

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 Mary the Virgin, Witney | Assessor's name: Kate Banks | Date completed: 18 December 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) | |

| 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 <u>guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas</u> West Doors open during services; | Churchwardens or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. | N/A | N/A | |
| | 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, except for the choir when singing, and the clergy when leading the service. A small supply of paper masks is available should a member of the congregation forget their own. | Churchwardens and welcomers, or other designated person | Kate Banks 18-12-21 |
| | Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing | Sitting in your “bubble” is encouraged | Churchwardens, welcomers, or | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |

| Risk | Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event) | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| | <p>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.</p> | <p>N/A for most occasions because we do not have back-to-back services. Services are spaced out during the week, and don't occur back-to-back. Should this become necessary, additional sanitising would be undertaken between services.</p> <p>https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/COVID%2019%20Guidance%20from%20the%2019th%20July%202021%20v2.0_1.pdf</p> | designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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, welcomers or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| 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 already available at all entry points into the church. Attention is drawn to it on entrance to the building by welcomers | Churchwardens, welcomers or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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. | The risks from contact spread is now considered to be low. However, all measures are taken to reduce contact with common contact points. Doors are open and service sheets are picked up by congregation and recycled by individuals after each service | Churchwardens, welcomers or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |

| Risk | Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event) | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|------|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| | Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. | Anti-bacterial wipes are available for cleaning frequently touched surfaces in addition to a regular cleaning schedule. Supplies are available from the Parish Office. | Cleaner has been informed and has been carrying out these instructions throughout the Covid -19 period. | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people. | N/A - St Mary's uses single use service sheets which are recycled after use | | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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. Most of the congregation who take a once only sheet when leaving church take it home to read again and recycle at home. | Welcomers | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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 | |
| | 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). | If the Pathfinders or Groundbreakers groups start up, sanitising wipes will be made available for any equipment | Youth group leaders, wardens | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |

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|---|---|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Appropriate facilities are available, there is also hand sanitiser outside the facilities | Churchwardens or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Yes, all bins have liners | Cleaner | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| 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 the church. | Churchwardens or designated person | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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 through the parish office. Local Facebook page and Hailey Herald | Kate Banks & Richard Young | ongoing |
| | 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. | Church Wardens; Richard Young | Kate Banks 20-11-21 |
| | 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 |

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| | Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. | Ongoing | 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 church wardens, in the event of known exposure | Ongoing |
| | If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | <u>Public Health England guidance</u> available here . | Rector and church wardens, in the event of know exposure | Ongoing |
| | 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 . | Rector and church wardens, in the event of know exposure | Ongoing |