if we hear later that someone present has the virus and we	Anthony or a deputy will quietly note who is present. If there are new faces, he takes their details, with their permission, at the end. These		Vicar	5 th July Anthony

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need to be part of “track and trace”	collated names are added to a document in the vestry immediately after the service. The document will be dated, kept in a locked drawer (administrator and wardens will know where) and destroyed after 21 days, in line with government guidance. We have a contact point for each of our AA groups, for Children’s Church, and for any other meetings who would keep track of who attended for the same purpose.			
Anthony invites individuals to chat, be part of an act of streamed worship or small group discussion	Anthony ensures all involved know the guidance, and ensures that, if different groups are meeting at the same time, due communication and procedures are followed.		Vicar	30/07/20 Anthony

Further specific guidance for use of the parish room or use of the church by external organisations is covered in specific guidance issued for those usages. Please look at these guides as necessary and contact the Church Administrator (church.administrator@smng.org.uk) if you need any further information.