

### **Matters for PCCs to consider in the process of reversing Lockdown**

These are difficult and demanding times and we are extremely grateful for all that you are doing to maintain the life of our churches and their witness within the parish. Already some limited access to churches is permitted following appropriate cleaning and re-opening procedures (see Appendix 1). Also church halls can be opened for use by nurseries/preschools provided they are the only user of the building, risk assessments have been prepared, agreed and actioned by the PCC and the Setting, a cleaning regime (and responsibility for it) has been agreed and **both** insurers are happy. This gives us a flavour of what is to come. I'm sure we would all like to see our church buildings open as soon as possible but it is vital this is done in a measured and considered manner. Inevitably the process of reversing Lockdown is going to be rather messier than the abrupt and clear-cut entry into Lockdown. This is because the guidance will be relaxed in stages and will be being applied to very different contexts, for this reason it is not possible to produce a definitive step by step guide to the process. This document aims to spell out some general principles and sign post to detailed advice.

The PCC owes a common law duty of care to anyone that uses its premises so in gradually opening the buildings you will need to demonstrate how you have exercised that duty of care. The bottom line is that if something goes wrong and someone suffers loss or harm will your insurers cover you? A key concern for your insurers will be whether you have followed the Law or Government Guidance and whether you have followed the Church of England's Guidance. Circumstances and knowledge about COVID-19 risks are changing fast, so you need to keep abreast of the latest developments and act accordingly. The following links are key ones to monitor:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for churches | The Church of England](#)

[https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm?utm\\_source=hse.gov.uk&utm\\_medium=refferal&utm\\_campaign=coronavirus&utm\\_content=home-page-banner](https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=refferal&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=home-page-banner)

In addition to following the guidance, Health and Safety legislation also applies, in particular the obligations in sections 2 and 3 of the [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) – to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of your workers and anyone else impacted by your operations. This includes keeping up to date with the work-related risks posed by COVID-19, as well as planning and implementing all reasonably practicable risk reduction measures.

More specifically, there is the requirement in Regulation 3 of the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** to make “suitable and sufficient” risk assessments of the health and safety risks faced by your employees, as well as non-employees who are affected by your operations. The routine use of risk assessments is going to be part of life for the foreseeable future. **These must be in writing and they must be reviewed or updated when the circumstances change.**

The House of Bishops have produced a generic risk assessment template reflecting the current guidance which should be used for churches (Appendix 1 below). We anticipate this will be revised once we get nearer to the point of opening church buildings for more general use. It is available to download from the Church of England link above. In due course you may find the HSE's generic template more appropriate to use for a Church Hall or Office available here: [Risk assessment: Template and examples - HSE](#) The content of these risk assessments need to be agreed by the PCC, with clear accountability structures to ensure actions are followed through and completed.

We your Archdeacons are always available as a source of help and advice for specific circumstances.

**The Archdeacons of Dorset, Sarum, Sherborne and Wilts.**

**5th June 2020**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Towards Re-opening Church Buildings: Covid-19 Risk Assessment Checklist for Parish Churches**

#### Version Control

| Issue Date                | Version Number | Issued by                                    |
|---------------------------|----------------|--|
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020 | 1              | The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group |

*This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to situations where there is limited access to church buildings the purposes of private prayer, livestreaming, construction, carrying out of contractual work, building maintenance and cleaning. This template relates exclusively to Covid-related risks, not general risks. If you would like more information about your responsibilities under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations then information and templates can be found on the [HSE website](#).*

*A further version of this will be produced when small services such as weddings and funerals are allowed, then for private prayer, then for some form of public worship. At present no public access is permitted to church buildings under government guidance.*

Risk assessment template

| Area of Focus  | Controls required  | Additional information   | Action by who? | Completed – date and name |
|--|--|--|----------------|---------------------------|
| <p><b>Preparation of the Church for:<br/>- private prayer and/or<br/>livestreaming by a single member of<br/>the clergy (and a member of their<br/>household if needed)</b></p> <p><a href="#">Advice on access for the clergy<br/>available here.</a></p> | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified.  |  |                |                           |
|  | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted  | An example can be <a href="#">found here.</a>  |                |                           |
|  | Buildings have been aired before use.  |  |                |                           |
|  | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.  | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean.   |                |                           |
|  | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.   | See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a>   |                |                           |
|  | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.  |  |                |                           |
|  | Holy water stoups and the font are empty.  |  |                |                           |
| <p><b>Preparation of the Church for:<br/>- construction workers and/or<br/>professional contractors</b></p> <p><a href="#">Advice on access for construction workers and advice on access for contractors available here.</a></p>                          | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.  |  |                |                           |
|  | Confirm that each contractor has carried out their own risk assessment (for themselves and their staff and sub-contractors) and has employers and public liability insurance in place. | Ensure they have included any work equipment, emergency equipment (such as fire extinguishers), ventilation systems and access routes. |                |                           |

| Area of Focus | Controls required  | Additional information  | Action by who? | Completed – date and name |
|---------------|--|---|----------------|---------------------------|
|               | Have hand sanitiser available for people to use on entry and exit of the church building.  | <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> will launch procurement routes for supplies for church use on 28 <sup>th</sup> May. |                |                           |
|               | Confirm who has responsibility for locking and unlocking the building.   |   |                |                           |
|               | Confirm whose responsibility it will be to carry out cleaning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toilets</li> <li>• Kitchen/servery areas if it is necessary for these to be used</li> <li>• Frequently touched surfaces e.g. doors</li> </ul> | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean.  |                |                           |
|               | Whoever has responsibility for toilets, ensure a supply of soap and disposable hand towels will be available.  |   |                |                           |
|               | Confirm who is responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste e.g. hand towels from the site.   |   |                |                           |
|               | All waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them being exposed   |   |                |                           |
|               | Prepare a suitable form to record contact details of people entering the building.   |   |                |                           |
|               | Confirm evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.   |   |                |                           |

| Area of Focus  | Controls required  | Additional information  | Action by who? | Completed – date and name |
|--|--|---|----------------|---------------------------|
|  | Direct all users to leave the building by one exit only, avoiding bottlenecks.   |   |                |                           |
| <b>Cleaning the church after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b> | Check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.  |   |                |                           |
|  | Check PCC/Chapter liability insurance is up to date.   |   |                |                           |
|  | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable) to protect their skin from exposure to cleaning materials.        | <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> will launch procurement routes for supplies for church use on 28 <sup>th</sup> May. |                |                           |
|  | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.                 | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean.  |                |                           |
| <b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>                 | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.   |   |                |                           |
|  | If 72-hour quarantine is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | <a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>  |                |                           |
|  | If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.         | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean.  |                |                           |