# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings for Public Worship

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by | Summary of Update |
| 7th July 2020 | 1 | Vicar and CWs |  |
| 29th July 2020 | 1.1 | Vicar | Update on numbers attending funerals, use of toilets, advice on face coverings |
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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-from-4-july) requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public.

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).

**This risk assessment covers public worship.**

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **St Mary’s Market Drayton** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Catherine McBride** | **Date completed:**  **02.07.2020** | **Review date:** |

| **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 | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | See Risk Assessment for Opening for Private Prayer |  |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | NA |  |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Ensure any new equipment used for streaming or recording of services is safe | IM |  |
| **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 issues are anticipated as we are not in close proximity to other public buildings likely to be in use at the same time. |  |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | Update relevant communications about private prayer, new Sunday service and restrictions for funerals, baptisms and weddings. | CM, LR |  |
| **Managing numbers in attendance:** Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Attendance at funerals, weddings and baptisms is limited to 30 people. Numbers for weddings and baptisms include minister, verger, organist, photographer etc.  Need to gauge possible attendance at new type of Sunday service.  The side pews can also be kept in reserve for ‘overflow’ seating if attendance is higher than anticipated.  Review attendance after the first few services to decide if additional measures are needed. | CM/IM to inform funeral, wedding and baptism families of the restrictions.  CM to communicate with congregation about possible new type of service and get feedback on possible attendance.  **Service stewards** to manage admission and seating.  CM and CWs review by end August. | 10.07.20  Ongoing |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/). | Suggest not open to tourists just yet. |  |  |
| **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. | Preparation of church were carried out prior to opening for private prayer. |  | Done |
| 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) | Guidelines have been reviewed and discussed with cleaner. Cleaning will be done on Mon or Tue and after any funeral. Surfaces likely to be touched will be wiped down with suitable disinfectant wipes after opening for private prayer on Wed and Sat. Saturday session will stop when Sunday service starts to allow 72h from last scheduled opening. |  | Done |
| **Managing the flow of people:** 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. | West Door provides easiest access and egress, with least pinch points. For services flow would be in one direction before and after the service and monitored by stewards.  Congregation fill in seats from the front and leave from the back rows first. Supervised by stewards.  Announcement at services. | CM to provide instructions for **service stewards.**  **Ministers** to make announcements. | 29.07.20  Ongoing |
| **Managing potential queue:** Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | We won’t provide e.g. any covered areas for waiting or queuing. This would just encourage people to congregate together.  Cones will be set out along church path to indicate 2m spacing as people approach West Door. If a queue develops, we a steward will be outside to manage social distancing. | CWs or **service stewards** set out cones before each service. CWs ensure we have enough cones. | Ongoing |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | West doors will be wedged open. | CWs or **service stewards** to wedge doors open at services. | Ongoing |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Move Bibles from sides to pews to resurrection Chapel.  One steward will sanitize hands and put notice sheets/ leaflets/ booklets at designated seating prior to service. Leaflets must be taken home after service. Service booklets will be quarantined after use. | CM/CWs | 08.07.20 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | NA |  |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Move kneelers from pews into Resurrection Chapel. Guidance is seat cushions can be vacuumed | CM/CWs | 08.07.20 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Children’s area cordoned off.  Children are welcome at the services to sit with their parents/carers in the pews and are invited to bring their own toys. | CM to provide communication for congregation and social media, website etc. |  |
| **Ensuring physical distancing:** 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). | Pew seating already marked out for social distancing. Central pews will be used to minimise areas that need to be cleaned. However, side aisle pews will be used if needed for overflow.  Signage needed to remind congregation to maintain 2m distancing.  One way system will be introduced for Communion and overseen by service stewards. Communion will be distributed from Communion Table at from of Chancel to avoid narrower area between choir stalls and avoid touching of choir stalls. | CM to produce signage and information for congregations and instructions for **service stewards**. | 29.07.2020 |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Already done |  | Done |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | For services, flow will be managed by the service stewards, who will ensure people take their seats straight away and *fill up from the front*, sitting at the designated places. People will not be allowed to congregate in the welcome area. Households/bubbles can sit together. Larger groups will be shown to side aisle pews.  Signage to remind people of 2m distancing. Nothing will be taped to the floor. | CM to produce signage and instructions for **service stewards**. | 29.07.2020 |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Already done |  | Done |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | For services hand sanitizer to be stationed: in entrance area by West Door (2 either side); by vestry entrance; at front of nave for Communion. | CM to buy smaller dispensers for hand sanitizer.  **Service stewards** set up stations prior to services. | 08.07.20  Ongoing |
| 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) | NA |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Already done  Prepare additional advice to send to congregation in advance of first service.  Prior to services: Put out cones on path to help social distancing as people approach the building and put out A frame with key instructions e.g. not to enter if they have symptoms etc. | CM to produce advice to send out. | 10.07.2020 |
| 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) | Plan is in place for cleaning between services (see earlier). Service stewards to wipe down high traffic areas surfaces during/after services. | CM to produce instructions for **service stewards.** | 29.07.2020 |
| 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. | Hand sanitizer will be provided for general use. Toilets will be stocked with soap and paper towels. | CWs to tell HH when new supplies needed.  CM to include information about toilets in communication to congregation. | Ongoing  10.07.2020 |
| 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. | People will be advised regarding cleaning of toilets and discouraged from using them if possible. They will be asked to wipe any surfaces they have touched with disinfectant wipes. | CWs to tell HH when new supplies needed.  CM to include information about toilets in communication to congregation. | Ongoing |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Already done |  | Done and ongoing |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Slip of paper left at each designated seat, with service/notice sheet and pencil. Congregation give their name and contact number and drop into a box on the way out. Cards and pencils quarantined for 72 hours. | HH to obtain pencils/pens and produce record slips. HH to be the custodian of these sips and dispose of them at appropriate time.  CM to produce Instructions for **service stewards.** | 29.07.2020 |
| 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. | Notice on notice board, FB, website, Drayton Crier, newsletter. Plus advice on website and sent to congregation as to what to expect. | CM, LR | 10.07.2020 |
| **Specific precautions to be taken during services of public worship** | Specific actions to be taken to minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission during church services of public worship. See Church of England guidelines <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20conducting%20public%20worship%20v1.2.pdf> and <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Coronavirus%20Advice%20on%20the%20Administration%20of%20Holy%20Communion%20v3.0.pdf> | See Appendix | CM to provide information for **service stewards** and ministers | 29.07.2020 |
| **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. | Plan already in place. Ensure 72 hour gap between last mid-week opening or Carol Preston to clean if there has been a funeral. Surfaces wiped with disinfectant wipes after opening for private prayer. | CWs or Clergy inform HH when there is a funeral. HH to contact CP to arrange cleaning. | Ongoing |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Plan already in place. Only Carol cleaning higher risk areas. |  | Ongoing |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Plan already in place |  | Done |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | Gloves and disposable aprons available | CWs or CP to tell HH when new supplies needed | Ongoing |
| 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. | Suitable cleaning materials available. | CWs of CP to tell HH when new supplies needed | Ongoing |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Double bagged bins are provided. These will be emptied by Carol, volunteers, CWs as necessary. | CP, CWs, midweek volunteers | Ongoing |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Double bagged bins are provided. These will be emptied by Carol or CWs as necessary. | CP, CWs, midweek volunteers | Ongoing |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Visitors and congregation asked to contact church if they become ill after attending. Church will be closed for 72 hours if possible. This may mean cancelling the midweek opening for private prayer. | HH to ensure notices highlight this. | Ongoing |
| 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) | Cleaning guidelines already cover this. Cleaning would be necessary if a service (funeral or Sunday) was occurring within 72 hours. |  | Ongoing |
| 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) | Cleaning guidelines already cover this. |  | Ongoing |

**APPENDIX: SUNDAY SERVICE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP AT ST MARY’S**

**Before First Sunday**

* Communicate plans to congregation.
* Gauge potential numbers.
* Complete signage etc for distancing.

**Pre-service**

* Put out cones on path to help social distancing as people approach the building and put out A frame with key instructions inc. not to enter if they have symptoms etc. If a queue develops, we will need one steward outside to manage social distancing.
* Put attendance slips, notice sheets, service sheets or booklets on pews in designated seats. Steward must sanitize hands before doing this.
* Wedge open West Doors for ventilation.
* Set up hand sanitizing stations. Four in welcome area by West Door (two each side) and one on a credence table at the front, for when people come up for Communion. Have one steward to ensure that everyone entering and leaving church uses the hand sanitizer.
* Two stewards to ensure people take their seats straight away and *fill up from the front*, sitting at the designated places. Avoid people congregating in the welcome area. Households/bubbles can sit together. Larger groups will be shown to side aisle pews.
* We want to minimise the areas that need to be cleaned, so seating is restricted to the centre aisle pews in the first instance. Once these sections of pews are full, overflow seating in the side aisle pews can be used.
* Use of face coverings by ministers and congregation is strongly advised.

**During service - General**

* Minister to make announcements about system for communion, leaving church etc
* There can be no singing at present. The organ could be played as people enter and leave church.
* No collection will be taken. Offertory bowl will be at the back for donations, but this will not be brought up during the service. *Use of the card machine is not recommended, as this would necessitate people touching the device to enter the amount they wish to donate.*
* There will be no sharing of the peace through physical contact.
* There will be no prayer ministry.
* We will avoid using the lectern for different readers/intercessors. We envisage these being done by the minister initially. If this changes then readers/intercessors will just come to the floor microphone.
* There will be minimal use of the sound desk for the currently proposed Sunday service. The set-up will be similar for an 8.30 service and can be set up by the minister. This approach can be modified in due course, as follows:
* Two members of the same household
* Or, sound operator sits nearby, but not behind the sound desk, once everything is set up.
* And small pew to the side of the sound desk will be kept clear to allow the video operator access/egress.

**During service - Communion**

* Minister must read Church of England guidance for hygiene practices during communion e.g. not speaking over uncovered ‘consumables’; words of distribution said generally to whole congregation, sanitise hands before distribution and again if you touch someone else’s hands, administer without touching hand of recipient, bread administered to individuals in ‘silence’.
* No offertory process, with elements brought up during service.
* Only President receives the wine.
* No intinction.
* Recipients sanitise hands before receiving bread. There will be hand sanitizer on a credence table at the front.
* No kneeling at the rail.
* Social distancing in the queue waiting to receive. One way system will operate. Communicants will be directed by a steward to come up the centre aisle to the Communion Table. The President will give the bread from behind the table and the communicant will return to their place via the north aisle (only pews where some two way traffic is unavoidable are the south aisle pews if these are used).
* Vessels washed in hot soapy water after the service

**After service**

* People must exit building as soon as the service is finished. Government guidance advises worshippers should not interact socially with anyone outside the group they are attending a place with.
* No refreshments will be served.
* Congregation will be invited to leave by a steward, one row at a time, from the back.
* Contact slips and pencils will be deposited in a box.
* Everyone leaving church must use the hand sanitizer
* Any leaflets given out must be taken away.
* Stewards wipe down seating areas with disposable wipes (wear gloves and disposable aprons).

**EXAMPLE OF ATTENDANCE SLIP**

A picture containing drawing

Description automatically generated DATE: …………………………………………

NAME(S): ………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………..

CONTACT No: ……………………………………………………….

In line with government guidance we are advised to keep a temporary record of visitors to assist NHS Test and Trace. Unless you have already given us permission to hold your contact details, the information you provide here will be destroyed after 21 days.