# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer and funerals

**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 |

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June.

House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **Christ Church, Derry Hill** | **Assessors’:**  **Linda Carter (Team Vicar)**  **Richard Carter (PCC Health & Safety)** | **Date completed:**  **18.06.2020** | **Review date:**  **04.07.2020** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Local application of measures**  **(Additional information)** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed** |
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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 | *Vestry door on south side* | LC | 14.05.2020 |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | *Take account of Ecclesiastical Ins. and Parish Lone Working policies and Guidance – ensure others are aware of whereabouts and diary appts.*  *Keep mobile phone on. Check in with texts/calls.* | LC | 14.05.2020 |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | *All doors, external and internal opened for 2/3 hours on several occasions* | LC & RC | From 14.05.2020  Ongoing |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | *Church to undergo professional deep clean.* | ‘Absolutely Cleaning Svs’ | 15.06.2020 |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | *Taps left running and toilet flushed as advised below on several occasions*  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) | LC & RC | From 14.05.2020 |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. | *Lighting and organ checked* | LC & RC | 14.05.2020 |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | *Font emptied post Easter and lid replaced* | LC | 14.05.2020 |
| **Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals** | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | *All required actions completed* | LC & RC | 16.06.2020 |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | *Professional deep clean plus additional cleaning carried out*  Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | ‘Absolutely Cleaning Svs’  LC & RC | 15.06.2020  16.06.2020 |
| 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. | *Entry via main west door*  *Exit via sanctuary door on south side*  *Signage in place* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | *Doors remain open during opening hours* | LC | Ongoing |
| Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user. | *All items removed to Vestry &/or Choir Vestry* | LC & RC | 16.06.2020 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items | *‘Mary’ & ‘Joseph’ statues, cross in Children’s Area and candles removed to Vestry* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | *Kneelers cleaned and removed to exclusion areas of the church* | ‘Absolutely Cleaning Svs’  LC & RC | 16.06.2020 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | *All items from Children’s Area removed to Choir Vestry* | LC & RC | 16.06.2020 |
| 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. | *Initial walk-through discussed with Standing Cttee*  *Further consideration to safe social distancing – limit to 4 people in attendance at any one time – signage at entrance* | LC + Standing Cttee via Zoom  LC | 08.06.2020  18.06.2020 |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | *4 chairs in nave at front of church – signage will clearly indicate this* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | *Signage will clearly indicate main aisle and sanctuary. Floor markings to remind re 2m social distancing* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | *The following are excluded areas: Toilet, Kitchen, Choir Vestry, Font area, Children’s Area, Pews, Balcony*  *Signage and physical barriers eg. the small red chairs*  ***Access to balcony via kitchen:***  ***Clergy, Churchwardens and Organist (for practice)only, with prior notification*** | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | *Hand sanitiser at entrance and exit points* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | *None necessary apart from as noted above* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | *Signage in entrance porch re:*  *Hand sanitiser*  *Social distancing*  *COVID-19 symptoms*  *Max no. of attendees* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| If the church has been used in the last 72 hours ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes. | *Daily cleaning of access areas Tue-Sun.*  Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | RC & LC | Ongoing |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | *Toilet and Kitchen are exclusion areas. Hand sanitiser to be provided* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | *See above* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | *One bin with disposable liner in access area. To be emptied daily (using gloves)* | LC or RC | 18.06.2020 |
| **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. | *We intend to open daily except Mondays, so daily cleaning of access areas as above* | RC & LC | Ongoing |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | *Current cleaning arrangements comply* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | *Currently limited to one household to limit risk of transmission. This will be reviewed on a regular basis* | RC & LC | 18.06.2020 |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | *Supply of gloves available* | LC | 14.05.2020 |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | *Supply of regular cleaning products in stock* | LC | 14.05.2020 |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | *Currently RC & LC (see above comments)* | RC & LC | 15.06.2020 |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | *Waste bin to be emptied daily* | RC or LC | 15.06.2020 |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | *The church will be closed for 72 hours* | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| 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) | LC | 18.06.2020 |
| 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)**.** | LC | 18.06.2020 |