# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th June 2020 | 3 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 1st July 2020 | 4 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 7th July 2020 | 4.1 | Rev’d Kim E Lafferty/Rev’d Stephen Nolan |

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-from-4-july) 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)
   * Livestreaming services (clergy only)
   * Private prayer (general public)
   * Public worship
   * Rites of passage services
   * Opening for visitors and tourists
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 – first service – 16th August 2020 10am**

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| **Church:**  **St Stephen’s, Kearsley Moor** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Rev’d Kim E Lafferty/Rev’d Stephen Nolan** | **Date completed:**  **7th July 2020** | **Review date:**  **18/08/2020** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Category** | **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) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible |  |  | Incumbent | 17.6.20 KEL |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf)  [here.](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf) |  | Not Applicable |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | Running of all taps for 5 minutes and flushing of toilet |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | 17.6.20 KEL  Ongoing/Weekly |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Electrics have been in use. Heating checked |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | 17.6.20 KEL  7.7.20 KEL SB |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Baptismal font to be emptied after each use |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | As required |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard |  |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
|  | | | | | |
| **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. | Not Applicable |  | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Update our ‘A Church Near You’ and Facebook pages. |  |  | Rev’d Kim | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services |  |  | Incumbent  PCC | Review  Weekly |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | Not Applicable |  | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| **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. |  |  | Rev’d Kim | 17.6.20 KEL |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | After each Sunday service a notice will be placed across the inner door, dated and signed, stating no access for 72 hours |  | Rev’d Kim | Ongoing/Weekly |
| 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. | Church audited by Clergy and Wardens. Routes and seating have been planned.  Seating areas and routes have been identified with tape.  St Stephen’s has been assessed as having capacity for 21 individuals, households or bubbles.  As it is not possible to predict which of the above will arrive and in what quantity, a dynamic Risk assessment will take place at the point of entry as needed. |  | Rev’d Kim  Rev’d Stephen  Church Wardens  Duty Warden  Duty Team | 7.7.20  KEL SN SB  Ongoing  Weekly |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Duty Warden will be on hand at the door permanently.  Duty Team will escort individuals, households and/or bubbles to appropriate seating. |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | All doors will be open at all times. |  | Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | The only service sheet available will be disposable. People will be encouraged to take them home and destroy them. |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Duty Team will be on hand to direct as necessary |  | Incumbent  Church Wardens | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Not necessary |  | Incumbent  Church Wardens | 7.7.20 KEL SN SB |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Blocked off |  | Rev’d Kim  Church Wardens | 16.7.20 KEL SB |
| 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). | Church audited by Clergy and Wardens. Routes and seating have been planned.  Visors to be worn by Duty Warden & Team, masks to be recommended to congregation. |  | Clergy  Church Warden | 7.7.20 KEL SN SB |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Non-seating areas have been blocked off with elastic |  | Church Warden | 10.7.20 SB |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Routes have been identified with tape. |  | Incumbent  Church Wardens | 16.7.20  KEL SB DB |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | As above |  | Incumbent  Church Warden | 16.7.20  KEL SB DB |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | A rehearsal will take place prior to the service where this will be actioned |  | Clergy  Duty Warden | 13.8.20 |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Not Applicable |  | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. |  |  | Rev’d Kim | 16.7.20 |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** |  | Rev’d Kim  Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| 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. |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| 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. |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |  |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Duty Team who seat congregation members will take one name and contact detail per group as they are seated. |  | Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| 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. | Using Facebook, ‘A Church Near You’ and noticeboard |  | Rev’d Kim | Prior to first service on 18.8.20 |
| **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. | After each service a sign will be placed across the inner door stating no access for 72 hours. Dated and signed. |  | Rev’d Kim | Ongoing  Weekly |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Toilet to be cleaned by one named person |  | Incumbent | Ongoing  Weekly |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). 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. |  | Incumbent  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  |  | Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Waste to be removed after each service |  | Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Notice placed across the inner door, dated and signed, stating no access for 72 hours |  | Incumbent | Ongoing  Weekly |
| 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) |  | Incumbent  Church Wardens  Duty Team | As Required |
| 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)**.** |  | Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
|  | It is possible that some will lift up the  sanitiser bottle to use. This should be  monitored and at least once per hour the  bottles should be cleaned |  |  | Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| The record of attenders must be placed on the retiral offering plate so that the  destruction date can be added and it can be  placed into the safe |  |  | Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Ensure housekeeping notices are given to the  congregation at the beginning of the service  so that they understand what arrangements  are in place for Holy Communion |  |  | Rev’d Kim | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Duty team to be briefed with their  responsibilities at the service |  |  | Rev’d Kim  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Clergy to dismiss congregation  in a controlled fashion, to ensure no  bottlenecks occur as they leave | Duty Warden and Tema to assist if needed |  | Clergy  Duty Warden  Duty Team | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Ensure the most up-to-date copy of  the Risk Assessment is added to  St Stephen’s ‘A Church Near You’ page |  |  | Rev’d Kim | Ongoing  Weekly |
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| **Holy Communion**  **Holy Communion** | Liturgy, Readings and Intercessory Prayers | For the first service, a team of 2 or 3 Clergy will preside from the East end of Church wearing face visors. They will do all readings, prayers and Liturgy |  | Clergy Team | 18.8.20 |
| Any lay person taking a role in the service  e.g. reading lesson, leading intercessions etc,  to be briefed re sanitising hands | When full service rota has resumed. |  | Rev’d Kim  Duty Warden | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Eucharistic Prayer | Elements will be covered during the Eucharistic prayer.  Wine will be consumed by the Clergy presiding over the Eucharistic prayer only.  Alcohol gel will be used. |  | Presiding Priest  Presiding Priest  All distributing | Ongoing  Weekly |
| Distribution of Holy Communion | Communion will be in one kind only.  Clergy will deliver the wafers directly to people’s seats.  This will be organised at Rehearsal. |  | Clergy Team | Rehearsal 13.8.20  Ongoing  Weekly |
| Music | No singing at all.  Any incidental music that may be played either before service or during the distribution must be carefully chosen to ensure it is instrumental only. |  | Clergy Team | Ongoing  Weekly |

**Category Classifications:**

**Colour Category Notes**

Green Low Risk These are easily managed and completed or are on a rolling cycle

Yellow Medium Risk These are easily managed and completed or are on a rolling cycle

Orange High Risk These are issues which we need to be aware of and make decisions if and when they arise

Red Very High Risk These are currently seen as unacceptable risks at this time (none at present)

Black Not Applicable These are issues that do not apply to this Church