# 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 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*](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767) *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*](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)*.*

**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
   * Formal childcare or where part of a school
   * Essential voluntary and public services
   * Use as a vaccination or testing centre
   * Community and support groups
   * Provision of youth services
   * Opening shops/cafes
   * Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction
   * Opening for concerts, plays etc
2. 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).

1. 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **St Denys, Stanford in the Vale** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Nigel Archer** | | **Date completed:**  **18/12/21** | **Review date:**  **15/1/22** |
| **Event or service this assessment relates to:** | | **Carol service, crib service and Christmas day services 2021** | | |

| **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. This is done where possible, but it is a large, airy old church so has ventilation. With doors open to vent at start of services. | Sidespeople and duty wardens. | During services as appropriate. |
| Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. | Not appropriate in Winter. |  |  |
| 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. | All advertising includes this and signage on church door and in church. Congregations wear masks when singing but performers don’t. | Janet Warren, wardens, Vicar | 15/12/21. Signage in church. All adverts include details |
| Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing | Seating is setup to be socially distant. Sidespeople and duty wardens guide people to seats. | Wardens and Covid task group | Before services. |
| 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. | Main entrance for entrance and chancel door for exit in normal services. For other services, like the carol service, the main entrance will be used by congregation for entry and exit and controlled by sidespeople and duty warden. Choir and orchestra exit via chancel door. | Wardens and Covid task group | Before services. |
|  | 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)  Mitigations are in place for all services but we are paying special attention to carol service and crib service. No events over 500 people. | Wardens and Covid task group | Before services. |
| **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 gel is provided at entry and exit points and for communion. | Wardens and Covid task group | 15/12/21 |
| 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. | This has been evaluated before and we continue with same practices to avoid paperwork contact and touching surfaces. | Wardens and Covid task group | 15/12/21 |
| Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. | See advice on [cleaning church buildings](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767). The cleaning team regularly clean and will be cleaning before the carol service. | Cleaning team | 17/12/21 |
| 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.  Shared items are avoided. |  |  |
| 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. | Sanitising happens on entry and sheets are placed on seats. | Janet Warren, sides people, duty wardens | Before and during services |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on). | This has been done | Wardens and Covid task group | 15/12/21 |
| 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). | This has been done for any items that the children have access too. | Cleaning team | 17/12/21 |
| 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.  Not applicable |  |  |
|  | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |  | Cleaning team | As required |
| **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).  Still displaying the same track and trace as we have been. |  |  |
| 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. | These are all updated and signage in place. Masks are available for the public if they forget them. | Vicar, Janet Warren, Nigel Archer | As needed. |
| Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired. | No difference for these groups with our restrictions. |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services. | An expression of intent to attend the services has been requested so that we have an idea of numbers. No formal ticketing was needed. | Wardens and covid task group | 2/12/21 |
| Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. | Not applicable. |  |  |
| Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. | On door and communicated in advertising. | Wardens and covid task group | 15/12/21 |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | **Will do if required** | Vicar, wardens | If 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) | Vicar, wardens | If required |
| 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) | Vicar, wardens | If required |