

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

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

The [government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy and members of the public entering for individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Risk assessment template

Church: St Andrew's Church, Donhead St Andrew, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9EB	Assessor's name: Michael Hockney	Date completed: Thursday 18th June 2020	Review date:
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
<p>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</p> <p>General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</p>	<p>One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible</p>	<p>This is entirely practicable.</p> <p>A member of the clergy can enter via the Parish Room entrance and then access the church itself by opening the locked metal screen in the Saxon arch that leads into the Chancel.</p> <p>The clergy already have all the necessary keys.</p> <p>A member of the clergy team will carry a personal hand sanitiser to use before opening the external door and then once inside the building.</p>		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	<p>An example can be found here.</p> <p>The guidelines for lone working have been read and understood.</p> <p>The timings of all live-streaming are published in the Benefice E-newsletter so the whereabouts of the member of the clergy team will be known.</p> <p>A member of the clergy, when entering St Andrew's Church alone, will always carry a charged mobile phone.</p>		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	<p>St Andrew's Church has air vents in several of the windows in the Nave.</p> <p>It is not practicable to leave the main door of the church open because of the risk of jackdaws and bats entering the church to nest there.</p>		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	<p>St Andrew's Church was the subject of a complete restoration in late 2019. A new extension was added at the same time.</p> <p>The building is now in an exemplary condition and was, prior to the pandemic taking hold, cleaned weekly by a professional cleaner.</p> <p>The cleaner will start work again with her weekly cleaning cycle in w/c 15th June 2020.</p>	Church cleaned every Friday	

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	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	<p>See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</p> <p>HM Government's guidance has been read and understood.</p> <p>St Andrew's Church's water system was newly installed in 2019. The pipework is, as a result, in very good condition.</p> <p>The church cleaner will regularly flush through the kitchen and wc water systems as part of her work spec.</p>		

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	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	<p>St Andrew's Church had new heating and lighting systems fitted in 2019.</p> <p>All were carefully checked and approved prior to the PCC taking back the church from the main building contractor.</p> <p>The heating system, delivered by an air source heat pump runs on a daily automatic system which maintains the church at a temperature of not less than 16 degrees centigrade.</p> <p>The system has been set on automatic and cannot be changed by unauthorised individuals.</p>		

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	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	St Andrew's Church does not have a Holy Water Stoup. The lead-lined Font is always empty. For Baptisms a bowl of warmed water is place in the Font.		
Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.			
	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 .		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	<p>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.</p>	<p>We have one point of entry for villagers; this is the main south door of the church.</p> <p>There will be a large notice on the external side of the door giving clear instructions as to the steps to take before and after entering the church.</p> <p>The notice explains how to proceed, including hand sanitising in the church porch before entering and then hand sanitising again once in the church.</p> <p>The notice also explains why there are no books on display.</p> <p>Exit is by the same door.</p> <p>The doors into the tower and the new extension are kept locked for security reasons, given the valuables located in these areas.</p>		

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	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	<p>The windows contain ventilation panels.</p> <p>It will not be possible to leave the main door open as this may allow the ingress of birds, particularly jackdaws and also bats.</p>		
	Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user.	<p>All books of every sort have been removed from the church and are now stored in the Parish Room; this area of the church will be kept locked at all times.</p> <p>The church library cupboards will also be kept locked.</p>		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items	Visitors will not be allowed to enter the Chancel or Sanctuary.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	<p>The PCC has given careful consideration to the matter of the seating and kneelers.</p> <p>The church seats were new in October 2019. The kneelers have all been cleaned before the church re-opened in October 2019.</p> <p>It has decided, as the guidance indicates, that the chairs and kneelers can all remain in place as the church will only be open twice a week for private prayer, thus maintaining the 72-hour gap between uses.</p>		
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	<p>There is no permanent play area in St Andrew's Church, so there is nothing to remove.</p> <p>For Family Services, this equipment has been provided as required and then removed at the end of a service.</p>		

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	<p>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.</p>	<p>The PCC has 'walked through' the church in order to plan the optimal solution in re-opening safely.</p> <p>The layout in the church means that a two metre distancing can be observed at all times.</p> <p>Access to the Chancel and Sanctuary will not be permitted.</p>		

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	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	<p>A plan has been developed, using the red and green 'lock' cards, which will be laminated as a precaution.</p> <p>St Andrew's Church has individual interlocking chairs.</p> <p>Visitors will be allowed to sit on specific chairs only, all of which are located at least two metres from the next chair to either side or in front or behind that can be used by a visitor.</p> <p>The chairs that can be used are marked with a laminated card.</p> <p>Once the individual visitor is about to leave the church, he/she turns the card on his/her seat over onto the red side. This means that this chair will not be used again that day.</p>		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Signs in the church porch and in the church itself will make this clear.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	The Tower area and the new extension, including g the wc, kitchen and Parish Room will be kept locked.		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	<p>Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.</p> <p>One of our priests has purchased a suitable quantity of approved hand sanitiser.</p> <p>This is a self-drying hand sanitiser so paper towels will not be require or provided.</p> <p>The sanitisers will be placed on a table in the church porch and on a table just inside the entrance of the church.</p> <p>Instructions for use will be provided.</p>		

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	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . Having consulted the appropriate documentation, the PCC does not need to seek permission for any temporary changes.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices will be placed in the church porch, on the table just inside the church door and elsewhere in the church. Further information on safe practice will be provided on the St Andrew's website, the Benefice website and the weekly e-Newsletter.		

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	<p>If the church has been used in the last 72 hours ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes.</p>	<p>Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.</p> <p>From our careful reading of HM Government's and the C of E's policies, St Andrew's PCC has decided to only open the church twice a week with 72 hours between each opening in order to provide appropriate safety measures relating to the degeneration of the Covid Virus.</p> <p>All visitors will be asked to use the hand sanitiser three times. First before entering the church. Secondly, immediately after entering the church. Thirdly, immediately before leaving the church.</p> <p>The church cleaner will concentrate on high-risk areas.</p>		

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	<p>Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.</p> <p>There will be no hand washing facilities for visitors.</p> <p>For the clergy, all provisions are in place.</p>		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	<p>Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.</p> <p>The wc is not open to visitors.</p> <p>For the clergy, all provisions are in place.</p>		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	<p>There are no waste receptacles in the areas accessible to visitors.</p> <p>For the kitchen and the wc, used solely by the clergy as necessary, waste receptacles have disposable liners.</p>		

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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 .	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.	The church is only open twice a week.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Not applicable.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	We have a paid cleaner.		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. These have been provided.		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Suitable cleaning materials have been provided.		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Visitors will not have access to any potentially high risk waste materials.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed - date and name
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site - suggested daily removal.	Only the clergy will use the wc. They will use the church twice a week and will take waste paper towels away with them in the waste disposal bags provided.		
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	If someone who goes in to the church is discovered to have contracted the virus, the PCC will institute a closure policy and an additional clean after the first 72 hours has elapsed.		
	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. It will be possible.		
	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. All policies will be followed to the letter.		

VERSION 3:

THE MEMBERS OF THE PCC OF ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, DONHEAD ST ANDREW HAVE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE CONTROLS AND ACTIONS IN THIS RISK ASSESSMENT.

THE ACTIONS REQUIRED TO MEET THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S REQUIREMENTS WILL ALL HAVE BEEN ACTIONED PRIOR TO THE RE-OPENING OF ST ANDREW'S CHURCH ON TUESDAY 23RD JUNE 2020.

Simon Cooper

Michael Hockney

**Major General Sir Simon Cooper GCVO
Church Warden**

**Mr Michael Hockney MBE
PCC Member and Nominated Assessor**

18th June 2020