

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

St Nicolas Church, Kings Norton Team Parish – worship and private prayer

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August.

Risk assessment template

Church: St Nicolas	Assessor's name: Pauline Weaver	Date completed: 6 January 2021	Review date: 18 January 2021
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Entrance for volunteers/staff/ministers through the South Door only.		

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General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Two people to be on duty at all times, lone worker policy not required	Rota - PH	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	All doors opened prior to opening to allow air to circulate	Clergy/Caretaker/volunteers	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Once doors opened for airing building is checked for animal waste and cleanliness.	Clergy/caretaker/volunteers	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Taps run for ten minutes. Taps only used for water for handwashing and cleaning by clergy, volunteers and caretaker. No refreshments provided	Clergy/caretaker/volunteers	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Heating turned on	Caretaker	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Safety to be checked by person filming	Caretaker	
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.	Pub closed, limited local business open	PW	

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	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website and social media to be updated	DA/PW	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Booking system to be simple by phone/email	PW/PH/JA	
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Face masks mandatory included on all newsletters and communications. Wardens to ensure compliance and that masks are worn correctly. Those with an exemption to be asked to wear a face shield. Ministers to wear a surgical grade mask for distribution of communion. Those shielding or clinically vulnerable or showing symptoms encouraged not to attend.	JA/PW/DA	
	Check if clergy, staff or volunteers required for opening to the public fall into clinically extremely vulnerable categories or have members of their household who do, and ensure there are enough people safely able and willing to facilitate opening and cleaning the building.	All volunteers and staff contact to check their availability and willingness to facilitate opening. Minimum number of volunteers required to sustain opening:3		

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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.	Checklist completed		
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Cleaning schedule in place and cleaning by volunteers at regular intervals. Cleaning after each service by caretaker. All those undertaking cleaning must wear gloves and mask.	Caretaker	
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.	Signage in place reminding of mandatory use of face coverings and list of exemptions. Lanyards available for those with exemptions and face shields to be worn instead of masks. Masks to be worn correctly.	JA/PH	
	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.	Worship & occasional offices: West door for entry and exit. . Private prayer: South door for entry and West door for exit All doors available as emergency exits	Signage and verbal instructions – wardens and caretaker	

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	<p>Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).</p>	<p>Worship - booking in point at cross aisle queue down Nave and then along path to south of West door at social distance or at social distance in South and West porches if wet. Interior queue to social distancing to be marked on floor with tape. Entrance to be to music and subdued lighting to encourage people not to socialise. Occasional Offices – queue along West path (towards rectory) to keep path clear for entrance of coffin/bride. Private prayer: Queue along main path outside of porch at social distance.</p>	<p>Signage and verbal instructions – wardens and caretaker</p>	
	<p>Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.</p>	<p>South and Chancel doors remain open. West Door to be open before and at the end of worship, with wardens to choose option to leave open during</p>		

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		service or close glass only doors.		
	Other measures to restrict contact/length of service	Gospel reading only Short intercessions and homily. HC Service to be lead from altar. Announcements at beginning and end of service regarding mingling.		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All literature removed. Single use service sheets to be provided via website and physical copies if required and to be taken home by user to be disposed of.		
	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 used as physical barriers to such items, others removed or covered. Lectern removed.		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers and cushions removed.		
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Play area isolated, toys and books covered or removed. Children encourage to bring quiet toy from home, activity packs to be provided.		

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	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 (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	Maximum 15 people available plus organist, small choir, two clergy and up to three stewards/wardens. All seats placed two meters apart. All seats for worship clearly marked other seats marked as 'do not use'. These seats may be turned and put into use for families sitting together at occasional offices but only in specific places as marked by caretaker/wardens. Private prayer seats marked separately with blue numbers.		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seats for worship and prayer marked, at a 2m distance and other seats taped off or marked 'do not use'. People allocated seats by wardens acting as ushers.		

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Arrows and signs showing one way system. Ushers to take people to seats and to direct exit from building. Booking in point to be moved to the cross aisle to prevent congestion. Cross aisle tables to be cleared so access to them is not required (eg remove collection tins, magazines, hand outs etc). People to leave church straight away with no mingling of households and to be reminded of this by the clergy/ministers. Clergy/ministers will not move to greet people on exit.		
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Temporary tape cordons and physical barriers in place. Walking route for clergy and organist to be clear. Organ used for worship and occasional offices.		

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		Piano used for private prayer		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	On entry and exit and individual bottles to be used prior and post communion. Sanitiser on altar for use of president. For funerals sanitisers to be available at the front of church. Masks available. Bin to be situated by exit for disposal of single use masks.		
	Complete fire risk assessment including material safety data sheets for hand gel	MSDS sheets available for all products. Hand gel not to be stored near any source of ignition or flame including matches, lighters and candles. Fire extinguishers available.		
	Put 'Covid-secure' plans and protocols for the administration of First Aid in your church.	First aiders must use: a fluid-repellent surgical mask, disposable gloves, eye protection, apron or other suitable covering. First aiders must:	First aid protocols to be issued to church wardens and first aiders	

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		<p>Try to assist at a safe distance from the casualty as much as you can and minimise the time you share a breathing zone.</p> <p>If they are capable, tell them to do things for you, but treating the casualty properly should be your first concern. Remember the 3P model – preserve life, prevent worsening, promote recovery.</p> <p>Preserve life: CPR Call 999 immediately – tell the call handler if the patient has any COVID-19 symptoms. Ask for help. If a portable defibrillator is available, ask for it. Before starting CPR, to minimise transmission risk, use a cloth or towel to cover the patient’s mouth and nose, while still permitting breathing to</p>		

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		<p>restart following successful resuscitation. Only deliver CPR by chest compressions and use a defibrillator (if available) – don't do rescue breaths Prevent worsening, promote recovery: all other injuries or illnesses If you suspect a serious illness or injury, call 999 immediately – tell the call handler if the patient has any COVID-19 symptoms. You should minimise the time you share a breathing zone with the casualty and direct them to do things for you where possible. After delivering any first aid Ensure you safely discard disposable items and clean reusable ones thoroughly. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser as soon as possible.</p>		

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	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Signage in place Wardens to enforce correct wearing of masks and no social contact before, during or after service. Music to be played before service to help encourage people not to socialise.		
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	All to be reminded of need to wear face coverings including congregation, ministers, wardens and volunteers. Clergy may not wear a mask when 2m away from congregation but must wear a surgical grade mask for the distribution of communion. Single use masks to be available at the rear of church. Instructions to be given by clergy for how to and when to sanitise and remove masks for receiving of communion.		

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Building to be thoroughly cleaned after each use regularly during use if possible. Mask and gloves to be worn during cleaning.		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Handwashing only available for clergy and vergers – soap, paper towels and bin available No toilet facilities available		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Bin bags in place in bins.	JA/Caretaker	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Simple booking system in place to record details.	JA	
	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.	Newsletter, magazine, word of mouth, phone calls, website and social media.	PW/PH/JA/DA	
	How will Communion be administered?	One communion (1000) with clergy taking bread to congregation. Wafer to be intincted with wine – mask and gloves to be worn during preparation of host.		

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		<p>Elements must be covered at all times. Only president consumes bread and wine that are broken during service.</p> <p>Communicants must gel hands, remove mask, gel hands, receive communion, gel hands, replace mask, gel hands.</p> <p>Those arriving when church is past capacity will be offered the opportunity to wait for the service to finish and then enter for private prayer with the option of prayers with the priest and reserved sacrament being available</p>		
	<p>Plan how funerals, weddings and baptisms will be managed with social distancing measures</p>	<p>Funerals – congregation to be seated prior to entrance of coffin to allow time for seating and hand sanitising. Additional hand sanitiser to be at front of church for family use. Maximum of 30 people, priority to close family – others may stand</p>		

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		<p>socially distanced outside. Wifi speaker linked to sound system to be investigated. Communication between family/clergy/funeral directors is essential. Second verger recommended to help manage people and serviced Weddings – liaison with family to ensure households can sit together. Maximum of 30 people, social distancing and hand sanitising. Baptisms – delayed until Spring 2021.</p>		
	music	<p>Choir to enter/exit through chancel door at staggered intervals. All seating is allocated and choristers must sit in the same seats at each service. Choristers must use named sets of books and personal water bottles.</p>		

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		Maximum of 6. Chancel door to be kept open. Choristers must wear masks (unless exempt) at all times when not singing. Choristers must use hand gel on arrival and departure and prior to/after removal of mask. Register of attendance to be kept for track and trace. Robes not to be worn. Currently no space for additional instrumentalists. Chancel and organ to be cleaned after use		
	Safeguarding	Usual safeguarding policies and procedures apply		
	Weather	Chancel and South Doors need to remain open even during inclement weather. People to be advised to dress appropriately as weather conditions change. West Door to be		

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		open before and at the end of worship, with wardens to choose option to leave open during service or close glass only doors.		
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure)	Security	All those attending to be reminded that this is a public space and to take care of their belongings.		
	Slips, trips and falls	Surfaces can be uneven inside and outside church and there are steps to negotiate and care should be taken when moving around the area.		
	Noise/disruption to other users of space	Volume of music should be kept to a reasonable level Disruption to other uses must be kept to a minimum during private prayer		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Gloves and masks available and to be worn.		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Materials available		

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to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Verger only		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Removed after each occasion the building is open		
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Building closed for 72 hours if possible		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	If building cannot be closed for 72 hours the Public Health England guidance will be followed by the Verger. Appropriate PPE and cleaning materials to be made available. See appendix 1 for details.		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Timings to be reviewed by verger and cleaning as appropriate		