# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th June 2020 | 3 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 1st July 2020 | 4 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Carrying out a risk assessment**

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
   * Private prayer (clergy only) – N/A
   * Livestreaming services (clergy only) – N/A
   * **Private prayer (general public – Wednesdays 17:00 to 18:00 – see other risk assessment)**
   * **Public worship (Sunday 08:00 from 12th July 2020 – this risk assessment)**
   * **Rites of passage services (a separate risk assessment will be prepared)**
   * Opening for visitors and tourists – N/A
2. Consider the hazards:
   * Transmission of COVID-19
   * Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church – **none identified**
   * 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). (NOTE: there is no toilet available for routine use – Robing room toilet is available for emergencies, to be locked for 72 hours afterwards if used – see check list)

1. 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **St Edward’s Corfe Castle** | **Assessor’s name:**  **John Lindsay** | **Date completed:**  **Draft 1 - 1st July 2020**  **Final Draft 3rd July 2020** | **Review date:**  **9th July – after first private prayer session** |

**SCOPE – Conduct of a Service of Morning Prayer at 08:00 each Sunday from 12th July 2020 until further notice**

**Review and authorisation**

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|  | By whom | Date |
| Preparation and drafting | John Lindsay (Church Warden) | 3rd July 2020 |
| Consultation and review of drafts  (Comments captured in e-mails) | Ian Jackson (Rector)  James Mercer (Assistant Priest)  Jane Hudson (medical doctor)  Stephen Earwicker (retired medical doctor)  Penelope Smith (Church Warden)  Christopher Finch (Chair of PCC)  Karen Spooner (volunteer sidesperson)  Elizabeth Proudman (volunteer sidesperson)  James Proudman (volunteer sidesperson)  Michael Humphries (Church Warden, St George’s) | 3rd July 2020 |
| Approval by PCC | PCC members (by e-mail) |  |
| Authorisation to open the church of St Edward, Corfe Castle for Sunday service of Morning Prayer at 08:00 each Sunday from 12th July 2020 | Ian Jackson (Rector)  James Mercer (Assistant priest) |  |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible | Vestry Door for clergy | Key – JL (B10)  Use – JM |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf).  No intention that the incumbent will work alone. | No action |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Open North and West door for short period – 07:30 | CW/S (S3) |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Initial entry Inspection | CW (B14) |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)  Water System not to be used  Tape off taps | IJ / CW (B25) |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Electricity remains on  Heating not currently needed | No action |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Check | CW/S (S5) |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | No live streaming planned at this time | No action |  |
| **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. | No relevant venues – timing for services and private prayer to avoid tourist times | Services 08:00, private prayer 17:00 | Complete 1st July 2020 JL |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. |  | Update web sites (B22) JL |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Not expected to be needed – timing will limit numbers | No action |  |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/). – not opening for tourist | No action |  |
| **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. | Confirm above steps complete | CW/IJ |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  **Review complete** | Only routine clean required (CW) (E1) |  |
| 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. | Entrance and exit via North Door  Emergency exit West Door – Entry and exit supervised by steward – pew by pew | CW/Steward (B10) (S8) |  |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Not anticipated as required due to timing of sessions – main service remains via Zoom – tape marks at entry | Mark floor of porch and inside at 2.5m intervals (B37) |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Open west door for a period and leave partially open if weather suitable | (S11) |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | From accessible areas (note 3 off black books to be left in each accessible pew) | CW (B19) |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | From accessible areas | CW (B19) |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | remove | CW (B26) |  |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Isolate by keeping rear of church cordoned off and move loose items to the kitchen | CW (B18) |  |
| 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). | Select pews for one use  Tape off area not used  Mark route with floor arrows – see church plan | CW (B10 & 11) |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | See above | CW (B10 & 11) |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Route marked by floor and pole mounted arrows | CW (B10 & 11) |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Erect temporary cordon to separate walking route and useable pews from rest of church | CW (B10 & 11) |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Two stations inside north door for entry and exit or by west door for exit | CW (B27) |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647).  None needed other than separation of non-access areas dealt with above | No action |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Draft, prepare and erect notices | CW (B28) |  |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  Leave building closed for 72 hours after use | CW/S (B1) |  |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  None available – sanitiser only | CW/Stewards (B27) |  |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  No available toilets except for emergency – key held by stewards | Stewards (S12) |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Procure and position waste receptacles (bins and liners) | CW (S15) |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Maintain a list of known parishioners attending – get names and contact details of any visitors | Stewards (S9) |  |
| 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. | Ensure appropriate information in notices of services and private prayer | JL (B22) |  |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | 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. | Record time of closure to confirm 72 hours before next opening | CW (P4) |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | 72 hours will be the standard – review this action if 72 hrs cannot be maintained | CW (P5) |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Rota to be developed once pattern has become established | Keep under review (JL) (P6) |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Procure and make available | (M10) |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Normal cleaning only at the current time | No action |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Steward / Warden | (P1) Steward |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After each session (service or period of opening for private prayer) – use gloves and double bag the waste | (P1) Steward |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Record time of closure to confirm 72 hours before next opening | CW (P4) |  |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)  If not possible – review risk assessment | CW (P5) |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | CW (B29) |  |

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| **CHECK LIST M - MATERIALS** | | |
| Materials required: | Item | status |
| 1 | Set of check sheets |  |
| 2 | Stewards check sheet and “what if” list |  |
| 3 | Diary and log book | Journal obtained – with JL |
| 4 | Signs | To be printed and laminated at home |
| 5 | Floor and barrier tape | Ordered |
| 6 | Hand sanitiser | Ordered |
| 7 | Tissues | Ordered |
| 8 | Cleaning wipes | Ordered |
| 9 | Bins and liners | Ordered |
| 10 | Gloves | Ordered |
| 11 | Normal cleaning materials | In place |

| **CHECK LIST B - PREPARATION** | | |
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| Before opening | Task | status |
| 1 | Decision to re-open is with the incumbent – record this decision by e-mail |  |
| 2 | Venue Managers – Church Wardens (Incumbent is member of a vulnerable group) | Church Wardens to oversee use |
| 3 | Consult cleaners and stewards | Complete – e-mail record |
| 4 | Get risk assessment reviewed and confirm this review in the document | Complete – e-mail record |
| 5 | Sign off risk assessment by Incumbent and wardens – circulate to PCC and record approval (e-mail) |  |
| 6 | Put risk assessment (or part) on web sites along with notice of services |  |
| 7 | Queue management, One way system – set up signs and markers |  |
| 8 | Booking system and queueing – not anticipated to be required – if excess numbers, advise to return in half hour | Keep under review |
| 9 | What is the max number – depends on family groups or individuals | 11 pews available |
| 10 | Only north door for and exit – west door for emergency exit – vestry for Priest (mark up) |  |
| 11 | Separation of worshippers – screens, not practicable, use segregated pews, one household/bubble group per pew |  |
| 12 | Disabled worshippers – brief stewards. Call for aid with ramps. |  |
| 13 | Fire and other emergencies – first aid etc. | Stick to normal fire plan displayed on lighting control box |
| 14 | Initial clean | Complete 03/07/2020 |
| 15 | Periodic clean – subsequent cleans – frequency? | Keep under review |
| 16 | Waste management – ensure bins and liners in place |  |
| 17 | Face covering voluntary – make clear in publicity |  |
| 18 | Cordon off play area – remove loose items to kitchen |  |
| 19 | Move books to area that is screened off (also leaflets and gift aid envelopes) – service books to be pre-placed and left for 48 hrs or use prepared single use sheets – JM to decide |  |
| 20 | Cash donations – have collection box by exit – have the card reader available – include in notices |  |
| 21 | Any cash to go in donations box and not be emptied for at least 72 hours |  |
| 22 | Publicise – Include advice on arrangements in notices about opening – update websites |  |
| 23 | No government requirement to record who comes in – but keep a diary including names of those attending and those stewarding – supply book for recording names |  |
| 24 | Toilet for emergencies only – record if used and keep closed for 72 hours |  |
| 25 | Tape off water taps |  |
| 26 | Move soft furnishings from accessible areas |  |
| 27 | Set up locations for hand sanitiser, wipes and tissues, waste collection and disposal (two at north door, one small bottle in the vestry) |  |
| 28 | Print and Erect notices |  |
| 29 | Arrange and confirm cleaning times – particularly if opening twice a week | Keep under review |
| 30 | Confirm arrangements for waste disposal – double bag and take home or to 10 West Street |  |
| 31 | Ensure advertising of the service notes the risk for those at extra risk |  |
| 32 | ~~Government would like names to be recorded – further information expected from Government?~~ |  |
| 33 | No singing or playing of wind instruments |  |
| 34 | Not communion at this stage – but guidance allows it in certain circumstances – no common cup | No action required |
| 35 | Script for James – reminder of social distancing, hand sanitiser and staggered exiting, collection on exit – see priest’s check sheet |  |
| 36 | Place three service books at each location that may be used, leave in place for 48hrs before and after use – or place single use service sheets |  |
| 37 | Mark up the floor of the North Porch and the area immediately inside the church with lines at 2.5 separation to indicate queueing positions. |  |
| 38 | Make Robing Room key available to Stewards/Sidespersons for emergency use |  |

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| Priest’s check sheet | | |
| Enter by external vestry door | Key from 10 West Street |  |
| Use sanitiser on entry | On the right as you enter the vestry |  |
| Switch on PA and don microphone | Key from 10 West Street |  |
| Prepare and read out information for congregation | Welcome  retiring Collection – card or box  Exit control  Hand sanitise on exit |  |
| Complete service record in the book | Check it’s been left out of the safe! |  |
| Turn off the PA |  |  |
| Use sanitiser and check vestry door is locked |  |  |

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| Check list S – Stewards/Sidespersons | | |
| Steward’s check list |  |  |
| PREPARATION | | |
| 1 | Confirm volunteers have no symptoms before going on duty |  |
| 2 | Fire and other emergency procedures – check plan (on light control panel) |  |
| 3 | Check church last opened more than 72 hours ago (refer to Journal) and air the church |  |
| 4 | Open west door and leave partially open for ventilation, but place barrier outside to prevent entry through this route |  |
| 5 | Pre-opening walk down |  |
| 6 | Check sufficient supplies |  |
| 7 | Check bins are empty – or have sufficient capacity |  |
| DURING | | |
| 8 | Steward to ensure entry and exit by members of the congregation maintains separation |  |
| 8A | Ensure all persons coming in use hand sanitiser and offer disposal gloves |  |
| 9 | Keep a record of the names of people who attend – record the names of regular parishioners, name and contact details of visitors |  |
| 10 | Dealing with cash donations – place in box on exit – leave for 72 hours |  |
| 11 | Direct cash donations to the box – have the card reader available - |  |
| 12 | Open the west door if the weather allows – wind is often an issue here |  |
| 13 | Dealing with disabled visitors – ask for help with ramps if needed (481498) |  |
| 14 | Remain close to North door to ensure late comers are welcomed and correctly directed |  |
| 15 | Collection of waste – ensure all waste goes in bins with liners |  |
| 16 | At the end of services ask people to leave one row at a time, starting with those nearest the exit |  |
| AFTER | | |
| 17 | Record time of closure |  |
| 18 | Put away notices and secure building |  |
| WHAT IFs | | |
| 19 | If an individual becomes unwell – send home and recommend follow stay at home guidance (from Gov guidance) – close church and keep closed for 72 hours – advise others who may have been in contact (for stewards’ check sheet) ASK INDIVIDUAL FOR CONTACT DETAILS |  |
| 20 | Actions if emergency need for the toilet – robing room – record use time and relock |  |

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| Check list P – Closing up | | |
| Post opening check list |  |  |
| 1 | Waste gathering and disposal (wear gloves and double bag) – take home or to 10 West Street for disposal |  |
| 2 | Review the requirement for attendants in light of experience |  |
| 3 | Arrange for next clean |  |
| 4 | Update diary with closure time |  |
| 5 | Confirm no intended opening for 72 hours – if otherwise, review risk assessment |  |
| 6 | Keep cleaning requirement under review – establish a rota once pattern of opening is established |  |

Documents referred to

Government guidance on the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for churches

Using church buildings for individual private prayer and funerals

Keeping church buildings clean

UK Government - COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from 4 July – 29/06/2020

Church of England - COVID-19 Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship – Version 1.1 30/06/2020