

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
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 (eg 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

Church: St. Bartholomew's, Otford	Assessor's name: Janet Hunt	19/7/2021	Review date: 31/8/2021
Event or service this assessment relates to:			

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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.	Doors held open for services when weather permits	Ongoing each service or event JH or JB to implement as required.
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	Outdoor spaces used for refreshments, not appropriate for Services	N/A	N/A
	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.	Signage in lobby requesting Congregations wear masks, during Services, especially when singing	CS to prepare signage. Wardens to speak to Congregation as they arrive	31/8
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	We will continue to use every other pew until the next review date – we will also provide signs for Congregation to use to keep	JH, CS	19/7 review 31/8

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		space next to them empty to provide Social Distancing		
	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.	Entry will continue to be via north door and exit via south door. Bellringers to use north door for entry and west door to exit.	All Congregation, young people and bell ringers.	31/8 review
	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.	Any events will have specific seating plans, also for Funeral and Weddings, with attendees being advised to the Church Office in advance	Anyone arranging an event or special Service	31/8 review
Surface transmission of Covid-19	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Hand sanitiser at entry and exit points. Additional to be provided for Ringing chamber.	25/7
	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.	Electronic documents used for 10.00 Morning Service. Paper service sheets for all other services – which are then quarantined until use the following week.		N/A
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	See advice on cleaning church buildings .	Church will continued to be cleaned	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
			after each Service	
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	You could consider a long-term loan system for Bibles and other books to ensure people have access to these.	Lessons for readers at a Service are printed in advance. Bibles not yet available in pews.	N/A already in place
	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.	Service sheets placed in pews in advance of the Service. People entering the Church are all requested to sanitise hands on entry.	All Congregation, Wardens and Sidespeople preparing for Services	Ongoing
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Devotional items previously removed have not yet been returned to Church.	Previously done	Review 31/8
	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).	Children's material have yet to be returned to Church.	Items could be cleaned after service in readiness for following week	Ongoing
	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.	Already in place	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Already in place	Ongoing
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.	Consult advice on Track and Trace .	In place	JH reviewed 19/7
	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.	DG to update website. Recommend face masks for Congregation – and request they are worn if singing.	DG, JH, CS	24/7
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.	A number of printed service sheets are available. Loop in place for hard of hearing	In place	Review 31/8
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Booking system no longer to be used – but will be reviewed on a regular basis	JH	JH 15/8 review
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	DG in touch with his Deanery Colleagues on a regular basis		ongoing
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Notices provided on a weekly sheet, and at the start of each service.		Ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	The Church would be closed should this situation arise.	Wardens and Vicar to make decision	Ongoing
	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.	N/A	N/A

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	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.	Cleaning would be undertaken by either Wardens and or Parish Administrator	As and when required

DG David Guest, Vicar
 JH Churchwarden
 JB Churchwarden
 CS Parish Administrator