

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

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
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
6 th July 2020	5	Adapted by HG as risk assessment for opening the church centre, rather than church buildings

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](#) 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](#).

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](#).

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).

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 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.
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 for opening Church Centre as a community facility

Church: St Anne's Church Chingford	Assessor's name: Heather Gwynn – Church Warden	Date completed: 8 July 2020	Review date: 4 August MLT meeting, or before as necessary
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Opening the centre for early years provision	Buildings have been aired before use.		Andy Crawford – caretaker (AC)	29/5 AC
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		AC	29/5 AC
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Carried out at intervals through lockdown	AC	29/5 AC
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating not required at this season	AC	29/5 AC
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the Centre are compatible.	Not necessary given numbers using Centre	-	-
	Update your website, and any relevant social media.	Specific communications re Pre School are the responsibility of the Pre	Church website – Rev Mick	Ongoing through successive

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		School leader Nicola Thurbon (NT) outwith the scope of this assessment	Scotchmer (MLS)	stages of re-opening MLS
Review requirements for safe operation of Pre School and ensure that these are met.	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).		Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)	26/5 MLS
	Choose one point of entry into the Centre to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	Note: At this period the centre was opened solely for the Pre-School. Specific arrangements for the safe operation of the Pre School have been addressed separately between the Pre-School and LBWF, in line with LBWF and OFSTED guidance,e and are not addressed further here.		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	“ “ “ “		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	“ “ “ “		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	“ “ “ “		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	“ “ “ “		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand	“ “ “ “		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	washing etc.			
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	“ “ “ “		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		AC	Ongoing AC
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		AC	Ongoing AC
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		AC	Ongoing AC
	If possible, provide safe means for visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	Responsibility of pre School - see above		
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors will know what to expect when they come.	Minimal impact on neighbours. Responsibility for informing visitors rests with pre-School - see above	MLT	29/5
Cleaning the Centre before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church	Arrange cleaning prior to opening.	Deep clean carried out	Commissioned by MLT	29/5 MLT
	check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	A cleaning contract for the centre is in place – these responsibilities fall to the contractor.		

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buildings can be found here.	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	“ “ “ “		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	“ “ “ “		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Materials available in the Centre for use by cleaners and other users as necessary	AC	Ongoing AC
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		AC	“ “
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	All bins emptied on a daily basis and bin liners placed in external waste bins. These bins are emptied weekly.	AC	29/5 AC
Cleaning the Centre after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the building for 72 hours with no access permitted.			To be actioned if necessary
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.			“ “
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	.		“ “
Opening the centre to other community groups	Identify those groups eligible to meet in line with new guidance effective from 4 July onwards, and check which wish to resume at this stage	Two eligible groups wish to resume meeting: others wish to wait at least until September	MLT	1/7 MLS
	Agree maximum numbers permissible in each Centre hall consistent with 2m social distancing	Agreed maximum nos of 15 in front clubrooms and 30 in	MLT	29/6

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		main hall. [Note – separate arrangements in place for Pre-School in line with LBWF and OFSTED guidance]		
	Agree maximum number of groups that can be accommodated per day consistent with social distancing and cleaning requirements	Agreed one group meeting only in each hall each day, not to run concurrently. Meetings to begin once Pre School closes for the summer on 17 July.	MLT	29/6
	Review standard requirements for Centre users and specify additional requirements necessary to ensure Covid 19 safety requirements met To cover; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2m social distancing - entry and exit routes - maximum numbers in each hall - requirement to keep details of attendees for 21 days - no access to kitchen - tables and chairs to be washed down after use 		MLT/MLS	Conditions Agreed 30/6 MLT
	Communicate conditions to groups which wish to begin meeting.			30/6 MLS
	Secure additional hand sanitiser for Centre users and ensure cleaning materials readily available.		MLS	6/7 MLS
	Review arrangements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if/when indoor sport, dancing etc permitted - in advance of return of Pre-School in September - as and when other user groups wish to resume 	Use of car park to be kept under review as numbers of Centre users increase, to ensure social distancing can be	MLT	Review as necessary

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	meeting.	maintained.		