THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

**Risk Assessment - Opening Church Buildings to the Public**

| **Church:**<br>**St Michael's, Aynho** | **Assessor's name:**<br>**Andrew Bellamy** | **Date completed:**<br>**23 Feb 2021** | **Review date:**<br>**9 April 2021** |
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| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for purposes of recording and/or livestreaming services (with no congregation present)**<br><br>**Risk:** contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services | Consider if anyone required for recording or broadcasting is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Can someone else fulfil their role in the recording/livestreaming? Ensure that the people who need to attend the church building to enable the livestreaming or recording to take place are willing to do so and can do so safely. Make sure that only those essential for livestreaming or recording enter the church. | Advice on livestreaming and recording can be found here. | N/A | |
| | Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible. | | | |
| | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be found here. | | |
| | Consider staggered arrival times if multiple people from different households are coming into the building. | | | |
| | Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | | | |
| | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | | | |

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| | Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands. | | | |
| | Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below). | Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here. | | |
| | Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce or download signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law and requiring these for all except those exempt. | Advice on face coverings can be found here. | | |
| | 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. | | | |
| | Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. | Consult advice on complying with Track and Trace. | | |
| **Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities** | Consider how the national lockdown applies to the particular circumstances of the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider the implications of where people travel from and the distance involved. | | | |
| | Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible. | Not applicable in this village | | |
| | Check if any clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their | Verger consulted and arrangements made | AB/KW | 25/2/21 |

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| | household who do, and ensure there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building. | | | |
| | Consider whether to discourage clinically extremely vulnerable members of the congregation or visitors from attending services altogether or setting aside a time for them to attend for individual devotions. | Let worshippers decide for themselves.<br>Include in email to Parishioners | AB in email | 24/2/21 |
| | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Question of numbers. Might be necessary at Easter. Note on website forewarning | AB | 29/3/21 |
| | Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. | Services not open to Benefice before Easter – all aware; repeated in correspondence. Travel restrictions apply. | | |
| **Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes**<br><br>**Risk:** Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas. | Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | N/A | | |
| | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. Clearly state the limits on attendance for weddings, funerals, commemorative events and any other permitted activities where upper limits apply (or provide a link to this document). | Initial message to contain instructions as necessary.<br><br>None of big events planned.<br><br>Arrangements for funerals will be made according to circumstances prevailing at the time. | AB in email | 24/2/21 |
| | Update your website to remind people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 to stay at home as much as possible and observe social | Reinforced by latest letter from NHS to the clinically extremely vulnerable | N/A | |

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| | distancing guidance, and either strongly discourage them from attending church in person during this time or indicate a time for them to attend for individual devotions. | | | |
| | Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below). | Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here. | | |
| | Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt. | Advice on face coverings can be found here. | | |
| | 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 exit. | Main entrance<br><br>North Door – leaving main door for parents/young children | AB in email | 24/2/21 |
| | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Outside notice – daily for Services | AB/KW | |
| | Make any temporary arrangements for managing the approaches to the entry points and any parking areas to ensure social distancing can be observed (taking into account any consequential risks arising from changes to circulation). | Car Park – individuals manage themselves | | |
| | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Use doors as required in temperate weather | AB/KW | |
| | If heating is required check your system is safe to use | Guidance on church heating | | |

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| | and test it before people are allowed in. | can be found here.<br>In use weekly | | |
| | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets unless they are absolutely essential and participants cannot bring their own. Hardcopy literature should be quarantined for at least 48 hours between use. | Only used once a week | AB/KW | |
| | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Candle stand to be moved before Services | AB/KW | |
| | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance on soft surfaces. | Removed for individual prayer days only – otherwise only used every 7 days | AB/KW | |
| | Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas. | Needed for children at Sunday Club – leave in use. Only used once every 7 days | AB/KW | |
| | Walk through the church to plan for physical distancing in seats, aisles, at the altar rail, including safe flow of visitors. Remember 2m in all directions from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary). | Alternate pews in use | | |
| | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Exclusion zones around choir, in front of Leader's desk and in front of the lectern | | |
| | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Numbers and worshippers don't need markings for Services. Control through Wardens and sidespersons. | | |
| | Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed. | Limit Vestry (only Leader and Wardens), kitchen and WC | | |

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| | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.<br>General sanitisers at entrance; individual sanitisers for communion placed in pews with worshippers | AB/KW | |
| | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | N/A | | |
| | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices at entrance and on entrance tables | AB/KW | |
| | Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.<br>For Sundays – no use from Thursday 3pm | | |
| | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.<br>Not in use – except in emergency. Check WC on Thursday pm for Sundays | AB/KW | |
| | 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. | | |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | | | |
| **Use of the church for baptisms, weddings,** | Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place. | Advice on baptisms can be found here. | | |

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| **funerals and commemorative services** | | Advice on weddings can be found here (scroll down to Can weddings go ahead?).<br><br>Advice on funerals can be found here.<br><br>The government's advice on commemorative events can be found here. | | |
| **Use of the church for permitted activities other than private prayer or worship** | Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place. Check that any external group using the church has COVID-secure working practices in place, including their own risk assessment where necessary, and will comply with what is required by the church. | N/A | | |
| **Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)**<br><br>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.<br><br>**Risk:** Getting or spreading | If the church building has been closed for 48 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces. | Closure period covers | | |
| | If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | | | |
| | Identify surfaces that are frequently touched and by many people (often common areas), e.g. handrails, door handles, shared equipment, toilets, and specify the frequency and level of cleaning and by whom. | Cleaned as necessary for Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday openings | | |

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| coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities. | Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects. | | | |
| | Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets deemed essential for services should be quarantined for 48 hours after use. | | | |
| | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. | | |
| | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. | | |
| | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | | | |
| | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | | | |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | Acknowledged (hasn't happened since Mar 20!) | | |
| | 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**. | | |
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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
|---|---|---|
| 13th January 2021 | 8 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

*This update has been reviewed in the light of new guidance from the Health and Safety Executive and is intended for use from 13thd January onwards. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly and checked against this latest version of the risk assessment.*

England entered a third national lockdown from 5th January 2021. This replaced the three-tier system introduced in late 2020 and later augmented with a fourth tier. During the lockdown, churches are permitted to open for communal worship, private prayer and a number of essential purposes where they can be carried out in a Covid-safe way. There may be specific local regulations recommended by local authorities, that place additional restrictions on certain activities. Before completing this risk assessment you can see what is permitted by checking this document. Guidance on opening cathedral and church buildings to the public during COVID-19 can be found here.

The government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy and members of the public entering for any permitted purposes. As well as offering guidance on best practice, the template is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. Specific guidance linking to advice on the lockdown period is available on the Church of England Coronavirus pages.

The government acknowledges that places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities and generations together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus. In drawing up a risk assessment for your church, or revising it in the light of the current situation, you will need to think carefully whether the public benefits you achieve by opening are justified by the risks involved, however much you can mitigate them. This judgement will vary depending on the location and nature of your church building and the make up of your congregation and visitor profile. You will need to discuss the factors with your governing body, whether the PCC or chapter. Remember that this is your collective choice whether to open: while our churches are permitted by

government to open, they are not obliged to do so. If you decide not to open, you can continue to have a valuable role serving the community in a number of ways. Guidance on this can be found on the Church of England Coronavirus pages.

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

Separate risk assessments for outdoor worship and for access by contractors and construction workers are available on the Church of England Coronavirus pages.

**Carrying out a risk assessment**

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
    - Private prayer
    - Public worship
    - Livestreaming or recording services
    - Funerals, weddings, baptisms
    - Formal childcare or where part of a school
    - Essential voluntary and public services
    - Use as a vaccination centre
    - Other exempted activities such as support groups
    - Opening for visitors/tourists, including opening shops and cafes
2. Consider the hazards:
    - Transmission of COVID-19
    - Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual

    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 venues 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 and go against the general guidance that people should stay local for any activities outside the home. 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.