

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
 - Essential voluntary and public services
 - 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 John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assessor's name: Anthea Beresford	Date completed: 10 December 2021	Review date:
Event or service this assessment relates to:		All services and activities listed in section 1 above	

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.	Consult HSE guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas Do not prop open fire doors.	Churchwarden; Sidepeople	Ongoing
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	Limited outdoor space is available in the churchyard and may be used if weather conditions and service allow.	Incumbent; Service leader	Ongoing
	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.	People will be reminded in advertising events, and as they arrive at Church, that face coverings are mandatory for everyone over 11-years of age, unless they qualify for a permitted exemption.	Incumbent; Service leader; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>The congregation and any choir will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings for exempt activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.</p> <p>For large gatherings, such as funerals, weddings, baptisms and Christmas services, where social distancing is not possible, additional guidance is provided by email beforehand (see below). Congregations are normally small and well able to space out.</p>		
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	<p>Recommending social distancing remains in place where practicable. Generally, congregations are relatively small, and social distancing is possible as people are most comfortable. Where congregations are expected to be larger and distancing not possible, additional mitigations are implemented – see below.</p>	Incumbent; Service leader; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	There is only point of entry and exit.	Not applicable	Not applicable
	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.	For all services the door will be kept open to increase ventilation of the building. People will be advised to wrap up warm. For large gatherings, such as funerals, weddings, baptisms and Christmas services, where social distancing is not possible, additional guidance is provided by email beforehand, including the mandatory wearing of face coverings, and a request to ensure negative lateral flow test results before coming, and a request for people not to come if poorly. There will not be any activities with over 500 people involved so COVID passes are not required.	Incumbent; Service leader; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
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 provided immediately inside the door and for use during Holy Communion.	Churchwarden; Sidepeople	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.	The church door is already open for people on arrival to services. Hand sanitiser provided immediately inside door. Service books, hymn books and Bibles will not be used more than weekly by different individuals. Individual service booklets are prepared for Christmas services. QR code provided. Sign-in sheet maintained.	Churchwarden; Sidepeople	Ongoing
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	See advice on cleaning church buildings .	Churchwarden; PCC; Sidespeople	Ongoing
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	People are requested to sanitise on entry to the building. Shared items are only provided at services, which ensures a gap of at least 48 hours between each use.	Churchwarden; Sidepeople; Incumbent; Service leaders	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Individual service booklets are prepared for Christmas services.		
	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.	People are requested to sanitise on entry to the building.	Incumbent; Churchwarden; Sidepeople	Ongoing
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	None present	Not applicable	Not applicable
	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 resources are isolated at the current time.	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Churchwardens	Ongoing
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, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options.	QR code provided. Other visitors recorded on paper.	Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing
	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.	Risk Assessments will be on Four Parishes and A Church Near You websites.	Incumbent; Four Parishes website administrator	In hand

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.	Every effort will be made to ensure people can hear and see what is going on.	Incumbent; Service leader; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	A booking system is not needed for normal Sunday services. It may be considered for larger services, but mitigations above will help with the risks at these. Additional people are needed to usher for large services.	Incumbent; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	Ongoing
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Provision is consistent across our Four Parishes.	Incumbent	Ongoing
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	There are notices in place but we also speak to people when they come into the church for services, include information in email invitations, in the Four Parishes News Magazine, and on the Four Parishes and A Church Near You websites.	Incumbent; Churchwardens; Sidespeople	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.		Incumbent; Churchwardens	Ongoing as appropriate
	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.	Incumbent; Churchwardens	Ongoing as appropriate

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Incumbent; Churchwardens	Ongoing as appropriate