

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 Mary's Selly Oak	Assessor's name: Revd Hazel White	Date completed: 1 st March 2022	Review date: As needed
Event or service this assessment relates to:		Public worship, currently 10am Wednesdays, 8am and 10am Sundays, some Sunday evenings	

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.	CO2 monitors used in different locations throughout the building suggest that ventilation is adequate.	None needed	N/A
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	Congregations can be encouraged to chat outside after services, weather permitting	Clergy	As appropriate by whoever is leading the service
	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.	Encourage people to wear a face covering when moving around the building, in enclosed spaces such as vestries, and in particular people are strongly urged to do so when coming to altar rail receive communion	Clergy	Whoever is leading the service

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	Encourage people to be considerate of others in giving one another space. Create more space in some areas of the church, particularly in retaining socially distanced seating at the back and in the Lady Chapel	Clergy Vicar	Messaging at each service Revd Hazel White, 20 th July 2021
	Singing: now allowed. However, there is an increased risk of catching or passing on coronavirus where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing or raising their voices. The risk is greatest where these activities take place when people are in close contact with others indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces. Church leaders urged to consider opening windows and doors, shortening the duration of singing, and encourage mask wearing to mitigate risks.	Congregational singing now allowed. Consider mask wearing for singing. Choir members can now sing in the choir stalls. However there is currently no singing when people come to the altar to receive communion. We do have the option to offer people the earlier service (8am) with no singing.	Incumbent in discussion with wardens and choir master	Revd Hazel White, reviewed regularly
	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.	Entry via church porch, managed by stewards on duty. West door can be used in addition as exit if needed, however steps make access unsuitable for those with mobility issues.	A rota of people in place for the Sunday 10am service to manage entry and exit	In place for every Sunday

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	For events where the building is likely to be especially busy, or the activity is particularly energetic, pay particular regard to the need for additional mitigations such as social distancing and face coverings.	To be assessed on a case by case basis. Additional mitigations, particularly face coverings, to be in place as necessary.	Incumbent	Revd Hazel White, as needed
Surface transmission of Covid-19	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Hand Sanitiser to be provide at entry and exit, at chancel steps, and at other points in the building as needed.	Incumbent	Revd Hazel White, as needed
	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.	Hand sanitiser to be used before handling paperwork and service books/hymn books.	Clergy team and Stewards	Managed by ministry team and stewards
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	Weekly clean on Tuesdays by paid cleaner	Cleaner	Jenny Smirthwaite, weekly
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	Hand sanitiser to be used before picking up paperwork and service books/hymn books. Service books and hymn books only used once a week therefore not used by multiple people.	Stewards	Managed by stewards
	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.	Hand sanitiser to be used before picking up TWS and people invited to take the sheet home with them	Clergy taking the service and Stewards	Managed by ministry team and stewards

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Lectern temporarily moved to avoid touch by multiple users.	Warden	Weds 1 st July 2020, Revd David Parker & George Harrison
	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).	Children's toys and books only in use once a week. Children's area cleaned by church cleaner.	N/A	N/A
	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.	Cleaner	Checked weekly by Jenny Smirthwaite
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Cleaner	Checked weekly by Jenny Smirthwaite
Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.	Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code.	No longer applicable following Government removal of track and trace	Incumbent	From 1 st March 2022
	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.	Updates to notice boards, TWS and website	Incumbent	Revd Hazel White, as needed

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.	To be kept under review	Ministry team	As needed
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	A booking system is not considered necessary	N/A	N/A
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Informal conversations ongoing through cluster and churches together	Incumbent	As needed
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Notices provided on the weekly notice sheet	Incumbent	Reviewed weekly
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	This will automatically be the case between church opening on a Wednesday morning and Sunday mornings, unless a wedding or funeral comes into church, in which case guidance will be sought from Public Health England.	Incumbent and wardens	As needed
	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.		