

Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
9 th June 2021	1	Lindsay Scott

This update has been reviewed to reflect the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 29th March onwards ('phase 1b'). It incorporates sections on singing, workplace testing, and planning for wider use of buildings including for non-worship purposes. At all times churches should check national and, if relevant, local restrictions to ensure the activity planned is currently permitted. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly and checked against this latest version of the risk assessment.

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.

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Private prayer
 - Public worship
 - Funerals, weddings, baptisms.
 - Livestreaming or recording services.
 - A choir or music group singing indoors as part of a public, livestreamed or recorded service (congregational singing may take place outside, but at present is not permitted indoors)
 - Formal childcare or where part of a Pre-school
 - Use as a vaccination centre – separate risk assessment.
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2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
 - Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual

One-Way System in place.

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.
4. Regular fogging
5. 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:	Assessor's name:	Date completed:	Review date:
Coton Green Church	Lindsay Scott	9 th June 2021	9 th June 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for purposes of recording and/or livestreaming services (with no congregation present) Risk: contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services	Consider if anyone required for recording or broadcasting is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Can someone else fulfil their role in the recording/livestreaming? Ensure that the people who need to attend the church building to enable the livestreaming or recording to take place are willing to do so and can do so safely. Make sure that only those essential for livestreaming or recording enter the church.	Advice on livestreaming and recording can be found here .	Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Identify one point of entry to the church building, and a separate exit if possible.		Ops Manager	9 th June 2021
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	PAT Testing Full Fire Risk Assessment	Ops Manager	9 th June 2021
	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.			9 th June 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Regular Fogging of Church	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Provide face coverings and produce or download signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law and requiring these for all except those exempt.	Provide face coverings		9 th June 2021
	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.	Pre-School Centre Staff	Pre-School Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.	Track & Trace	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Regular Lateral Flow Testing	LF Kits available		9 th June 2021
Deciding whether to open to the public for pre-school, public worship and other permitted activities	Consider how the national lockdown applies to the particular circumstances of the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider the implications of where people travel from and the distance involved.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Check if any clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their household who do, and ensure there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	ChurchSuite	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021

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Deciding whether to have a choir or music group singing/performing Risk: Aerosol spread of coronavirus may be increased by singing and playing of wind instruments	Check current guidance on singing to establish what is permitted.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Ensure that singers from different households can be socially distanced from one another, and from anyone else present (including a conductor, camera or microphone operator or, if present, a congregation).		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Put in place measures to create a physical barrier between singers and any congregation.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Remind any members of congregation present that at present they may only sing if wearing a face-covering and socially distanced.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use high traffic areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points and other communal areas.	Confirm that all steps (above) for access for livestreaming/broadcast have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. Current guidance is that numbers are limited by social distance capacity.		Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	PPE Heroes Fogging		9 th June 2021
	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.	One way System	Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into	Social Distancing	Stewards	9 th June 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).			
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.		Stewards	9 th June 2021
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in.	Regular Maintenance	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Remove items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.		Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)		Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas.			9 th June 2021
	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).	Social Distancing	Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Social Distancing	Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Social Distancing	Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon is needed.	Social Distancing	Stewards	9 th June 2021
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers for people to use on entry and exit of buildings to be staffed by stewards.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Fogging	Ops Mgr Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
Use of the church for baptisms, weddings, funerals	Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place.	See appendix Baptism	Senior Pastor	9 th June 2021
Use of the church for permitted activities other than private prayer or worship	Consider the specific guidance in place for those activities and assess the additional controls and limits on attendance in place. Check that any external group using the church has COVID-secure			

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	working practices in place, including their own risk assessment where necessary, and will comply with what is required by the church.			
<p>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</p> <p>Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus by not cleaning surfaces, equipment and shared facilities.</p>	If the church building has been closed for 48 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.			9 th June 2021
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Fogging	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Identify surfaces that are frequently touched and by many people (often common areas), e.g. handrails, door handles, shared equipment, toilets, and specify the frequency and level of cleaning and by whom.	Fogging	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Keep surfaces clear to make it easier to clean and reduce the likelihood of contaminating objects.	Fogging	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets deemed essential for services should be quarantined for 48 hours after use.	Fogging	Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.		Ops Mgr	9 th June 2021
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.			
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.			
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.			

General questions Baptism

1. What should I do before the baptism?
2. • It is important that interaction with the candidate/families must be done as safely as possible. This might mean meeting, at least initially, via video link or talking on the telephone. If face to face meetings are held, please follow the government guidance on working in other people's homes and ensure that everyone adheres to physical distancing requirements and that numbers are limited, preferably to a minimum. Such meetings should not be held in the house of anyone who is self-isolating or who is in a vulnerable group.
3. • It is important to be careful to avoid sharing documents, books, photos etc and to remember to wash hands thoroughly before and after the meeting.
4. • The health implications for those in a vulnerable group should be discussed and if some people in these groups intend to be present at the baptism, their welfare should be kept to the fore.
5. • These will include advising other attendees that there is a vulnerable person attending, reminding them to take particular care in observing physical distancing, abiding by the law regarding wearing of face coverings, and refraining from attending themselves if they feel unwell.
 - If someone from a vulnerable group intends to be present, they should be advised to travel to the church in the safest way possible, preferably in a car by themselves or with someone from their household
 - 2. How many people can attend the baptism?
 - For a baptism as part of communal worship the limits should be decided locally on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship, following a risk assessment in the same way as for public worship.
 - If the baptism is not part of communal worship and undertaken privately then the Government guidance states a limit of 30 can attend.
 - Individuals, households and support bubbles can attend worship but must not mingle with others outside of the people (up to 6) or 2 households they arrived with and physical distancing should be maintained.
 - The candidate and the minister are all that are required to be present for baptism. If they wish to have other family members or friends present, it is important to talk with them about the overall restrictions on numbers.
 - In England, face coverings are required by law in places of worship, and in other public indoor settings. There are valid exemptions for some individuals and groups to not wear a face covering (see our guidance on face coverings for details).

- In particular, those who are officiating at services and presiding at Holy Communion, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, preaching, or leading prayers) do not always need to wear a face covering, although one should be worn especially if physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. if gathered at the font). This exemption does not apply to worshippers, who should wear face coverings consistent with the requirements for any other public space.

- Government guidance indicates some health, age, or equality reasons for which people may not be expected to wear face coverings. We encourage clergy and ministers to be sensitive to the needs of those who rely on lip reading, facial expressions, or clear sound.

4. What special steps should I take during the baptism?

- Given the restrictions on numbers attending, clergy might wish to consider ways in which others may be able to join the service, perhaps through an audio or video link. If this is not possible, a recording of the service might be appropriate.
- Please ensure that everyone adheres to the Government guidance on physical distancing.

- It is important for clergy to be mindful of their own personal hygiene – please wash your hands before and after, face coverings are strongly advised and avoid using communal Bibles etc.

- If the candidate is an infant for dedication/thanksgiving, he or she should be held by a parent or guardian for the duration of the service, including during the act itself.

- The minister should sanitize their hands before and after laying on of hands and prayer.

- Can we do full immersion baptisms? Yes, providing as part of careful planning the following measures are taken:

- Those being immersed should be at least 2 metres away from the congregation and officiants at all times, except while they are being immersed.

- Only one person should be immersed at any time and they should only be attended by a single officiant/clergy member.

- Clergy/the officiant should wash their hands after each person is immersed, or if this isn't possible they should use hand sanitiser.