

Risk Assessment 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
11 th December 2021	12	St Mary's Church, Amersham

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](#).

The original St Mary's Risk Assessment, which relates more to the fabric of the building rather than the activities taking place remains constant and has not been updated at this time.

This risk assessment covers the activities as stated and use by hirers is not covered by this risk assessment and they are asked to carry out their own assessment

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
 - Provision of youth services
 - Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction
2. Activities that are NOT covered by this assessment
 - Formal childcare or where part of a school
 - Use as a vaccination or testing centre
 - Opening shops/cafes
 - Opening for concerts, plays etc
 - Community and support groups
 - Essential voluntary and public services
3. 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).

4. 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.

5. 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's Church, Amersham	Assessor's name: Lorraine Hollett	Date completed: 11/12/2021	Review date: In response to changes
Event or service this assessment relates to:		All activities listed in Section 1	

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.	High windows opened for services Option to leave south door open	Sides person	Ongoing
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	We have done this for Dec 2020 Carol singing so have a method to draw on for future	Clergy	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.	Face coverings encouraged including when singing hymns (with the exception of the choir). Message in notices and on website	Clergy Sides persons	Ongoing
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	Messages in notices and website Social distancing and hand sanitising encouraged	Clergy Sides persons	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Cards available to indicate where someone doesn't want to share their pew. South Aisle pews are distanced (2m) One-way system for Communion and no moving around for the Peace. Retiring collection only and no refreshments.		
	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.	South door Notices on the door and on table just inside. For services, Sides Person will direct people.	Sides persons	Ongoing
	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.	Church capacity is less than 500 and hirers told that no additional chairs can be used to increase capacity Numbers are being monitored and we are still well within tolerance on capacity. Reduced processing and moving around. No energetic activity	Clergy Sides persons	Ongoing
Surface transmission of Covid-19	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Sanitising stations at Inside north door Choir stalls Front and centre of nave	H&S Officer to monitor and top up sanitiser	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		South Porch and inside south door.	where needed	
	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.	South Door kept open and with sanitiser points inside and out Retiring collection only	Sides persons	Ongoing
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	Formal contract for weekly deep cleaning with a second clean each week and option for additional deep clean on request Specific additional cleaning procedures in place (e.g. crèche toys) Pews used are cleaned at the end of each service Regular checks on cleanliness and supply of sanitiser etc	Cleaners H&S Wardens Sides persons Sunday School H&S Officer	Ongoing
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	You could consider a long-term loan system for Bibles and other books to ensure people have access to these. Copies are available for loan if required. Hymn books are quarantined after use, so different sets are used for services on the same day.	Sides persons	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 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.	Yes, and any left behind or handed back are placed in the recycling bin, outdoors	Sides persons	Ongoing
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Altar rails in place to deter access for private prayer		Ongoing
	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).	All toys are easily cleaned and are cleaned after the main family service Limited (washable) resources in Drake Chapel Any used for Sunday School / crèche are washed and quarantined as appropriate.	H&S and Sunday School	Ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Normal practice. Toilet facilities are not accessible during private prayer	Wardens Cleaners	Ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	All bins have bag liners Spare liners kept in drawer in the kitchen	H&S Cleaners	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.	Consult advice on Track and Trace . QR codes inside north door, outside south porch, 2 inside south door and 1 in middle of the nave.	All	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>Paper based check in reinstated at south door, sign in sheet at north door</p> <p>For main Christmas services, people must pre-book</p>		
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Notices sent to congregation electronically and also available via church website Printed copies are delivered to those who request it.</p> <p>Weekly notices, website and Facebook page used. Notice at South Porch door re face covering and also inside north door Government guidance on funerals is applied. Limits and social distancing info is passed on to wedding planners but we cannot enforce compliance.</p>	<p>Parish Administrator Web admin</p> <p>Funeral directors Wedding planners</p>	Ongoing
	<p>Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.</p>	<p>Hearing loop has been recently upgraded Regular members of the congregation who fall into this category are advised to</p>	<p>Clergy</p> <p>Sides persons</p>	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		access the services on-line if they can. Sides persons on hand to offer assistance when required		
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Not applicable for private prayer, where numbers are low. Arrangements for limiting numbers for funerals are covered by funeral directors / clergy Similar for weddings Attendance at main services is monitored and thus far has not been an issue. Booking system in place for main Christmas Services	Parish Administrator Clergy Sides persons Funeral directors Wedding families / planners	Ongoing
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.		Clergy	
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Signage on the south door and inside the entrance In church notices and on website Possible new notices to replace the BCC / NHS notices previously used	Wardens Office / H&S Officer	TBA

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	In response to such an occasion arising, the church will be closed for a 48 hour period with no access permitted. Parish Office to issue communication in this event.	Wardens H&S Officer Parish Office	As and when
	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. e.g. if a funeral is to take place, all appropriate guidance will be followed Option to call for an additional deep clean,	Wardens H&S Officer Clergy Parish Office Cleaners	As and when
	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. Option to extend closure or call for an additional deep clean, depending on where we are in relation to the usual, weekly deep clean	Cleaners Parish Office Cleaners	As and when