

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
10 th December 2021	10.1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed to reflect the new restrictions contained in Plan B implemented by the UK government. As Plan B adds restrictions to people entering places of worship 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](#) 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.

*Please note while the NHS COVID pass is mandatory for entry into venues where large crowds gather, **this requirement will not apply to places of worship when they are being used for Communal Worship, Weddings, Funerals and other ceremonies to mark key life events.** Concerts or other non-worship events will need to comply with the new requirement but only where 500 or more people are involved in indoor venues.*

More information is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#) and on the Government's [website](#).

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: Holy Trinity, Woodgreen	Assessor's name: Charlotte Tremain	Date completed: 18.12.2021	Review date: 12 months from date of assessment or earlier if required
Event or service this assessment relates to:		Services and when open to the public (daily) but this is an out of town centre setting. Few visitors.	

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.	During period when church is heated the windows will be opened during Sunday services except in extreme weather conditions. Doors will be closed when service starts	Churchwardens or designated person	CFT 11.10.21
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	N/A during winter	clergy	
	Remind people that it is now mandatory to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. You may also consider asking congregations to continue to wear face coverings for exempt activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.	People who are able, are required to wear face coverings, with the exception of the choir when singing, and the clergy when leading the service.	Churchwardens or designated person	CFT 18.12.21

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	Sufficient choice of seats for present congregation size – social distancing up to individuals	Churchwardens or designated person	ongoing
	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.	N/A for most occasions because we do not have back-to-back services.		
	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.	This is assessed separately on a case-by-case basis. For large services a separate risk assessment may be required.	Churchwardens or designated person	ongoing
Surface transmission of Covid-19	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Hand sanitiser is available at all entry point into the church.	Churchwardens or designated person	ongoing
	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.	Orders of services will not be used within 7 days with exception of up to 4 booklets being used within 48 hours.	Churchwardens or designated person	ongoing
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	Anti-bacterial wipes should be available for cleaning frequently touched surfaces in addition to a regular cleaning schedule. Supplies are available from the Parish Office.	Cleaner or people on the cleaning rota	ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	See previous entry.	Churchwardens or designated person	
	If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them.	A recycling bin is provided for people to dispose of single-use service sheets when leaving the church.	Welcomers	ongoing
	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		
	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).	It will be advised that toys are not currently used as no Junior Church at present and no crèche facility	Cleaner or people on the cleaning rota	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Churchwardens or designated person check before each service.	Churchwardens or designated person	ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Standard practice	Cleaner or people on the cleaning rota	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 . QR codes are in use in all churches.	Churchwardens or designated person	11.10.21
	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.	The benefice website and social media are updated centrally.	Kate Banks & Richard Young	ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.	The Eucharist from St Mary's is streamed weekly.		ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	N/A		
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	There are 6 places of worship in the benefice offering complementary provision.	PCC	ongoing
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Reminders of safe practice are given periodically in the notices and e-notices	Deputy wardens	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.	At the discretion of the rector and churchwardens.	Rector and churchwardens	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.		
	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.		