

## Risk Assessment Template for Outdoor Worship

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
25 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

*This update has been reviewed to reflect the [roadmap to ease restrictions](#) issued by the UK government and is intended for use from 29<sup>th</sup> March onwards ('phase 1b'). It incorporates sections on singing, workplace testing, and planning for wider use of buildings including for non-worship purposes. At all times churches should check national and, if relevant, local restrictions to ensure the activity planned is currently permitted. Risk assessments carried out using an earlier template may still be valid but should be reviewed regularly and checked against this latest version of the risk assessment.*

England entered the government's roadmap out of lockdown on 8<sup>th</sup> March with the re-opening of schools and other education settings, and an increase in permitted reasons to leave home to meet one person outside for social purposes. As they have been throughout the third lockdown (from 5<sup>th</sup> January) churches are permitted to open for communal worship, private prayer and a number of essential purposes where they can be carried out in a Covid-safe way. There may be specific local regulations recommended by local authorities, that place additional restrictions on certain activities. Before completing this risk assessment you can see what is permitted by checking the guidance on permitted activities on the national church coronavirus webpage. Guidance on opening cathedral and church buildings to the public during COVID-19 can also be found [there](#).

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 any permitted purposes. As well as offering guidance on best practice, the template is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. Specific guidance linking to advice on the lockdown period is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

The government acknowledges that places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities and generations together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus. In drawing up a risk assessment for your church, or revising it in the light of the current situation, you will need to think carefully whether the public benefits you achieve by opening are justified by the risks involved, however much you can mitigate them. This judgement will vary depending on the location and nature of your church building and the make up of your congregation and visitor profile. You will need to discuss the factors with your governing body, whether the PCC or chapter. Remember that this is your collective choice whether to open: while our churches are permitted by government to open, they are not obliged to do so. If you decide not to open, you can continue to have a valuable role serving the community in a number of ways. Guidance on this can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Guidance indicating how churches might arrange access and events in a Covid-safe way have been produced as part of a government initiative to encourage re-opening in a safe and reasonable way. This includes a number of case studies that may help you think about your church building.

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

Separate risk assessments for outdoor worship and for access by contractors and construction workers are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

## Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
  - Public worship
  - Congregational singing as part of an act of worship
  - Other public outdoor activities e.g. fetes, concerts etc.
2. Consider the hazards:
  - Transmission of COVID-19
  - Hazards arising from using the church and churchyard in a different way to usual, especially uneven outdoor areas and use when it is dark

Read the guidance and think about how it relates specifically to your church and/or the outdoor setting you will be using. What constraints are there? Consider how people will arrive and move across the site; circulation around the churchyard; also access to other areas or the interior of the church 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 real but they are in many ways less than those for indoor worship as long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming to an event makes the possible impact – for example of someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller venues 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 and go against the general guidance that people should stay local for any activities outside the home. 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.

## Risk assessment template for Outdoor Worship

<b>Church:</b> St Nicholas' Church, Dormston	<b>Assessor's name:</b> St Nicholas' Church, PCC sub-committee Comprising: Hilary Lloyd, Roger Cliffe, Sandra Wood, Maria Lazenbury	<b>Date completed:</b> March 2021	<b>Review date:</b> Midsummer 2021
<b>Key Reference</b> Site usage coordinator - Sandra Wood (SW) Benefice Administrator – Maria Lazenbury (ML) St Nicholas' PCC Secretary – Maria Lazenbury (ML) Clergy Team – Rev'd Bruce Rienstra, Rev'd Diane Hayward Wright, Rev'd Vivienne Heenan (BR), (DH), (VH) Vicar of the Benefice of Inkberrow with Cookhill and Kington with Dormston – Rev'd Bruce Rienstra (BR)			
<p><b>This risk assessment is for outdoor worship at St Nicholas with the regular congregation. Funerals and other outdoor events are subject to a separate Risk Assessment.</b></p>			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<p><b>Deciding whether it is safe to hold outdoor worship</b></p> <p><b>Risk:</b> contracting or spreading the virus by not social distancing or by touching contaminated services</p>	<p>Consider if anyone required for the running of the service is clinically extremely vulnerable or has household members who are. Can someone else fulfil their role? Ensure that the people who need to attend the site to enable the service to take place are willing to do so and can do so safely.</p>	<p>The majority of the volunteers and PCC members of St Nicholas' are in the vulnerable category.</p> <p>The PCC cannot guarantee the presence of sufficient volunteers to act as marshals and stewards to control social distancing.</p> <p>There are no volunteers/PCC members safely able to set out equipment and clean and clear away afterwards.</p> <p>No services will be held within 48 hours of each other to ensure adequate time elapsed between use.</p>	<p>Minister to book service with <b>site usage coordinator, Sandra Wood</b> at least 48 hours in advance.</p> <p>Site usage coordinator Sandra Wood to approve all key release to third parties and convey issue instructions to Steve Tonry (current key holder).</p>	

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	<p>Consult the guidance on what is permitted at the different steps of the lockdown in relation to the particular circumstances of the site and the worship envisaged. For gathered congregations or one-off services drawing people from a wide area, consider the implications of where people travel from and the distance involved.</p>	<p>St Nicholas' is located rurally and has its own car park. Any service/funeral event is unlikely to attract more visitors than it can accommodate.</p>		
	<p>Assess the site, taking into account the need for people from different households to remain 2m apart from each other, and the recommendation that outdoor events have seats for audiences. Consider if the capacity of the site will work with the service(s) you are planning.</p>	<p>3 reasonably flat areas are available for use for worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Area between front gate and the south porch and either side of the main path</li> <li>b) Area between north wall and the carpark hedge</li> <li>c) Area at eastern end of the car park</li> </ul> <p>There is no suitable seating for worshippers to use outdoors.</p> <p>Outdoor services are unlikely to attract more than 10 households. Separate Risk Assessment to be undertaken for a service attractive to greater numbers.</p>	<p>Each bubble/ household/individual to be stationed at least 2 metres from others</p> <p>Worshippers to bring own portable seating and remain in situ throughout.</p> <p>Limitation document to give advance notice to worshippers Service to be short</p>	

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	<p>Assess the availability of utilities such as electricity that might be needed, especially for services taking place in the hours of darkness e.g. for lights, microphones. Do you have the correct safety equipment for outdoor use?</p>	<p>The PCC has decided that no services will take place outdoors during hours of darkness. NB no outdoor electrical supply</p>	<p>Any use of electrical equipment, team to observe standard safety guidance re safe loads and trip hazards</p>	
	<p>Consider accessibility issues such as access to the site for those who use wheelchairs or have difficulty walking, and also how people who are deaf or hearing impaired will be able to participate (make use of microphones and good lighting).</p>	<p>Access from both gates reasonably level but some unevenness. Support from a household/bubble member recommended. No audio system in place at St Nicholas. Limited numbers likely to attend outdoor services. Congregation will not be too distant from minister.</p>		
	<p>Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.</p>	<p>St Nicholas is located rurally and has its own car park. Any service/event is unlikely to attract more visitors than it can accommodate. Church services unlikely to conflict with the activities of the few local residents.</p>		

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	Consider if a booking and seat- or place-allocation system is needed; consider staggered arrival times.	Attendance unlikely to exceed 30 people  Any publicity of services to make attendance limits clear	Clergy  Administrator	
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Most of the nearby churches are within the Benefice and administered by the same clergy team. The Benefice is also collaborating with the Arch Benefice to offer joint recorded online services and share ministerial responsibilities when required	Coordination from the clergy in consultation with the PCC	
	Check current guidance on singing to establish what is permitted. This can be found in the Church of England <a href="#">guidance</a> on conducting public worship and on in the Government guidance for <a href="#">places of worship</a> .	Congregational singing outdoors on church grounds is permitted provided that current guidance regarding distancing and hygiene is followed. St Nicholas does not have suitable/safe equipment for outdoor musical accompaniment. Congregational singing to be reviewed in June 2021	Services to be planned without singing until review in June 2021 by Risk assessment sub committee	

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	Ensure that singers from different households can be socially distanced from one another, and from anyone else present (including a conductor, camera or microphone operator or, if present, a congregation).	Congregation members to remain stationed at safe distancing positions	Clergy to remind congregation before service	
	Put in place measures to create a physical barrier between singers and any congregation.	No singing group/choir available		
<b>Preparation of the site for access by members of the public for outdoor worship or any other permitted public event</b>  <b>Risk:</b> Getting or spreading coronavirus in common use or high traffic areas such as entry points; ensuring safe operation of service.	Check the guidance on permitted activities to ensure that the event you are planning is permitted under the current step of the roadmap.	Guidance on Permitted Activities from the 29 <sup>th</sup> March and on the Government's four step roadmap can be found <a href="#">here</a> .	Check at least weekly HML	Checked 29/03/21 HML
	Set up a one-way route around the site to aid distancing measures. Indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times.	Worshippers to follow usual routes from access points keeping distance from others		
	If relevant, clearly mark out seating or (if seating is not possible) standing areas, including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Limitation document informs worshippers of need to station themselves at a two metre distance from others	Volunteer steward to monitor worship zone	
	If ticketing/booking is being used, decide how best to manage that process e.g. specific points of entry, barriers.	Unlikely to be necessary for this type of service		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed, e.g. lighting, microphone: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets or cables/equipment causing trip hazard	No sound systems, microphones etc NB no outdoor electrical supply		

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	<p>Make any temporary arrangements for managing the approaches to the entry points and any parking areas to ensure social distancing can be observed (taking into account any consequential risks arising from changes to circulation).</p>	<p>Provide signage in the car park asking people to leave suitable space between cars.</p> <p>Produce signage at entrance to the churchyard asking people to wait to be seated/positioned.</p>	<p>Maria Lazenbury (signage)</p>	
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Face coverings are not required for outdoor services but participants should remain vigilant to safe distancing</p>		
	<p>Identify where you can reduce the contact of people with surfaces, e.g. by using electronic documents rather than paperwork. If paper service sheets are to be used agree a process for handing them out safely and encourage people to take them home with them.</p>	<p>Attendees to sanitise hands and collect service book from basket. Return books after use maintaining distance at all times. Books to be quarantined for 48 hours minimum</p>		<p>As required</p>
	<p>Ensure you have an NHS Track and Trace QR code available, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system.</p>	<p>QR printed and displayed For those without use of QR, paper form for completion with contact details using own pen, or consent to name being listed (all paper records/forms destroyed after 3 weeks) Site usage coordinator to monitor/collect paper</p>	<p>Worshippers to assist with Track and Trace</p> <p>Sandra Wood</p>	<p>02/10/2021 Maria Lazenbury</p>

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		records upon locking church after service.		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements such as bringing a face covering. Remind people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 to stay at home as much as possible and observe social distancing guidance, and either strongly discourage them from attending services in person during this time or indicate a time for them to attend for individual devotions.	Completed	Rev'd Bruce Rienstra & Benefice Administrator	March, July, November 2020 & January 2021 Maria Lazenbury
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	Place no entry signage on the door to the church.	Maria Lazenbury	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Currently located upon temporary pin board located as you enter church Laminate poster and place in porch area.  Second notice board to be provided to be located in outside/Porch when outdoor service takes place.	Maria Lazenbury to provide 2 <sup>nd</sup> signage board.  Site Usage coordinator Sandra Wood to place in location as and when required.	1 <sup>st</sup> signage board placed 02/10/2020 Maria Lazenbury

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	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Hand sanitiser in situ  To be located by both gates	RC to investigate suitable fixture. Sandra Wood to monitor stock and order further supplies via Maria Lazenbury	02/10/2020 Maria Lazenbury
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	There is no water provision within the church, hand sanitiser provided as an alternative.		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	There are no toilet facilities on site		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	It is not felt there should be any need for bins. Should they be required disposable biodegradable liners are available from Benefice stocks. Pedal bins can be ordered to limit surface contact the parish buying scheme.  Monitor the need for bins	Site Usage coordinator Sandra Wood to advise PCC if she thinks these are required. All site users to remove their own rubbish	
	If other organisations are part of the event – e.g. stallholders at a fete (when permitted) – ensure they have completed their own risk assessments for their setup and you have a copy. If in doubt, check with your insurer.	This risk assessment is for outdoor worship only. When other activities are permissible, an event specific risk assessment will be required.	Risk Assessment sub-committee as required	

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<p><b>Closing the site down after outdoor worship and events</b></p> <p><b>Risk:</b> Getting or spreading coronavirus among event organisers.</p>	<p>Ensure that safety procedures are in place for closing the site down – e.g. providing gloves and masks to those stacking chairs or moving electrical/staging equipment.</p>	<p>Closing down procedures to be minimal because of lack of volunteers able to operate safely</p> <p>Steward to check door handle sanitised and church locked.</p>	<p>Steward. After all worshippers and clergy have removed their own eating and rubbish.</p>	