

Church Re-opening Risk Assessment post-Coronavirus Lockdown

Introduction

When Government regulation permits your building to re-open, whether fully or for limited use (e.g. private prayer, funeral services, etc.) Elders’ Meetings (or the equivalent council in LEPs) must undertake a Risk Assessment and wherever possible identify steps to reduce and mitigate risk.

Fuller guidance on risk assessment can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>, and advice obtained through your Synod office.

For each area of risk that you are able to identify, you must assess the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact it would have if it did occur. Score both items on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being highest) and multiply the two together to get a Risk Score. Then identify steps that can be taken to reduce or remove the risk. Does the mitigation give a significantly lower risk score? If not, what further mitigation must be put into place to bring the Risk Score to an acceptable level? If the risk remains “Catastrophic” or “unacceptable,” what can you do to remove that activity or area of risk completely? For example, if the state of the church roof is such that it is likely to collapse on anyone inside the building, and the injuries caused would probably be major or severe (which includes fatal injury), the risk score would be at the catastrophic risk level (coloured red in this grid). Until repairs can be carried out to make the building safe, the mitigation is not to use that part of the building, keep it locked and post clear warning signs not to enter. **"Catastrophic" and "unacceptable" risk levels mean that the church must not proceed with that activity until the risks can be lowered to "Undesirable" or "Acceptable" levels.**

NOTE: The risks listed on the following pages are suggestions. Your local context will mean that some of the risks and the necessary mitigations will be different and so you must adapt this to suit your buildings and circumstances.

Impact	Severe	5	5	10	15	20	25
	Major	4	4	8	12	16	20
	Moderate	3	3	6	9	12	15
	Minor	2	2	4	6	8	10
	Insignificant	1	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5
			Remote	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Highly Likely
			Likelihood				

Key to Risk Level

Catastrophic	
Unacceptable	
Undesirable	
Acceptable	

Church: _____ Risks assessed by: _____ Date: _____

Assessment accepted by Elders' Meeting: _____ (Signature of meeting chair or secretary) Date: _____

Risk No	Risk	Type*	Inherent risk			Mitigation	Residual risk			Notes	
			Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		
Preparing the buildings for reopening											
1	A	Build-up of dust and possibly mould whilst building closed	Property	5	3	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Open doors and windows to allow airflow. ➤ Restrict access into building until building aired ➤ Minimise access to building and close off until task complete ➤ Undertake deep cleaning prior to opening for first time 	1	1	1	No one allowed into building until task completed
2	A	General cleanliness of building	Property	5	3	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning of inside of building and review if additional action such as a deep clean required ➤ All fitting and fixtures (including door handles, hand rails and light switches) MUST be wiped down with anti-bacterial wipes and sanitisers 	1	1	1	Restricted access into building until task completed
3	A	Potential contamination of water system (legionella)	Property	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water system flushed through: all taps to be run for at least 20 mins after lockdown then at least 5 mins weekly thereafter; all toilets to be flushed at least twice weekly ➤ No cistern tanks in our building, all direct feed cold water 	1	1	1	If weekly checklist has not been carried out, the water system should be checked
4	A	Safety measures against fire are not securely in place	Property	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fire Risk Assessment must be in place and up to date ➤ All fire extinguishers to be checked and ensure functioning and in date All fire signage and exit are clear 	1	1	1	Fire Risk Assessment must be in place before opening
5	A	Alterations to layout in order to maintain current Government social distancing measures mean a clear evacuation route is not obvious or needs to be changed	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review evacuation and emergency response procedures to ensure they remain suitable with the altered layout and social distancing in place ➤ Where occupants require assistance evacuating the premises, ensure a plan is in place to provide appropriate support, including the provision of PPE for anyone who might provide assistance ➤ Display clear signage and ensure the identified route is free of obstruction and accessible to all 	2	2	4	Building must not open until measures in place
6	A	Seating in areas to be used for private prayer, and public worship once permitted, is too close together.	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Close off seats (ROWS AND SINGLE) and specify which can be used so that required distancing can be strictly followed. Remove excess chairs and stack safely 	1	1	1	Building must not open until measures in place

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7	A Electrical and heating systems (including emergency lighting) fully functional	Property	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure all statutory compliance checks are up to date (gas and electrical safety) ➤ All systems to be checked and signed off 	1	1	1	Systems to be repaired as required prior to opening
8	A Items stored and displayed on surfaces makes cleaning regime difficult	Property	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear surfaces as much as possible and move items to safe storage 	2	2	4	Ensure all items removed as appropriate prior to opening
9	A High value items at risk of theft	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Secure items that are not needed (such as audio-visual equipment). ➤ Ensure the premises are staffed and supervised whilst open to the public. 	1	1	1	Ensure all items removed as appropriate prior to opening
10	B Insufficient staff/volunteers available to supervise the premises for Covid-Secure compliance whilst open	Service delivery	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Daily Rotas of volunteers in place with reserve indicated ➤ Building only opens if minimum of 2 people in place with NO LONE WORKING 	1	1	1	Close the building until sufficient people are available.
11	A Items may be handled by more than one person, increasing the risk of cross contamination	People	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Remove/secure hymnbooks, Bibles, pens, prayer request books, etc. Produce single-use/disposable printed resources ➤ Consider providing prayer guides, posters/displays, non-contact prayer stations etc., to aid private devotion. ➤ Hand sanitisers in place at exit and entrance for mandatory use when entering and leaving the building 	2	1	2	Building must not open until measures in place
12	A Issues with outside of building	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check guttering/ downpipes/gullies ➤ Check overgrown shrubs or trees across walkways ➤ Check for any loose fence panels as appropriate ➤ Check for any loose headstones in grave yard if appropriate <p>NOTE: unless these are a danger to individuals entering the church building they will not stop it re-opening BUT must be actioned</p>	2	1	2	Any issues must be put onto an action plan and addressed

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13	A Flow of people within the church causes congestion or makes social distancing impossible	People	4	4	16	➤ Investigate and implement processes to ensure flow of people in church adheres to government guidelines currently applicable (e.g. one way system signage)	2	1	2	Must be in place before church opens
14	A Excess rubbish builds up at the premises	People	3	2	6	➤ All rubbish to be taken away by church attendees where appropriate ➤ Replace all bins with automatic open and close lids to minimise touch point ➤ Bins regularly emptied by nominated person	1	1	1	Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening
15	A Safeguarding information missing or out of date	Legal	4	5	20	➤ Ensure safeguarding poster and statement of policy, including contact details for local safeguarding co-ordinator are displayed prominently ➤ Ensure stewards are briefed on the safeguarding policy and know who to contact if a concern is raised	1	1	1	

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Social Distancing											
16	A	Too many people gather in the building.	People	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Control numbers entering the church which will be agreed by the Elders prior to church opening and all stewards fully aware trained and briefed in the protocol 	2	2	4	Stewards MUST adhere to agreed numbers
17	A	Those using the building don't respect distancing guidance.	People	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Place distancing marks outside the building where possible and inside the building (for preference these should still be at 2m intervals, although a lesser distance may be permitted by Government regulation and guidance with appropriate mitigations in place. Display clear signage at the entrance and throughout the space about maintaining distancing during their visit, including when greeting others. ➤ Ensure stewards are properly briefed to reinforce the message. ØStewards to remind worshippers that they must adhere to social distancing guidelines whilst on church grounds as well as inside 	2	3	6	Stewards be briefed to remind people to adhere to distancing guidance whilst in the buildings or on the church grounds
18	A	People attend who have symptoms of coronavirus	Legal	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stewards to be briefed to ask people if they believe they have symptoms and if so, respectfully decline entry to them. ➤ Clear signage reminding people of the symptoms of Covid-19 and of the importance of self-isolation. ➤ Door stewards to wear masks 	2	3	6	This MUST be adhered to and if suspected people will not leave church to be closed immediately NOTE: if required support will be requested (police)

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19	A Congestion at choke points prevent distancing being respected	People	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Re-laying out of church to reduce pinch points ➤ Investigate options such as one way systems ➤ Ensure all relevant signage and floor marking in place ➤ All stewards to be briefed in flow of building <p>NOTE: if pinch point cannot be removed time and flow through at that point MUST be minimised (a “one in, one out” system) to maintain infection protocols</p>	2	2	4	Stewards must be fully briefed to enable smooth flow
20	A A person known to be on the sex offenders' register attends	People	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brief stewards that known offenders are not to be admitted as they cannot be supervised during private prayer ➤ When it is possible to resume corporate worship, review the covenant of care/offenders' contract and amend it to provide socially distanced supervision. 	2	2	4	

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Cleaning										
21	A Nominated company or rota of volunteers not in place to ensure regular cleaning	Service delivery	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delay opening until employed cleaners or volunteers are in place. Follow current Government guidance on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting ➤ Confirm responsibilities for cleaning, ordering supplies, etc. Ø Consider removing and storing upholstered chairs and pew cushions which would require steam cleaning and use hard-surfaced chairs that can be wiped clean <p>NOTE: if building is listed refer to Historic England's Guide to cleaning Historical surfaces.</p>	1	1	1	Cleaning regime must be in place prior to and maintained throughout opening
22	B Cleaning staff/volunteers unable to comply with safe working practice for cleaning	People	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Update risk assessment and method statements, including COSHH assessments to reflect change in practices ➤ Ensure that cleaners are properly briefed on a safe method of cleaning. ➤ Provide gloves and aprons for those using cleaning materials. ➤ Use warm soapy water for wiping surfaces but be aware that if might conflict with preserving historic artefacts or listed buildings specialist advice must be sought. ➤ Hands must be washed thoroughly after removing and disposing of PPE ➤ PPE MUST be disposed of in designated receptacle. ➤ Waste must be double-bagged and securely stored for 72 hours before being placed in bins. 	1	1	1	Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening
23	A Materials not available to properly clean surfaces	Service delivery	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delay opening until materials are available. 	1	1	1	Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening

*Risk type: choose from: Data, Financial, Legal/regulatory, People, Property, Reputational, Service Delivery

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24	A Contamination from high-touch areas such as door handles and switches	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement a practice of cleaning high-touch areas before the building is opened ➤ Clean at regular intervals during the period of opening and when the building is closed for the day. ➤ Where consistent with fire safety and security, use wedges/hooks to hold doors open and ensure doors are closed when the building closes to maintain fire safety. 	2	3	6	Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening
25	A Contamination from surfaces in toilets	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clean at regular intervals during the period of opening and when the building is closed for the day. ➤ Provide anti-bacterial wipes to allow surfaces to be sanitised after use and a bin for disposal along with signage instructing wipes not to be flushed away 	2	3	6	
26	A Someone with Coronavirus is found to have visited the building	People	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Display signage asking those with the known symptoms to return home immediately ➤ Ask those coming into the building for any purpose to leave name and contact details in order to comply with NHS Test and Trace procedures, retaining those details securely for 21 days before destroying them. ➤ Close the building immediately for min.72 hrs. ➤ After that period ensure as a minimum that all surfaces are washed with warm soapy water or household disinfectant unless damage to historic artefacts or listed buildings might be incurred, in which case seek specialist advice (it may be decided to deep clean area of contamination) ➤ Double bag waste and store it securely for 72 hours before placing it in bins. ➤ Wash hands thoroughly after PPE kit has been removed and disposed of in designated bin 	2	3	6	This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed

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27	A People may carry Coronavirus into the building on their hands	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Require everyone to sanitise their hands upon entry. ➤ Where possible and for preference provide liquid soap and running water for handwashing on arrival and either disposable paper towels which must be double-bagged and stored securely for 72 hours before putting them into outside bins or automatic hot air hand dryers. ➤ If running water is not available, provide hand sanitiser. ➤ Display clear signage on the importance of washing hands regularly and avoiding face touching. 	2	3	6	This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed
28	A Toilet facilities cannot be cleaned adequately between users	Property	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning regime to be in place to ensure toilet facilities safe to use. 	1	1	1	Close off toilet facilities until arrangements can be made. Display signage by the entrance making it clear that no toilet facilities are available in the building
29	A Increased risk of airborne transmission of disease	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limit the duration of opening times and ventilate the building during and between opening times where possible 	1	1	1	

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30	A Someone starts to feel unwell/develops coronavirus symptoms whilst on the premises	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Isolate the person in a separate room whilst arrangements are made for them to be taken home or into medical care. ➤ Anyone sitting with the person must wear a face mask, disposable gloves and apron (either disposable or washable at 60oC) throughout the period of supervision/support ➤ Church and isolation room must be closed for 72 hours before deep cleaning with soapy water and/or household disinfectant ➤ Cleaning cloths and PPE to be double-bagged and stored securely for 72 hours before placing in outside bins. ➤ Hands must be washed thoroughly immediately after removing & disposing of PPE ➤ Anyone supervising/caring for the person who is unwell should return home, shower and change clothes ASAP. 	2	2	4	

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Additional risks associated with opening for public worship											
31	A	Premises are not Covid-Secure prior to opening	Property	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the space is properly prepared for re-opening, the cleaning regime is in place and preparations for hand-washing, hygiene, distancing and signage are all in place 	1	1	1	Re-opening must NOT take place until the Covid-Secure measures are in place (see the risks for building preparation, cleaning and social distancing above for greater detail)
32	A	Increased risk of coronavirus spread through communal singing (once this is permitted by local legislation: whilst prohibited in law, churches must NOT include singing in worship)	People	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider worship without communal singing ➤ Issue instructions on singing quietly in worship ➤ Require facemasks to be worn during worship to reduce risk of transmission 	1	1	1	There is divided scientific evidence and opinion on whether singing increases the risk of virus transmission
33	A	Risk of virus transmission from shared resources (Bibles & other books, offertory plate, etc.)	People	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Remove all items that may be handled by more than one person ➤ Place offertory baskets/plates at the back of church, being mindful of security, or move to contactless or online giving ➤ Where cash handling cannot be avoided, wear gloves when handling it and wash hands thoroughly afterwards 	1	1	1	

Risk No	Risk	Type*	Inherent risk			Mitigation	Residual risk			Notes
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34	A Children's group leaders not willing to resume activities immediately	People	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the space for children is properly prepared for social distancing, etc., and remind parents/carers that the government expects them to ensure that their children maintain social distancing ➤ Remove softs toys and soft furnishings and any toys that would be hard to clean, storing them securely ➤ Provide single-use resources & equipment or ensure that items are not handled by many people and are sanitised before and after use ➤ Consult with group leaders to see whether mitigation resolves their concerns and if not investigate alternative provision/format for the activities, or resolve not to resume at this point. 	2	1	2	
34	B Children's group leaders not willing to resume activities immediately	Legal/ Reg	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that any new group leaders have been safely recruited under Good Practice 5 and are available in sufficient number for safeguarding 	1	1	1	If adult/child ratios cannot be upheld, activities must not take place
35	A No Covid-safe space available for children's groups to meet during worship	People	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide space and activities within the sanctuary where the children can be safely supervised without leaving the main act of worship ➤ Remove soft toys and soft furnishings and any toys that cannot easily be cleaned, storing them away securely ➤ Provide single-use resources & equipment or ensure that items are not handled by many people and are sanitised before and after use. ➤ Co-ordinate with worship leaders to provide all-age/intergenerational worship 	2	2	4	Initially advertise that worship is all age and no outside church provision for children

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36	A Risk of virus transmission through serving/receiving Holy Communion	People	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Consider refraining from sharing Communion Ø If Communion is offered, it must be done without physical contact with the elements placed into the communicant's hand only, the worship leader must not speak or sing over uncovered elements, hands must be washed/sanitised before serving, the Common Cup must not be used, and appropriate care taken by those cleaning the Communion vessels and cloths after use. 	2	2	4	

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37	A Risk of transmission through administering Baptism	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that relevant Government guidance is followed ➤ Until further notice baptism by full immersion should be avoided ➤ For infant baptism use the minimum amount of water possible and ensure that the parent/carer holds the infant ➤ If there are baptismal candidates from more than one household, change the water between candidates and ensure appropriate distancing is maintained between the households and others involved in the baptism ➤ Consider offering an alternative rite (e.g. dedication or thanksgiving) until the pandemic has passed. 	1	1	1	
36	A Visiting worship leaders are not aware of COVID-19 secure arrangements	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send out information about precautions with the usual information about leading worship for your church ➤ Ensure details on the order of service/format for worship is updated 	1	1	1	
37	A Equipment may be touched by more than one person before and during worship (e.g. photocopier, computer, audio-visual equipment, etc.)	Property	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emphasise the importance of good hand hygiene for everyone throughout their time in the building. ➤ Provide cleaning materials to wipe down equipment surfaces between use and instruct those involved on how to use it safely 	1	1	1	

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			Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		
Additional risks associated with opening for other church activities and external lettings											
38	A	Space for mid-week adult groups is not Covid-Secure	Property	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assess whether it is appropriate to resume activity, weighing prevalence of the virus in the population, vulnerability of the group and the nature of the activity against the impact on well-being of attendees if they cannot meet together ➤ Make the room(s) ready with all hygiene and social-distancing measures in place including cleaning regimes before, during and after use ➤ Ensure the meeting space has an up-to-date general risk assessment for health & safety, and appropriate actions have been taken to reduce risk ➤ Remove books, etc. that might be handled by several people; ensure that other resources and equipment is sanitised before and after use or is single-person use only ➤ Make the room(s) ready with all hygiene and social-distancing measures in place including cleaning regimes before, during and after use ➤ Provide guidance about soft furnishings and upholstery that may become contaminated and transmit through touch (chairs, curtains, etc.) 	2	2	4	Activity leaders must know the risks and mitigations, adhere to restrictions and enforce them appropriately
38	B	Space for mid-week adult groups is not Covid-Secure	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider whether you need to move to a larger space than usual, restrict numbers and/or add sessions to keep within your safe capacity 	2	2	4	Capacity that lets the group maintain current social distancing standards must not be exceeded

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39	A Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	Property	3	3	9	In addition to the mitigations for adult groups, consider the following: > Assess how many children and leaders can safely meet in the room(s) and plan activities appropriately > Provide, where appropriate, places where prams and pushchairs can safely be left without causing obstruction or requiring anyone other than the owner to move them > Provide clear signage for entry and exit points, reminders about distancing and hand hygiene and remind parents/carers (where appropriate) to be responsible for the supervision of their children > Ensure that food and drink is not shared > Consider the use of outdoor space, where regulations permit, for more active games, prayer activities, etc., ensuring that cleaning, hygiene and distancing measures are still applied	2	2	4	Activity leaders must know the risks and mitigations, adhere to restrictions and enforce them appropriately
39	B Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	People	3	3	9	> Consider whether you need to move to a larger space than usual, restrict numbers and/or add sessions to keep within your safe capacity	2	2	4	Capacity that lets the group maintain current social distancing standards must not be exceeded
39	C Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	Legal/ reg	4	3	12	> Ensure that all group leaders and other arrangements for the group are operating to Good Practice 5 standards (or the appropriate denominational safeguarding policy in place for LEPS.)	1	1	1	Safeguarding remains paramount even when adapting procedures in light of the pandemic
40	A Pressure to resume external lettings so that income can be generated	Property	3	4	12	> Ensure that all Covid-Secure measures are in place	2	1	2	This first step is essential before considering re-opening to external groups

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40	B Pressure to resume external lettings so that income can be generated	Legal/ reg	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that the proposed use is compatible with Covid restrictions in place (e.g. choirs cannot resume rehearsal whilst singing is prohibited by law, indoor exercise groups may not be permitted at the time of assesement) ➤ Ensure a current letting agreement is in place ➤ Liaise with group leaders on how they will be ensure distancing and hygiene measures are in place, and that they will be responsible for operating those measures ➤ Agree whether the group can safely meet in rooms that they had previously used or whether they need to meet in a larger space or in more than one session ➤ Agree and document who is responsible for cleaning the rooms they use before and after their session ➤ Obtain a copy of their written Risk Assessment 	2	3	6	Each group accommodated must be able to meet in accordance with regulations and procedures in force, otherwise their actions will jeopardise the safety for everyone else using the premises