

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public – St Mary’s Rawtenstall

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
6 th August 2020	5	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](#) 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)
- Public worship
- Rites of passage services
- 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 Mary Rawtenstall	Assessor's name: Peter Terry	Date completed: 11th July 2020	Updated effective 8 th August 2020
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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	Church not open for public other than at service times. Main door used for other access.	PT	PT 4.7.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here . – No private prayer or streaming undertaken.	PT	PT 4.7.20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Main doors and west doors to be opened on Friday 11 th July to allow air circulation	PT	PT 11.7.20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Weekly visits by PT throughout lockdown undertaken	PT	PT on going
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies Water taps have been run each week during PT visits Further running of water on 11 th July.	PT	PT on going

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	N/a have been on throughout lockdown. Heating to be turned up in w/c 5 th July. Sound and visual systems to be checked pre -opening	PT	PT 9.07.20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Checked - Font was empty pre lockdown	PT	PT 3.7.20
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	N/A not live streaming	PT	PT 3.7.20
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.	N/A no other venues in immediate vicinity of church.	N/A	PT 3.7.20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Social Media updated	PT	PT 3.7.20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Email to members to assess likely take up. Significant capacity with balcony	PT	PT 3.7.20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	N/A	PT
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Any non-regular visitors advised of need for face coverings e.g. baptism families	PT	PT on going.
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	All steps complete	PT	PT 5.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
purposes, including worship and tourism	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.	PT	PT 11.7.20
	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.	See guidance note prepared for worshipers.	PT	PT 11.7.20
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.	Signs prepared and displayed in church	PT	PT 8.8.20
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Limit opening time before service. Use outer and inner foyers as a means of queuing for sanitiser before entering main church room.	PT	PT 11.7.20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	One side of main door, foyer doors and one side of west door to be open before and during services.	Wardens	On going - Open before and during service
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets		Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	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 – none in church.	PT	PT 5.7.20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	N/A – none in church.	PT	PT 5.7.20
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Remove to back room	Wardens	PT 5.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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).	Site visit undertaken and excess chairs removed to storage. 2m distancing on remaining seating. Movement into and out of church via wider aisles. Leave church from back rows first	Wardens	PT 3.7.20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Chairs removed to create safe distancing as above.	Wardens	PT 3.7.20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	All double doors to be open. Pre visit documentation and posters in church to identify flow direction.	Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Vestry/ Vicars vestry and kitchen to be out of bounds to congregation.	Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Stand for sanitiser purchased and located on entrance	PT	PT 3.7.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . N/A can be accommodated within existing floorplan	PT	PT 3.3.20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices to be prepared and put up. Notices added requiring everyone to wear face coverings in church.	PT PT	PT 9.7.20 PT 31.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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 . Door handles, lecturns, sound desk, computer to be sprayed.	Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Only handwashing is in the toilets. Sanitiser to be used instead.	Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	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 for procurement options.	Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Wardens	PT 11.7.20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Electoral Roll Register to be ticked off with details of new visitors recorded	Wardens	TB 12.7.20
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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. Facebook and Web pages to carry notice of procedures.	PT	PT 3.7.20
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.	This to be default position where possible. All surfaces and handles sprayed following final check by PT on 11.7.20	PT	PT 11.7.20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	N/A	Wardens	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Being discussed currently	Wardens	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Wardens	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Wardens	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Wardens	On going
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After every service	Wardens	On going
	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This is the Default position. No one to enter church unless authorised by wardens	Wardens	On going
	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.	N/A	
	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.	N/A	