

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

On 4 January 2021 the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown for all of England. These restrictions:

- require people to stay at home, except for specific purposes
- prevent people gathering with those they do not live with, except for specific purposes
- close certain businesses and venues

Places of worship are currently permitted to remain open for certain purposes, including private prayer, communal worship, funerals, and broadcasting or filming an act or worship. The decision on whether to open must be based on local circumstances.

The transmission of COVID-19 occurs mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated surfaces. 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.

In order to minimise risk, we have decided that all communal worship in the Four Parishes will be online until further notice. Our churches will be open for private prayer for a limited number of hours on Sundays and, in some cases, on Wednesdays.

This Risk Assessment has been carried out after considering the following:

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Opening our churches for a few hours up to 2 days per week for private prayer
 - Allowing keyholders to enter the buildings for the purposes of cleaning, maintenance or recording music or videos for services
2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
3. Consider who might be harmed and how
 - Keyholders entering the church at any time
 - Members of the public entering the church during the hours when it is open

Risk Assessment for Opening the Church Building during Lockdown

N.B. This does not include any risks associated with the resumption of communal worship, which must be considered separately.

Church: St Nicolas Church, Forest Hill with Shotover	Assessor's name: Julia Stutfield	Date completed: 13 January 2021	Date approved: 19 January 2021	Review date:
New document created	13 January 2021			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed by – date
Access to church buildings by keyholders for the purposes of cleaning, maintenance or recording music or videos for services General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here. Risk: contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services	Ensure that any keyholder who needs to enter the church is willing to do so and can do so safely. Anyone who is extremely vulnerable or who has extremely vulnerable people in their household, should be asked not to do so.		All keyholders to confirm that they are aware of this document.	19/01/21
	Avoid the likelihood of keyholders from more than one household being in the building at the same time. If this occurs, they must comply with government regulations about face coverings and social distancing.	Details of government regulations to be notified on the church door.	All keyholders to confirm that they are aware of current government regulations.	19/01/21
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. social distancing, hand sanitising, wearing of face coverings etc.	Details of government regulations to be notified on the church door or some other appropriate prominent place.	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	Not applicable	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed by – date
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	No holy water stoup present. Font is covered and empty.	Not applicable	N/A
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Livestreaming will not be performed.	Not applicable	N/A
	Provide adequate hand sanitiser stations.	Hand sanitiser to be placed in porch and on table immediately inside door	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	Completed (see below)	19/01/21
	Read the CofE guide on 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.	Advice on face coverings can be found here . Sign on door and notice in church.	Action completed.	19/01/21
	Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.	Consult advice on complying with Track and Trace . QR Code is displayed on the church door. Visitor's Sign in sheet available as an alternative.	Action completed	19/01/21
Deciding whether to open to the public for private prayer, public worship and other permitted activities	Consider how the tier system applies to the church and the worship or other activities envisaged. For gathered congregations or other activities drawing people from a wide area, consider whether anybody attending would be likely to be traveling from a higher or lower tier	Action completed and decision made to restrict church opening to private prayer for a few hours max 2 days per week.	Complete	19/01/21

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed by – date
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for private prayer Risk: Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use areas such as corridors, toilet facilities, entry/exit points..	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by keyholders have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Confirmed above.	Churchwardens	19/01/21
	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.	The South Door is the only point of entry. For private prayer, the key to the emergency exit is on a hook beside the door with a notice beside it.	None needed	N/A
	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.	Vestry and toilet door left open. Visitors Book replaced with individual sheets of paper.	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Windows cannot be opened. The church is adequately ventilated for the small number of people expected to enter.	None needed	N/A
	If heating is required check your system is safe to use and test it before people are allowed in.	Guidance on church heating can be found here .	Not applicable	N/A
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Books and gift aid envelopes have been removed from pews	Complete	19/01/21
	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	N/A
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Not required due to gaps in excess of 48 hrs between church openings	Not applicable	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed by – date
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	None present	Not applicable	N/A
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Considered not necessary, due to small size of church	Not applicable	N/A
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . None needed	Not applicable	N/A
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Not required due to gaps in excess of 48 hrs between church openings	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	<i>See Opening checklist:</i> Check toilet	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	<i>See Opening checklist:</i> Check toilet and vestry	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	Church will be closed for in excess of 48 hours between periods of opening	Not applicable	N/A
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	If 48-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Church will be closed for in excess of 48 hours between periods of opening	Not applicable	N/A
	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.	Church will be closed for in excess of 48 hours between periods of opening	Not applicable	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed by – date
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Noted	Not applicable	N/A
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Noted	Not applicable	N/A
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Noted	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	As needed	Designated person (JS/PS)	19/01/21
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	Noted. This would always be the case as the norm. Exceptional cases, e.g. a funeral, would be discussed between the Vicar and Churchwardens, and appropriate cleaning undertaken as necessary on an ad hoc basis	Vicar and Churchwardens	N/A
	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.	Noted	N/A
	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.	Noted	N/A

St Nicolas Opening Checklist

Action	Checked
Open road gate (with gloves or sanitised hands) and wedge it open	
Open main door (with gloves or sanitised hands) and leave it open for a few minutes before official opening of church.	
Wipe entrance door handle	
Check that notices are in place to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. hand sanitising, wearing of face coverings and social distancing.	
Check that hand sanitiser(s) is/are in the agreed position	
Check that signing in sheets are in place and sanitise pen.	
Check for and clean up bat droppings.	
Check toilet for cleanliness and to ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels.	
Close and lock vestry door (with gloves or sanitised hands). Leave toilet door and door to corridor open.	