# Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 10th December 2021 | 10.1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

*This risk assessment 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, we have reviewed risk assessments to ensure they fit the new circumstances. The Church of England’s* [*guidance*](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767) *is a helpful reference point.*

*As necessary we will carry out a separate risk assessment for each activity type e.g. public worship, use by community groups, concerts etc. and ensure that these are regularly reviewed with reference to local Covid infection rates and other relevant circumstances. We 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*](https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance) *and on the Government’s* [*website*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do)*.*

**This risk assessment**

1. The activities we are planning for:
   * 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
2. Considering 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)

We have read the guidance and thought about how it relates specifically to our church. We have considered 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).

1. We have considered who might be harmed and how. We have read the guidance and thought about how the activities we are planning will affect different groups of people. We have considered our particular circumstances and adapted 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, although in practice this is not an issue for us. We have considered whether we need to consult our wider membership and users. We have concluded this is not necessary.
2. Using this risk assessment checklist below we have:
   * added in mitigations for any risks that are particular to our circumstances;
   * recorded what we need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
   * considered any equipment we need and any temporary changes we might need to make to the church;
   * checked back against our list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when;
   * created separate Risk Assessments setting out the provisions for the 1045 am family service and, most particularly, for children and young people. These deals with the C&YP in their groups either using the halls or going outdoors. Where there is an All Age service the C&YP remain in church and this Risk Assessment governs that service.

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **St Paul’s Church, Boundary Road, West Bridgford** | **Assessor’s name: Charles George (Church warden)** | | **Date completed:**  **8 January 2022** | **Review date:**  **End of February 2022** |
| **Event or service this assessment relates to:** | | **Sunday and Wednesday services. Life Events. Provision of refreshments at these services/events.** | | |

| **Risk** | **Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **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. | Consult HSE [guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/identifying-poorly-ventilated-areas.htm)  Do not prop open fire doors.  All doors from the main door and into the church, fire exit and door by the sacristy (the exit) will be opened before the service. During the service, the roof vents will be opened, as well as window louvres – and external doors in the church if conditions allow– to aid ventilation. Where possible internal doors will be left open to minimise touching of door handles and door plates by worshippers. |  |  |
| Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. | During the winter months this is not a realistic planned option save for possibly C&YP groups. Subject to changes on guidance and infection levels we will review external singing of final songs/hymns and external provision of refreshments later in the year. | 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. | We will remind the congregation to wear face coverings, including during singing. We have a stock of face coverings, if needed. | In services and by mailer. | Each service |
| Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing | 1. We have retained the increased gap between rows of about 50 inches. However, if those attending wish to sit next to someone not from their household or bubble that is in order providing they have asked them. We must respect a wish to maintain a gap of 1 or 2 chairs. 2. Sharing of The Peace: We will continue to ask the congregation not to move from their chairs when sharing the Peace thereby avoiding the risk of physical contact save for with those from the same household or bubble. | CJG/WP | Each service |
| 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. | Current arrangement continues: Entry will be by the main door, as usual for services, into the foyer and then into the church**.** Exit will either be through the main door, or by the door next to the sacristy (priest’s side door). We do not think a “one-way system” is required but recognising a pinch point through the internal doors to the foyer an alternative should be available. A notice is in place to show the alternative exit route. Hand sanitisers will be available on entry and exit. |  |  |
|  | Celebration of Holy Communion | This will continue in its current format; namely, by way of simultaneous administration, an option available in line with CoE guidance. It is premature and too great a risk to return to the Common Cup. The procedure will remain unchanged – that is the congregation is invited to apply hand sanitiser should they choose (in position for use at the 4 communion stations – see below); words of distribution said once to all before distribution although there can be words rather than silent distribution by the priest who will be wearing a face covering; wafers “dropped” into hands. There will be no queuing. There will be 4 marked areas along the raised dais (2 Ms apart) to receive communion which communicants will be invited to use. Instructions will be given, and CJG/WP/sides persons will supervise to aid socially distanced movement to and from chairs. Key message: Only move from seat when a “station” has been vacated. | TF/CJG/WP | Ongoing |
|  | Singing and/or playing of instruments  RISK: Aerosol spray from singing and playing wind instruments. The risk remains although now allowed in church. | We had reached a stage of singing all songs in church. For now, we have reverted to wearing face coverings (see above) as required which lowers the risk of catching or passing on the virus. | CJG/WP/TF |  |
|  | Consider lighting of candles. | We have always had a large candle in a prayer bowl. Initially it was moved to the right-hand side (children’s corner not currently in use) within a circle of socially distanced chairs set up for prayer group use. It has been returned to near to the side entrance out to the patio where worshippers can light a single candle whenever they choose, allowing 3-4 minutes to pass after applying a hand sanitiser. There is a warning notice with the bowl. The risk of multiple handling is removed. No queuing to use the bowl. Instruction to go to the bowl one at a time. | CJG/WP | Ready at the beginning of each service. |
|  | 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. | [Required use of the NHS COVID Pass](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#required-use-of-the-nhs-covid-pass)  This will be done as necessary. |  |  |
|  | Regular tests having regard to the highly infectious Omicron variant. | Clergy, leadership team and church officers are aware of taking lateral flow tests in line with guidance. The congregation will also be encouraged to do the same subject to their circumstances and contact with others.  NOTE: If TF tests positive, we will notify our archdeacon and review service provision during self-isolation. Notification by mailer, website and Facebook. | TF/CHG/WP  Mailer | Ongoing |
|  | Provision of refreshments | We will continue to provide refreshments in hall 1. It is for worshippers to decide if they wish to do this, or to leave the building. In addition, we advise wearing of face coverings save for obviously consuming the drink or food. | CJG/WP/AL  Mailer | Ongoing |
| **Surface transmission of Covid-19** | Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can’t wash their hands. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. Hand sanitisers are available inside the main door (on 2 separate tables), by the toilet in the foyer and by the additional exit. More hand sanitisers are on a table within the church, as well as at the communion stations. Sanitisers will be provided for the C&YP groups. | CJG/WP | Ongoing.  AL buys stocks as necessary. |
| 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. | Doors are left open as necessary.  Projection is used at all services – but see below for the 9am Sunday service and also the Wednesday service. | CJG/WP | Ongoing |
| Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. | See advice on [cleaning church buildings](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767).  The site is subject to daily cleaning by Willow Cleaners; Mondays to Saturdays to include the halls, toilets and alternate weeks in church. We have a separate rota of volunteers for the church.  Also note:   1. The church is cleaned using antiviral sanitiser/disinfectant spray between the 9 and 1045 services. This focuses on high-risk surfaces and touch points. 2. We make available disposable gloves for anyone cleaning. | CJG/WP/AL | Ongoing.  AL buys stocks. |
| Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people. | There is a manageable risk for those who wish to use Orders of Service and Bibles at the 9am service and on Wednesdays, although projection is provided at both 9am and 1045am services on Sundays. Worshippers leave them on their chairs after the service from where they are collected and quarantined until the next service. | CJG/WP | Ongoing practice |
| 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. | If this happens, this will be carried out. |  |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on). | Not necessary. |  |  |
| 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). | Not an issue. While the children’s corner has been set up again it is not currently used. | CJG/WP |  |
| 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. Toilets will meet the necessary sanitary requirements. They will be cleaned after services. | CJG/WP | Checked before and after services. |
|  | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Confirmed. | CJG/WP | Bin by sacristy to be used and emptied each week. |
| **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](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/21016). We will keep a record of attendees in service registers. This will assist NHS Track and Trace. We will keep a record of names (we have contact details) and retain for 21 days on a rolling basis. All attendees will be invited to sign a consent form. In addition, we have an NHS Track and Trace QR Code. | CJG/WP | Ongoing use of registers. |
| 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. | Confirmed.  Aside from website the church mailer is a key way of communication. | CJG/WP/TF/AL |  |
| Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired. | We will keep this under review. |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services. | Most of the time this will not be necessary as our current experience is that we have adequate safe space. However, a recent example of a booking system (Eventbrite) was for Christingle services at Christmas 2021. | CJG/WP/TF/AL | AL can administer Eventbrite. |
| Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. | Not an issue. |  |  |
| Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. | Notices in a prominent place in the foyer. | AL | Ongoing review. |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | Confirmed. We will follow PHE guidance. In the sacristy we have displayed the Covid-19 “early outbreak management” notice. | CJG/WP | No specific steps required. |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) |  |  |
| 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.**](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767) | CJG/WP | No specific steps required. |