

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

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21 st March 2022	11	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed to reflect the removal of restrictions from 24th February 2022 and the publication of the Government's [Living With Covid](#) guidance. The Church of England's [guidance](#) may also be a helpful reference point.

Completing a risk assessment is still a recommended step in deciding on uses of church buildings, even though legal restrictions on activities and gatherings of people have ended. You can use this template, or one provided by the [Health and Safety Executive](#), or one of your own devising, so long as it identifies risks and assigns suitable mitigations so everyone is clear who is responsible for which steps and activities.

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.

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 (e.g. 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:	Assessor's name:	Date completed:	Review date:
St Mary the Virgin, Witney	Jeremy Lasman	26.04.2022	TBC
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.	Do not prop open fire doors. The scale of St Mary's as a building allows for sufficient ventilation. Where the weather allows the West Doors to the building remain open during major services	No further action required	n/a
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	No Longer required	n/a	n/a
	Consider if you will ask attendees to wear a face covering (unless exempt). This is no longer a legal requirement but remains recommended by government guidance.	Research shows that rates of Covid transmission by aerosol means (i.e. particles in the air) are very high. The PCC has agreed that the wearing of face masks is at the discretion of the individual in line with	Duty wardens and vergers to advise attendees of services as required	On-going

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		government policy as at April 2022		
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing.	We share a socially distanced Peace. Government guidelines no longer require us to enforce social distancing, so at the discretion of the individual	Duty wardens and/or vergers to provide extra seating should an individual require to be seated in a socially distanced manner	On-going
	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.	No Longer required by government policy. The West doors provide sufficient space to manage flows of people into and out of the building at low risk	n/a	n/a
	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.	No longer required by government policy, but agreed actions as described above will be followed	n/a	n/a
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 provided at both North and West doors and in the toilet block, with signs requesting that those entering the building use it.	Welcomers and vergers to encourage usage	On-going

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		This is the agreed policy of the PCC		
	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.	Already our practice to print service sheets for use, and to encourage the use of contactless devices for giving.	n/a	n/a
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	See the cleaning section of Church of England guidance . Church is cleaned twice a week by our cleaner and once a month with the team that attends 1 st Saturday church cleaning	n/a	n/a
	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. As already stated, we minimise the use of Bibles and hymn books by the use of printed service sheets and encouraging the use of the Daily Office app	n/a	n/a
	If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, either place these on seats or ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them.	As above	Welcomers and vergers to encourage use of hand sanitisation	On-going

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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	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).			
	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	n/a	n/a
	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		
Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.	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	ongoing
	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.	Already in place	n/a	n/a
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	Ventilate the building as fully as possible to disperse aerosol particles.	Will be progressed as required	Wardens/verger	n/a
	Clean all touchable surfaces, with reference to the Church of England guidance	Will be progressed as required	Wardens/verger	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 ventilation and cleaning is not possible then close the church building for 48 hours.	At the discretion of the rector and churchwardens.	Rector and church wardens, in the event of known exposure	Ongoing