

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Adapted for St Helen's Bishopsgate and St Andrew Undershaft

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
2 nd July 2020	Rev 01	St Helen's Bishopsgate – Changes in red
8 th July 2020	Rev 02	Reviewed for Wedding Ceremonies

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15th June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4th July. Other activities, except for a few still prohibited by law, may also take place in churches, subject to the government guidance in place for the relevant sector.

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. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. You should read the advice on re-opening buildings and the guidance on public worship before completing this assessment. Both are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

A separate risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Private prayer (clergy only)
 - Livestreaming services (clergy only)
 - Private prayer (general public) – previously done and therefore not part of this risk assessment
 - Public worship – the focus of this risk assessment
 - Rites of passage services – Wedding ceremonies
 - Opening for visitors and tourists
2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
 - Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church
 - Hazards arising from now using the church in a different way

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 so long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming through your building makes the possible impact – for example of someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller venues with fewer people. Consider your particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate.
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 Helen's Bishopgate	Assessor's name: Jason Barrington – Operations Manager	Date completed: 02/07/20	Review date: 08/07/20
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Staff to use reception door on arrival and wash their hands for 20s immediately. Hand sanitiser also available. For SAU Staff to enter via Kitchen door and wash their hands in the handwashing sink.	Ops Manager	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	All staff to email Facilities before coming to the church buildings to avoid the risk of lone working. All staff have read and signed a separate return to work risk assessment.	Ops Manager	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Daily checks have been undertaken throughout lockdown.	Facilities Team	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Regular cleaning has been reinstated.	Facilities Team	

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	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Daily checks have been undertaken throughout lockdown and weekly flushing of the plumbing systems carried out.	Facilities Team	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Daily checks have been undertaken throughout lockdown. Regular electrical inspections have been done as per normal operation.	Facilities Team	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Livestream equipment now moved to the gallery desk to avoid any trip hazards.	Facilities Team	
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	<p>Surrounding businesses not yet open and have only a fraction of their normal occupancy. Sunday use means even less interaction with the business community.</p> <p>From 13th July road works will begin outside St Helen's. We will be in regular contact with the contractors to ensure safe interaction</p>	Ops Manager	

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		between the works and the church.		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Regular updates being sent out.	Comms Team	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	A registration form has been created to facilitate contact tracing and confirming numbers in advance of services. A cap on numbers is possible. For weddings the couple must provide a guest list 48hrs in advance of the wedding.	Ops Manager	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. We won't currently open to visitors except those wanting to enter for individual private prayer.	Receptionist	
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Facilities team have actioned the points above.	Facilities Team	
	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. Risk assessment completed below.	Facilities Team	
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with	Entry through both west doors to provide maximum	Ops Manager	

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	<p>notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.</p>	<p>flow without causing a bottleneck. A one way system with exit through the south doors (South transept and tardis). For St Andrews entry will be through the south doors and exit via the north doors.</p>		
	<p>Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).</p>	<p>A socially distanced queueing system has been set up in the church yard and to the south of the office building. Two separate queues will keep the number of people to a minimum.</p>	<p>Ops Manager/Stewarding Team</p>	
	<p>Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.</p>	<p>To increase ventilation the roof extractor fans will be turned on during services and the north door, south transept doors and the tardis doors will be kept open.</p>	<p>Facilities Team</p>	
	<p>Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets</p>	<p>Congregation asked to bring their own bibles and liturgy will be displayed on the screens.</p>	<p>Ops Manager</p>	

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		For weddings service sheets will be placed on seats before the service starts.		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	N/A not part of our normal practice.		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	N/A		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Creche will remain closed at this time until further risk assessments undertaken.	Ops Manager	
	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).	Rows of chairs placed at 2m distance with either one household per row or 2 individuals at either end.	Ops Manager	
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Only specified rows and seats available. For the wooden benches at the back every 3 rd seat will be available.	Ops Manager	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One way system in place with directed stewarding.	Ops Manager/ Stewarding Team	
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Office building will be shut off. No-one should access this building during services. Only the disabled toilet will be used in St Helen’s with all	Ops Manager	

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		<p>other toilet facilities being provided in St Andrew's. The bookshop will remain closed.</p> <p>In SAU the kitchens will remain closed.</p>		
	<p>Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.</p>	<p>Congregation encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser where possible.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser provided at the entrances and exits as well as outside the disabled toilet.</p>	<p>Facilities Team</p>	
	<p>Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing</p>	<p>Temporary signage and barriers in place. Some furniture will be moved to cordon off areas.</p>	<p>Facilities Team</p>	
	<p>Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.</p>	<p>Signage outside and inside the building.</p>	<p>Facilities Team</p>	
	<p>Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes</p>	<p>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.</p> <p>Toilets to be cleaned after each service. Doors will be propped open however door handles will be wiped between each service.</p>	<p>Facilities Team/Staff Stewards</p>	

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	All toilets have soap, paper hand towels and bins provided.	Facilities Team	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	As above.		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	This will be implemented by the facilities team and bins emptied by staff members.	Facilities Team	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	All attendees must register before coming into the church. An online form will collect information which will be kept for 21 days. Wedding guest list to be kept for 21 days.	Ops Manager	
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.	Email communication to the church family with regular updates to the website and social media.	Ops Manager	
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.	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.	N/A due to multiple services on Sunday.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Cleaning is carried out by staff and trainees. They will be asked if they are in a vulnerable group or self-	Facilities Team	

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		isolating before attending to clean.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	This has been put in place by the Facilities Team.	Facilities Team	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	A separate cleaning kit to be made available for staff to clean between each service. A laminated step by step guide will also be provided.	Facilities Team	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Regular cleaning products in use.	Facilities Team	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Facilities Team to oversee the emptying of bins.	Facilities Team	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Bins will be checked and emptied daily.	Facilities Team	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This will be done if service times allow. It is unlikely on a Sunday.		
	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. A separate cleaning kit will be set aside for cleaning after a known expose incident.	Facilities Team	

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	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 . Regular cleaning will be carried out after a 72 hr quarantine.	Facilities Team	