

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
10 th December 2021	10.1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update has been reviewed to reflect the new restrictions contained in Plan B implemented by the UK government. As Plan B adds restrictions to people entering places of worship 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](#) 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.

*Please note while the NHS COVID pass is mandatory for entry into venues where large crowds gather, **this requirement will not apply to places of worship when they are being used for Communal Worship, Weddings, Funerals and other ceremonies to mark key life events.** Concerts or other non-worship events will need to comply with the new requirement but only where 500 or more people are involved in indoor venues.*

More information is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#) and on the Government's [website](#).

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: All Saints High Wycombe	Assessor's name: Lis Burns Venue management team: Lis Burns (LB), Jenny Cartledge (JC), Thistle Martin (TM) Activities team: Stephen Linger (SL) Ministry team: Hugh Ellis (HE), Jackie Lock (JL), Gareth Morley (GM) Derek Lancaster (DL), Robyn Connelly (RC)	Date completed: V10.1 15/12/21 2020 versions available on request V8 completed 06/03/21 V9 completed 28/03/21, reviewed 24/04/21, 23/05/21, 24/06/21 V10 completed 22/07/21, reviewed 11/09/21, 14/10/21, 07/11/21	Next review: 03/01/22
Event or service this assessment relates to:	Sunday and weekday services / building open to public		

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	(Re)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.	One door in large west end entrance usually left open - except in windy conditions During choir practice – inner south porch doors open	Ministry team LB/JC/Activities team/Welcomers	December 2021 JC/LB+ongoing
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	Not appropriate for most services – building is large and well ventilated	Ministry team/LB+JC	December 2021 LB/JC/HE
	Remind people that it is now mandatory to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. You may also consider asking congregations to continue to wear face coverings for exempt activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.	Website and entrance signage updated	Ministry team/welcomers	December 2021 LB/TM

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	(Re)completed – date and name
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	Socially distanced seating in the south aisle, encourage distanced sharing of peace etc	Ministry team LB/JC/Activities team/Welcomers	December 2021 LB/JC/HE
	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.	West end entrance South door for choir and north door for bellringers practice	Ministry team LB/JC/Activities team/Welcomers	December 2021 LB/JC
	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. Where a non-worship activity with over 500 people is involved such as a concert or other event an NHS COVID Pass may be required for attendance.	No non-worship planned where there will be 500+ in building at same time	Ministry team /Activities team	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
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 available at all entrances when in use	Activities team	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
	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.	West doors open as people arrive and leave – inner doors closed during service Online service sheets and news sheets available electronically. Sign up sheets online	Activities team/LB/JC Office/LB	July 2021 LB/JC+ongoing December 2021 TM/LB+ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	(Re)completed – date and name
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	Building is cleaned multiple times during the week	Activities team	December 2021 Activities+ongoing
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	Items not usually shared but can be put away for 48 hours between use	Ministry team /Activities team/Welcomers	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
	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.	Weekly sheets printed for Sunday Eucharist. Reusable sheets for other services – put away for at least 48 hours between services	Office Welcomers	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Some items remain in storage	LB/JC	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
	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).	Colouring and books/puzzles made available but no soft toys	RC	December 2021 RC
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		Cleaner/Activities team	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Cleaner/Activities team	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing
Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or	Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options.	QR code and forms to remain in place - optional	Activities team/welcomers	December 2021 LB/JC+ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	(Re)completed – date and name
visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.	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.	Updated ACNY and website	LB + office	December 2021 LB/TM+ongoing
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.	Guidance will be online, some printed copies. Announcement made when relevant	LB + office/ Ministry team	December 2021 LB/TM+ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Enough space for standard and socially distanced seating	LB/JC	December 2021 LB/JC/HE
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Shared at team benefice meetings	Ministry team	Ongoing LB/JC/HE
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Update signage	LB + office /activities team	December 2021 Activities+ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		Ministry team/wardens	Ongoing
	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.	Activities team to arrange deep clean	Ongoing
	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.	Activities team /cleaner	Ongoing