# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer

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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 |

On 7th June the government announced that places of worship may open for individual prayer in line with social distancing guidelines from 15th June. The government requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy, and members of the public entering for individual private prayer.

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| **Church: St Mary’s Church, Lutterworth** | **Date completed: 24/06/2020** | **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.](about:blank) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified. |  | Hilary Cooper | 23/06/20 - HC |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | Already in place | n/a | n/a |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  | Hilary Cooper | 23/06/20 - HC |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  | Lisa Nelson | 25/05/20 - LN |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](about:blank) | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| **Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and worship** | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| 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**](about:blank)**.** | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| 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. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets. |  | Ben Horrex | 15/06/20 - BH |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed. | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. No change until separate risk assessment has been completed if cushions were to be returned | Ben Horrex | 15/09/20 - BH |
| 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. | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes and seating plans updated | Ben Horrex | 15/09/20 - BH |
| Determine placement of hand sanitiser available for visitors to use. |  | Ben Horrex | 15/06/20 - BH |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. No change required | Ben Horrex | 15/09/20 - BH |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. New seating plan has been introduced to avoid gatherings of more than 6 outside of an individual household | Ben Horrex | 15/09/20 - BH |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. |  | Hilary Cooper | 25/06/20 - HC |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. |  | Hilary Cooper | 25/06/20 - HC |
| 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**](about:blank)**.** | Hilary Cooper | 25/06/20 - HC |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. |  | Lisa Nelson | 22/06/20 - LN |
| All people in the building should wear a face covering (unless exempt under government guidelines) when the building is open as a place of worship or for private prayer |  | All | Ongoing |
| Seating plan put in place to ensure 2m distancing between each household bubble and to establish a safe operating capacity during times of worship. Limits of 30 people including staff continue to apply to funerals and life events (unless held during a regular public worship service). Limit of 15 excluding staff applies to weddings. | Decision reviewed on 28/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. No change required to numbers as public worship is exempt from regulation changes, but seating plan updated. Numbers updated for weddings. | Ben Horrex | 28/09/2020 - BH |
| Collect contact details from all attendees through CONNECT forms for NHS Track and Trace. The only exception is when tickets have been booked online and personal details have already been collected. Contact details can be shredded after a period of 21 days | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. No change required as data collection is already in place | Ben Horrex | 15/09/2020 - BH |
| Singing is only permitted by worship leaders, professional singers or choirs. Congregational singing is not yet permitted, so congregation should be encouraged to mouth words, hum or remain silent. Singers leading worship must either be positioned more than 2m away from any other person (including other singers) or use a screen | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes | Ben Horrex | 15/09/2020 - BH |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. |  | Lisa Nelson | 22/06/20 - LN |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them. |  | Lisa Nelson | 22/06/20 - LN |
| Above precautions are based on the area being in the “Tier 1/Medium” category of restrictions and must be reviewed if the category changes | Reviewed on 13/10/2020 |  |  |
| **Use of the Church for Small Groups** (from 4th July onwards) | Confirm that all steps (above) for access for individual prayer and worship services have been carried out before use for small groups |  | Ben Horrex | 02/07/20 – BH |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Place hand sanitisers near doors and seating area to allow for regular sanitising |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. Only use rooms which have sufficient space for 2 metre distancing such as the main church space, café area or Church Gate Centre |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| If group is not covered by an exemption (for example: youth and children’s activities, support groups, public worship services), group sizes must be limited to 6 people. Multiple groups of 6 may take place at the same time, but cannot interact between groups and must be spaced at least 2m away from any other group. This applies both inside and outside the building | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels |  | Lisa Nelson | 22/06/20 - LN |
| Do not serve food or refreshments unless a separate risk assessment has been completed and table service is used. The only exception is serving takeaway food and drink for consumption outside the building | Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| All participants should wear a face covering (unless exempt under government guidelines) |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Avoid any activity which has been advised against in the recent government and Church of England published advice (including physical touch, congregational singing, wind instruments, playing music loudly [that would cause people to raise their voices]) |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
|  | Small groups can also be held in private homes/gardens, as long as these gatherings are of no more than 6 people and have room for physical distancing | Decision reviewed on 05/10/2020 in light of regulation changes | Group Leader | Ongoing |
|  | Above precautions are based on the area being in the “Tier 1/Medium” category of restrictions and must be reviewed if the category changes | Reviewed on 13/10/2020 |  |  |
| **Youth and Children’s Activities** (from 4th July onwards) | All of the above precautions for small groups must be followed |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Check alert level with National Youth Agency and follow their guidance for each level, with the following activities permitted:  **RED**: Online provision, detached work (socially distant), 1-2-1 sessions outdoor with high-need young people  **AMBER**: As above, plus 1-2-1 sessions indoors or outdoors with any young person, small group sessions (up to 15 people including leaders) delivered indoors or outdoors with social distancing  **YELLOW**: As above, plus larger indoor group sessions with social distancing  **GREEN**: As above, plus normal operation of services, overnight trips and visits | Guidance and current alert level can be found at: [www.nya.org.uk/guidance](http://www.nya.org.uk/guidance)  The early periods of lockdown were classed as red, with the level reduced to amber from Saturday 4th July | Ben Horrex | Ongoing |
| Safeguarding guidelines are followed, as per the Safeguarding Policy 2020 |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Group size is limited to 15 young people plus leaders, following the National Youth Agency Guidelines. Out of school activities can take place in the church building, in a public space or in a private garden | Decision on numbers made on 28/08/2020 based on NYA guidance and government guidance for out of school settings  Decision reviewed on 15/09/2020 in light of regulation changes. No change required as Youth Provision is exempt from regulation changes | Ben Horrex | Ongoing |
| Ensure hygiene can be maintained, which means taking hygiene materials if an activity is outside the building (for example, leaders to take hand sanitiser if a session was organised at the local park) |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Plan games and activities to comply with current social distancing guidelines, making sure that the indoor or outdoor area is of sufficient size to allow for the group size and for entry/exit pinch points |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| All leaders to be made aware of the guidelines and expectations for the session |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Normal registers to be kept, as well as arrival and leaving times in case a member of the group becomes unwell and it is necessary to inform others in the group |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Activities to be kept outside, when possible, as this reduces the risk of transmission |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Group Leader to be made aware of any young person or leader who is clinically vulnerable in order to complete a dynamic risk assessment and adjust the session accordingly |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Particular caution to be taken with younger groups who may struggle to maintain social distancing |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| All young people aged 11 and over should follow the same face covering guidelines as adults |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| Any child, young person or leader not following the guidelines to be challenged and, if necessary, asked to leave the session |  | Group Leader | Ongoing |
| **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**](about:blank)**.** | If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for cleaning. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/05/20 - HC |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. |  | Hilary Cooper | 24/06/20 - HC |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). |  | Ben Horrex | 22/06/20 - BH |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. |  | Ben Horrex | 24/06/20 - BH |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  | Hilary Cooper/Lisa Nelson | Daily |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. |  | Hilary Cooper/Lisa Nelson | Daily |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. |  | Charlie Styles | If applicable |
| 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.](about:blank) | Charlie Styles | If applicable |
| 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**](about:blank)**.** | Charlie Styles | If applicable |