

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
13 th January 2021	8	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 13th January onwards. 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 a third national lockdown from 5th January 2021. This replaced the three-tier system introduced in late 2020 and later augmented with a fourth tier. During the lockdown, 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 [this document](#). Guidance on opening cathedral and church buildings to the public during COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

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 makeup 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](#).

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
 - Use as a vaccination centre
 - 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 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 venues 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 Paul's, Coven	Assessor's name: Karen Jones / Pauline Appleby	Date completed: 17.01.2021 (original) revisions stated in header.	Review date: 31.03.2021 or when next Version is issued from CofE Recovery Group
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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	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	Services are recorded, converted, and published on YouTube every Sunday. Link sent out by email to Electoral Roll, published on Website and Facebook pages, as well as Coven Matters. All recording is completed by one person in Covid secure conditions. From Sunday 17.01.21 we shall also be livestreaming via Facebook	KJ	17.01.21 KJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
social distancing or by touching contaminated services	sure that only those essential for livestreaming or recording enter the church.			
	Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible.	One entry point – but not possible / practical to do one-way system, so stewards' direct entrance and dispersal and attendees briefed.	KJ/ PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	KJ	17.01.21
	Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building.	Signs on entrance door – attendees briefed and monitored by stewards.	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Emptied before lockdown 1	PA	17.01.21 PA
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Battery operated camera n/a Facebook Live via Mobile Phone	KJ	17.01.21 KJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Hand sanitising stations provided at entrance and in sanctuary. Attendees encouraged to bring own hand sanitiser to use before and after receiving the sacrament.	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
	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 . Cleaning recording revisited and made more stringent, communicated to all responsible for cleaning. For Version 7 risk assessment– no further changes required for version 8	KJ / PA / JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK
	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 . Read and complied with. Signage posted.	KJ	17.01.21 KJ
	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.	Service booklet reduced to one sheet, replenished with clean copy for each service. Readings sent out by email and attendees asked to print at home and bring with them	KJ	17.01.21 KJ

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.	Consult advice on complying with Track and Trace . Sign in sheet for name and contact number at entrance. Covid secure supply of pens. NHS app QR check in.	KJ	17.01.21 KJ
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.	<p>We are a small church with removable seating, so easy to socially distanced. Attendees who travel in by car all do from no more than 4 miles. Most attendees walk to Church.</p> <p>As the parish is in Vacancy (and has been for the last 3.1/2 years apart from 16 months), it relies on visiting priests to cover services. These priests have been from the Deanery (Rev Greg Yerbury and Rev Rachel Dale have both helped us out) or from further afield. We check they are an ordained priest in the Church of England and hold a current PtO. No one who has covered any of our services travels further than the staff working at our Church School.</p> <p>When the statistical incidence of CoVid in our Parish is high and above the National average, tempered by the disproportionate effect, because of 3 prisons within the catchment area, we warn any visiting priest that they may be travelling from an area of a lower incidence, this is particularly important if they are classed as clinically vulnerable, as they have to weigh up the potential risk to themselves (ultimately, like the staff in our Church School, it has to be an individual decision).</p> <p>15.03.21 Hotspot Locations The county council is pausing the hotspots to look at the areas in more detail.</p> <p>The UK Government Interactive map at: https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/interactive-map Featherstone West, Coven & Shareshill</p>	KJ	17.01.21 KJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>Seven days to 10 March 2021</p> <p>Total cases 17 up 10 (142.9%)</p> <p>Rolling rate 181.7</p> <p>This is currently above the National Average.</p> <p>An additional reflection of the current infection rate is given on the Essington Live Facebook page where the rates of infection have been broken down by village / community and the prison figures extrapolated (data requested by the Parish Council), which state the infection rate for Brewood and Coven up to the 07.03.21 is 52.5 per 100,000 population, which is well below the national average,</p>		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	Not applicable – numbers are not large enough to impact on nearby venues or businesses.	KJ	17.01.21 KJ
	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	Checked Clergy and both people responsible for opening and closing live on their own. And are not clinically extremely vulnerable. Sufficient but limited number of people to complete all these tasks.	KJ / PA	17..01.21 KJ / PA

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	and cleaning the building.			
	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.	Post on FaceBook Page Notified on Website and weekly newsletter.	KJ	17.01.21 KJ
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system in place and communicated widely by emailed weekly newsletter and on social media.	KJ /PA	17.01.21
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	No churches locally are open. Rural Dean informed of current provision.	KJ	17.01.21 KJ
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Actioned	KJ	17.01.21 KJ

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<p>any permitted purposes</p> <p>Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.</p>	<p>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 weddings, funerals, commemorative events and any other permitted activities where upper limits apply (or provide a link to this document).</p>	<p>Website, A Church Near You and social media all updated.</p>	<p>KJ</p>	<p>17.0.121 KJ</p>
	<p>Update your website to remind people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 to stay at home as much as possible and observe social distancing guidance, and either strongly discourage them from</p>	<p>Actioned</p>	<p>KJ</p>	<p>17.01.21 KJ</p>

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	attending church in person during this time or indicate a time for them to attend for individual devotions.			
	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 .		
	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 . Actioned as detailed on P5 preparation.	KJ /PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ / PA / JK
	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.	Actioned as detailed on P4 preparation.	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Actioned – attendees briefed, and stewards appointed.	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
	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).	Actioned	KJ / PA	17.01.21
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Actioned	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it	Guidance on church heating can be found here . Tested, gas safety certificate, serviced annually.	KJ /JB/ BB	17.01.21 KJ/ JB/BB

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	before people are allowed in.			
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets unless they are absolutely essential and participants cannot bring their own. Hardcopy literature should be quarantined for at least 48 hours between use.	Removed before lockdown 1	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	All items removed, identified areas cordoned off	KJ / PA	17/01.21 KJ / PA
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces.	No pew cushions or kneelers in main seating area.	KJ / PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas.	Not Applicable – stored on kitchen area which is out of bounds.	K J/PA	17.01.21 KJ / PA

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 (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	Actioned	KJ/PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Actioned	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Actioned	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed.	Actioned	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options Registered.	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	available for visitors to use.			
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . Temporary changes made (chairs not pews so able to place socially distanced).	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Actioned	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ/PA
	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 . Cleaned and recorded after every access where there is not a lapse of 72 hours.	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
	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. Checked twice weekly.	KJ /PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA / JK

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Checked twice weekly.	KJ /PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Actioned	KJ /PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK
Use of the church for baptisms, weddings, funerals and commemorative services	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> <p>All advice and guidance considered and followed. No Church Wedding, Funerals or Baptisms have been arranged before 31.03.21 when this risk assessment will be reviewed.</p> <p>Guidance on funerals will be rigorously complied with as issued and communicated.</p>	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ/ PA

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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> <p>The government’s guidance on the use of hospitality spaces can be found here.</p> <p>N/A Church is not used for any other activities.</p>	K J/PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with	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.	Generally, there is at least 72 hours between each opening.	KJ/ PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<p>Coronavirus symptoms)</p> <p>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.</p> <p>Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities.</p>	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Actioned – where applicable.	KJ/PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK
	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.	Identified and listed on Cleaning record, which is updated and signed every time such surfaces are cleaned.	KJ /PA/JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA/JK
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.	Actioned	KJ /PA /JK	17.01.21 KJ/PA/JK
	Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets deemed essential for services should be quarantined for 48 hours after use.	Actioned	KJ /PA	17.01.21 KJ /PA
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Provided	KJ /PA /JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA /JK

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Actioned	KJ /PA /JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA /JK
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Only KJ / PA or JK remove such items and aware of responsibilities.	KJ /PA /JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA /JK
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Weekly	KJ /PA /JK	17.01.21 KJ /PA /JK
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		KJ /PA If required	
	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.	KJ /PA If required	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	KJ /PA If required	

Key

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- PA Pauline Appleby
- JK Jo Knight
- JB Jan Beason
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