# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
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| 1st July 2020 | 4 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15th June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4th July. Other activities, except for a few still prohibited by law, may also take place in churches, subject to the government guidance in place for the relevant sector.

The [government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-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, it 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. You should read the advice on re-opening buildings and the guidance on public worship before completing this assessment. Both are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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.

A separate risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Carrying out a risk assessment**

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
   * Private prayer (clergy only) - No
   * Livestreaming services (clergy only) - No
   * Private prayer (general public) - No
   * Public worship - Yes
   * Rites of passage services – Yes in the longer term.
   * Opening for visitors and tourists – Considered on a case by case basis.
2. Consider the hazards:
   * Transmission of COVID-19
   * Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church
   * Hazards arising from now using the church in a different way

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).

1. 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 so long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming through your building makes the possible impact – for example of 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **St. Botolph’s, Hadstock** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Paula Griffiths, Tim Boyden, Peter Jarritt, Janice Snell** | **Date completed:**  **6/7/20** | **Review date:**  **1/9/20** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches)  **This activity will not be taking place** | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible |  |  |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). |  |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Full Church Clean to be undertaken before opening. | Cleaning Team/ Rick Albrow |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  | See above. |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)  No water on site. |  |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Electrical services will not be used. |  |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Yes. |  |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Not applicable. No PA system will be used. |  |  |
| **Deciding whether to open to the public** | Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible. | The congregation will be advised that toilet facilities will not be available until the Village Hall is re-opened. No groups will be given access unless and until toilet facilities are available. Groups will be able to visit by prior agreement and appointment only, and only if stewarding can be arranged. To minimize cleaning impact visits will be restricted to Wednesdays to allow 72 hours for virus decay. |  |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | To be actioned to reflect decisions taken in this Risk Assessment.  [Link to Government advice re opening places of worship](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july) | PHJ and PG in conjunction with PCC. |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | This risk assessment covers routine Sunday Services and Tuesday Morning Prayers only. Capacity is sufficient for these services. A new RA will be required for festival days, weddings and funerals and other meetings. | PCC |  |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/). | N/A |  |
| **Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism** | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | No individual clergy access is planned. |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** |  |  |
| 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. | Access to the Church will be actively managed through the North Door. Access will be supervised to ensure safe distancing and to prevent overcrowding. Roger Mance will act as doorman and direct to seats, filling up from the front to the door and then from the back to the door. West door will be open to provide emergency exit if required. Notices to be affixed at entrance to inform re escorting to seating. | Roger Mance |  |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | A queuing mechanism will be used. People will be asked to arrive early to prevent last minute rushes. |  |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Ventilation will be from the North Door only which will remain open. |  |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | All books and leaflets will be removed from the church. No service sheets or grpevines will be published. These will be distributed electronically and available via the web site. Order of service booklets (if used) will be placed on approved seating places before the service begins by a steward wearing newly donned plastic gloves and members of the congregation will be asked to place service books in a collection box at the end of the service. These will be left untouched for at least 48 hours. |  |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Not applicable |  |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | These will not be removed as the utilization rate will mean at least 72 hours are left between use. |  |  |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Not applicable |  |  |
| 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). | Allocated seating has been established to provide 2m spacing in all directions. Members of the congregation should sit in the allocated row furthest from the aisle. Family groups will be accommodated. Should the need arise the church will move to named allocated seating to facilitate larger family bubbles. The building can accommodate 11 singles or 22 in couples which should be sufficient for regular services. | Seating spaces will be marked using CE signage. All other rows will be taped off to prevent usage. |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | See above. |  |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | A one way system is not possible. The congregation will be asked to enter and leave the building respecting the 2m social distancing requirement. The congregation will be asked to leave the building as quickly as possible after the service, row by row, with any conversation taking place, socially distanced, outside the building.  For private prayer individuals should not sit in the same place as the previous person. The steward will be responsible for changing over chairs as required. Chairs will be stacked and not used for >72 hours. Areas of the church will be roped off to prevent attendees accessing areas other than the nave. |  |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Areas other than the nave and chancel will be taped off including the lady chapel. This will be relevant to Tuesday and Wednesday opening. |  |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Supplies procured. | To be placed at the entrance to the church for use prior to entry and on exit from the church. Actioned for each service by steward. |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647).  Not applicable. |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Relevant signage has been procured. And will be placed on the noticeboard in the porch. . |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  Care will be taken with the main entrance to the church and the door will remain open to avoid the need for multiple touches. The altar and communion items will be managed entirely by the clergy to restrict contact to one person.  Sanitiser spray is available for use on opening the church. A supply of gloves to be procured and made available to cleaners. | Paula Griffiths  To procure through Parish Office |  |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  No hand washing facilities available. Hand sanitiser only to be used. |  |  |
| 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](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  No toilet facilities are available unless and until agreed with Village Hall. Unlikely before September due to building works. |  |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Waste receptacle with bin liner will be provided for each service. This will be disposed of following each service.  For the cleaning team the team leader will be responsible for collection and disposal of waste. | Tim Boyden. |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | A register will be taken for each service and kept to the required period. Worshippers will be asked to complete a registration card as consent to keep the data for 21 days. | Tim Boyden to keep register. |  |
| Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come. | Rev Paula Griffiths to generate a description of service format and distribute via magazine, Hadstock Info and direct circulation to the electoral roll registrants. The car park will be opened and signage indicating that parking is at the users own risk will be displayed. |  |  |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces. | The Church will only be open on Sunday morning and Tuesday morning. Seating will be different between the two services ensuring surfaces should not be used for at least 72hours. Plastic chairs will be used on Tuesday morning and these will be spray cleaned before and after the service. (Paula happy to do this). The church will be open to visitors on Wednesday for a maximum of 2 hours. Only plastic chairs wll be used for seating and a steward will ensure chairs are rotated and that chairs from the Tuesday meeting are not touched. |  |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | A cleaning rota of non-vulnerable adults will be assembled and used for initial clean. Cleaning team will be responsible for the removal of waste materials, protective clothing etc. |  |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Periodic as required. No extra cleaning to remove virus required due to infrequency of church use. Intermittent cleaning will take place as and when a cleaning team can be assembled. |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Gloves will be provided for the cleaning team. |  |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Permitted cleaning materials are available and will be used. Cleaning teams will access the building on Tuesday or Wednesdays to allow for viral decay before a Sunday service. |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | A member of the cleaning rota will need to be allocated this task. |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Waste will be removed after each service and disposed of in accordance with government directions. | Tim Boyden |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | This will be possible but may require the cancellation of the Tuesday service if a case is notified from the previous Sunday. Tuesday attendees will be advised of the need for increased vigilance as warning may not be available to eliminate this risk. Cleaning regimen should be sufficient if only contacts are to use the plastic chairs. |  |  |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  See above. |  |  |