

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: St Kenelm's Church Hall	Assessor's name: Hugh White	Date completed: 17 th December 2021	Review date: 17 th December 2022
Event or service this assessment relates to:		Special Christmas services and family services occurring twice a month thereafter	

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.	Service team	17.12.21 and forward Hugh White
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.			
	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.	We are requiring people who are able to wear face coverings to do so, even when singing. Face masks are available at the entrance to the Hall.	Service leader	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	Seating arranged with social distancing in mind	Service team	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	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			

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	available at all times. Where possible use a different door for exit.			
	<p>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.</p> <p>Where a non-worship activity with over 500 people is involved such as a concert or other event an NHS COVID Pass may be required for attendance.</p>	Services usually not very energetic and only about 20 people attending	Service leader (should circumstances require drawing the attention of a congregation to a particular need to observe risk mitigation behaviours)	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
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 the entrance to the Hall	Hall maintenance team / Service team	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	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.	Doors left open.	Service team	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	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.	Hall maintenance team	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.	Long-term loan system implemented for regular worshippers	Standing Committee	17.12.2021 Hugh White
	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 Team/Leader	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	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).		Service Team, when applicable	ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		Hall maintenance team	ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Hall maintenance team	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 .	Hall maintenance team/ Service leader	17.12.2021 and forward Hugh White
	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.	Benefice website, etc are updated regularly	Kate Banks and 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.	Eucharist from St Mary's, Witney is streamed weekly on Thursdays	Service leader to advise	ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Not deemed necessary		
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	There are six places of worship in the Benefice offering complementary provision	Parish Secretary	ongoing
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.		Service team	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.		Hall maintenance team	ongoing, as 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.	Hall maintenance team	ongoing, as required
	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.	Hall maintenance Team	ongoing as required