

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
16 th July 2021	10	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed to reflect step 4 of the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 19th July onwards. As step 4 sees the easing of all legal restrictions 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 on step 4](#) 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.

Risk assessment templates for outdoor worship and for contractors and construction workers are also available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#).

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. Laurence, Winslow	Assessor's name: C.Ryalls	Date completed: 22/7/21	Review date: 19/8/21
Event or service this assessment relates to:			

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. Weather permitting doors should be left open, including interior and exterior vestry doors.	Consult HSE guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas Do not prop open fire doors.	Wardens	Every service
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. Outdoor service planned for 8/8/21.		NA as not routine	
	Request or consider requiring people to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. This may particularly apply to activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing. With the legal requirement to wear masks ceasing on 16/7/21 we will not request people to wear face coverings, however, we will be sympathetic to those who wish to continue wearing them. We will re-introduce communal singing. We will set up 'reduced risk' area(s) where people will be asked to wear masks, maintain social distancing and refrain from singing.		Remind congregation of reduced risk areas and expectations. Review each service if area is large enough. Wardens and incumbent	Every service

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	In the first instance we will use the north aisle for this purpose.			
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing. We are removing restrictions on social distancing and bringing all pews into use. This will allow more people to sit in the nave and consequently free up space in side aisles where people who wish to maintain a large social distance will be able to do so in a 'reduced risk' area (see above).. Communion will be managed in such a way as to have single file queues for the sacrament(s) and people are requested to maintain social distancing when queuing or to have the sacrament(s) brought to you. To increase social distance in the choir we will use additional chairs in the chancel, sanctuary and in front of the altar rail.		Priest to agree communion routes and distribution points prior to each service with wardens/sides people. Derry French to coordinate additional choir seating.	Each service..
	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. People are asked to maintain social distancing when leaving the church.		Wardens remind congregation each service.	Each service
	People handling food and drink, including communion wafers and wine, should wear gloves and masks. People receiving food items should, ideally, sterilise hands before doing so. At present, following advice from the diocese, we shall not be offering wine in communion. When/if we make the		Priests, servers and coffee corner volunteer s should ensure they have	Each service.

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	<p>decision to offer wine the following will apply. In the case of receiving communion wine communicants should take a small, quick sip from the chalice. It is acceptable, and advised, that communicants take hold of the chalice to guide the server. Dipping wafers into wine (intincting) is NOT allowed. Servers should use medicated wipes to wipe the lip of the chalice after each communicant.</p>		<p>gloves and masks before the service.</p>	
Surface transmission of Covid-19	<p>Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands. Hand sanitiser should be available for use when entering and leaving the church at the altar, and where refreshments are served.</p>	<p>Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.</p>	<p>Wardens to check supplies are present at each service and sufficient supplies are available for the next service as well. Purchase more if necessary</p>	<p>Every service.</p>
	<p>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.</p>			
	<p>Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. Pews should continue to be wiped down and disinfected after each service.</p>	<p>See advice on cleaning church buildings.</p>	<p>Wardens and sides people</p>	<p>Every service</p>
	<p>Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people. Since Bibles, hymn books and</p>	<p>You could consider a long-term loan system for Bibles</p>		

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	service books are only used weekly for the most part any virus left on these surfaces should be destroyed by oxygen in the air before they are used again.	and other books to ensure people have access to these.		
	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. NA			
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on). NA			
	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). TBA with Mothers Union.		Volunteers to collect used ‘happy bags’ each service’ replenish supplies and disinfect as needed. A.Bowe to coordinate	Every service
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. These are available in SLR.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	D.French	Weekly
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. TBA		Wardens	When putting bins out on Sunday
Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending	Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that	Consult advice on Track and Trace .	Wardens/sides people ensure	Every service.

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.	system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options. We will provide a sign in sheet and encourage people to use it or the NHS app.		all documentation is in porch for congregation to use.	
	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. Once agreed we will publish the risk assessment on the website and send it to a Church Near You.			
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired. NA			
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services. Unlikely to be needed but we have done this in the past and could do so again.			
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. Once agreed we will send RA to wardens of St. Mary's and St. James'.			
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. Provide copies of RA in church and display an information notice in the church porch along with NHS QR code, 'sign in' sheet and hand sanitiser.			

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. Will comply.		Wardens	
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. NA usually, in the event of closure affecting an occasional service the priest holding the service will arrange for cleaning prior to the service.	<u>Public Health England guidance available here.</u>	Wardens	
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. Will comply.	Advice on <u>cleaning church buildings can be found here.</u>	Wardens	

- Please use the 'sign in' sheet and leave a contact number for 'Track and Trace' purposes if we do not have contact details for you already, or use the NHS app.
- Use the hand sanitiser provided on entering and leaving the church.
- Mask wearing and social distancing are no longer legally required and communal singing will take place during many of the services, however, we are using the North Aisle as a '**reduced risk**' area (see below).
- During communion, and when entering and leaving the church, please give the people in front of you sufficient space as has been customary during the pandemic.
- When sharing the peace continue to avoid hand shaking and kissing.
- If receiving wine do so by sipping from the chalice. DO NOT DIP (INTINCT) YOUR WAFER. (At present, we are following the diocesan advice NOT to offer wine.)
- **Reduced risk areas**, currently the North Aisle, are for the anxious, the vulnerable or those who live with a vulnerable person. In these areas we ask that you wear a face covering throughout the service, refrain from joining in the communal

singing and seat yourselves to maintain a social distance of 1m+ from people not in your bubble.

'Sign in' sheet for _____ service on _____.

--	--	--	--	--	--

Checklist															
Initial when complete															
Service															
Time/Date															
QR code, information sheet, 'sign in' sheet, pens, hand sanitiser are all in porch															
Gloves, masks and sanitiser at altar and coffee corner.															
Distribution points and communion route agreed with priest.															
Doors opened for ventilation.															
Congregation informed about route to use for communion, use of reduced risk area and need for social distancing on leaving.															

Pews wiped down																			
Bins have bags and bins outside SLR and graveyard.																			
Sanitiser, gloves and mask supplies sufficient for next week.																			