

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group

THIS IS A PLANNING DOCUMENT ONLY. IT WILL BE UPDATED AND CONTENT MAY CHANGE ONCE GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON REOPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP HAS BEEN PUBLISHED. We are awaiting clarification from government on the extent and nature of what 'supervised individual prayer' means and what exactly will be required. We will update this document as further information becomes available.

On 7th June the government announced that places of worship may open for individual prayer in line with social distancing guidelines from 15th June. The government 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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when small services such as weddings and funerals with limited numbers are allowed and then for different forms of public worship.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Risk assessment template

Church:	Date completed:	Review date:
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified.	Vestry door	Clergy	TC 22.05.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Following CoE guidelines for clergy in church alone	TC 22.05.20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	When accessed by CW checking the building	NW	Also TC on day of entry
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	No waste but some hoovering needed	CW / TC	Ongoing as required
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	Kitchen will not be used Toilets flushed	22.05.20
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	Checked by CW when checking the building	CW	Not yet used; safety checked by NW
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A	N/A	
Preparation of the Church for individual prayer	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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 .	TC / NW prior to and TC after opening	12 / 13.06.20
	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.	Enter via front door Exit via vestry door	TC to mark and provide notice and supervisors to ensure this is followed If anyone needs to use the disabled access this must be supervised to ensure no clash with anyone exiting. Instructions to supervisors	12.06.20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation.		Those supervising the opening sessions as appropriate	Ongoing; to be completed by supervisors before / during and after opening sessions
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets.		TC	12.06.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed.	Discussed by clergy; agreed by Rev'd P Robinson	Not necessary as 72 hours will be left between openings	
	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.		TC to mark seating	12.06.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitiser available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	At entry / exit and in toilet	12.06.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions (link to be added when guidance is live).	None required	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		TC with tape & notice	12.06.20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		TC with tape and notices	12.06.20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		TC	14.06.20
	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.	TC during and after each opening	ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	PJR to alter the taps in the toilet TC to check and clean facilities after use	PJR 14.06.20 Ongoing
	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.	TC to monitor	Ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them.		TC to provide and place	ongoing
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for cleaning.	72 hours will be kept between openings TC to monitor wiping of pews & clean toilets after use during opening and at the end of each session	TC	ongoing
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.			
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.		TC	Ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	TC	Ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	No historic surfaces	TC	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	TC	TC	Ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		After each session TC	Agreed 9.06.20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Church will be closed for 72 hours Further review as services expand		
	If 72-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 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	TC	As required