

## Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public St Stephens Church Centre, Canterbury Rd, Colchester

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
16 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	10	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

*This update has been reviewed to reflect step 4 of the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 19<sup>th</sup> July onwards. As step 4 sees the easing of all legal restrictions 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 on step 4](#) 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.*

*Risk assessment templates for outdoor worship and for contractors and construction workers are also available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#).*

## 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).

3. 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.

4. 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.

**The local context as at 26 July 2021**

### **Covid data re Colchester from Public Health England on 25 July 2021**

#### **Cases in Colchester**

A confirmed case is someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. **95** new people had a confirmed positive test result reported on 25 July 2021. Between 19 July 2021 and 25 July 2021, **834** people had a confirmed positive test result. This shows a decrease of **-10.9%** compared to the previous 7 days.

#### **Vaccinations in Colchester**

Vaccines are currently given in 2 doses, at least 21 days apart. **132,976** people had been given a first dose by the end of 24 July 2021. **102,812** people had been given a second dose by the end of 24 July 2021.

#### **Healthcare in East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust**

Some people with coronavirus have to go into hospital. **9** people with coronavirus went into hospital on 18 July 2021. Between 12 July 2021 and 18 July 2021, **30** went into hospital with coronavirus. This shows an increase of **76.5%** compared to the previous 7 days. There were **26** patients in hospital with coronavirus on 20 July 2021. Some people in the hospital need to use a special device called a mechanical ventilator to help them breathe. There were **2** coronavirus patients in hospital beds with a mechanical ventilator on 20 July 2021.

### **Deaths in Colchester**

There were **0** deaths within 28 days of a positive test for coronavirus reported on 25 July 2021. Between 19 July 2021 and 25 July 2021, there have been **1** deaths within 28 days of a positive coronavirus test. This shows no change compared to the previous 7 days.

**Risk assessment template**

<b>Church:</b> St Stephens, Colchester	<b>Assessor's name:</b> John Clifton	<b>Date completed:</b> 27 July 2021	<b>Review date:</b> Based on changes in circumstances, Govt and Diocesan guidance
<b>Event or service this assessment relates to:</b>		All worship services	

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Action by whom?</b>	<b>Completed – date and name</b>
<b>Aerosol or droplet transmission of Covid-19</b>	Increase ventilation in your building: natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or mechanical ventilation if appropriate/necessary.	Consult HSE <a href="#">guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas</a> Do not prop open fire doors.	Open doors and windows before services- Churchwardens	Churchwardens Existing practice
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	Garden available for conversation following services	Door to garden and gate to be left open - Churchwardens	Churchwardens- Existing practice
	Request or consider requiring people to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. This may particularly apply to activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.	Changes in Covid precautions issued on wearing of face masks (see below) commencing 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	Notice to be circulated to congregation before service and reinforced at entrance	Churchwardens- To be implemented in services from 1 August onwards

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
			and in notices	
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	No regulations now exist on social distancing. But attenders are asked to particularly avoid speaking face to face in close proximity to others, shaking hands or hugging	Churchwardens and congregation	Churchwardens- To be implemented in services from 1 August onwards
	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.	Retain existing guidance. Front door for entry. Garden door for exit	Retain existing guidance. Front door for entry. Garden door for exit	Churchwardens Existing practice
	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.	No regulations now exist on social distancing. But attenders are asked to particularly avoid speaking face to face in close proximity to others, shaking hands or hugging	To be included in updated guidance to attenders (see below)	Churchwardens To be implemented in services from 1 August onwards
<b>Surface transmission of Covid-19</b>	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Already provided	Churchwardens Existing practice
	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.		Leave open non fire doors when building in use	Churchwardens To be implemented in services from 1 August onwards

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	See advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings</a> .	Churchwardens	Churchwardens Existing practice
	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.	The time lapse between the use of service sheets is such that Covid transmission is very low risk. No action required at present	
	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.	Not applicable		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Not applicable		
	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).			Centre management group Existing practice
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.		Centre management group Existing practice
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.			Centre management group

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
				Existing practice
<b>Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.</b>	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 <a href="#">advice on Track and Trace</a> .		Churchwardens Existing practice
	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.	See paper below: Changes in Covid precautions	Display in church entrance area' on website, Facebook and email to parishioners	Church administrator
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.		On request, provide appropriate version of Changes in Covid precautions	Church administrator
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Re-evaluated. No longer considered necessary. Disseminated in paper below: Changes in Covid precautions	Not applicable	Churchwardens
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.		Comparison made with new guidance at Christ Church Ireton Rd	Churchwardens 25 07 21



Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	New notice in Foyer	Church Administrator	
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		Churchwardens to carry out advised actions if and when infection identified	
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	Churchwardens to carry out advised actions if and when infection identified	
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	Churchwardens to carry out advised actions if and when infection identified	

## DRAFT

### Changes in Covid precautions: Worship at St Stephens from [7 August 2021].

Following the government announcements about relaxation of Covid restrictions from 19<sup>th</sup> July, the PCC has agreed that a cautious approach is appropriate until further notice. The following arrangements will be in place from [7<sup>th</sup> August]:

1. Booking for services is no longer required. Attenders asked to enter by the front entrance and exit, as before, through the garden.
2. As before, attenders encouraged to use hand sanitiser in the entrance area on arrival and sign in using the NHS app or the written list.
3. Worship area for both Wednesday and Sunday worship: Doors and windows open for maximum ventilation. Seating 'bubbles' will no longer be provided and chairs will be set out with a seat-width size gap between. 2 seat length gaps between rows. It is likely that attenders will automatically tend to space themselves out leaving unoccupied chairs. But some in the congregation may feel particularly vulnerable and anxious at the possibility of being seated closer to other people. If someone would feel safer, chairs to their right and left may be reserved to maintain more distance. Cards will be provided to allow people to maintain social distance by placing cards on adjacent seats.
4. Attenders are asked to use facemasks when entering and moving around the building. Attenders have a choice as to whether to use them when seated, being mindful of those close-by.
5. No regulations now exist on social distancing. But attenders are asked to particularly avoid speaking face to face in close proximity to others, shaking hands or hugging.
6. The worship band can continue to sing unmasked. Wind instruments are now allowed. Congregational singing is allowed but using facemasks is suggested for congregational singing.
7. At Holy Communion services the President will wear a mask during administration, which will be at the front (apart from for those with reduced mobility to whom the wafer will be administered in their seats by the President). As before, wafers only are administered as before. The President to be the only person who receives Holy Communion in the form of wine.<sup>1</sup>
8. Facemasks are advised when going up for communion. Please avoid forming long queues and space generously whilst waiting.
9. No refreshments to be provided, but the congregation is no longer required to leave the building / church grounds immediately after the service. We can become more sociable again!

26 July 2021

John Clifton Martin Kerins

Churchwardens on behalf of St Stephens Parochial Church Council