



Church Re-opening Risk Assessment post-Coronavirus Lockdown

Introduction

The Government regulation permits our buildings to re-open, with limitations. A Risk Assessment has been undertaken and agreed by the Elders' Meeting, where possible steps have been proposed 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 the Synod office.

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| Church: Abbey United Reformed Church, Romsey | Risks assessed by: S Beaman, Revd M Perrott, C Cox | Date: 23-Jul-20 |
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| Assessment accepted by Elders' Meeting: | | Date: 28-Jul-20 |
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| Risk No | | Risk | Who or what is at risk | Controls | Tolerable risk - Y/N | Notes |
|--|---|--|------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| Preparing the buildings for reopening | | | | | | |
| 1 | A | Build-up of dust and possibly mould whilst building closed | Property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Air by open doors and windows. ➤ Restrict access until building aired | YES | Restrict access into building until task completed |
| 2 | A | General cleanliness of building | Property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning of inside, reviewed and deep clean not required ➤ All fittings/fixtures (door handles, hand rails, light switches) wiped down with anti-bacterial wipes/sanitiser | YES | Restrict access into building until task completed |
| 3 | A | Potential contamination of water system (legionella) | Property | <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 | YES | 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 | <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 | YES | 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 | <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 | YES | 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 | <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 | | Building must not open until measures in place |

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| 7 | A | Electrical and heating systems (including emergency lighting) fully functional | Property | <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 | | Systems to be repaired as required prior to opening |
| 8 | A | Items stored and displayed on surfaces makes cleaning regime difficult | Property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear surfaces as much as possible and move items to safe storage | | Ensure all items removed as appropriate prior to opening |
| 9 | A | High value items at risk of theft | Property | <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. | | 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 | <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 | | 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 | <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 | | Building must not open until measures in place |
| 12 | A | Issues with outside of building | Property | <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> | | 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Investigate and implement processes to ensure flow of people in church adheres to government guidelines currently applicable (e.g. one way system signage) | | Must be in place before church opens |
| 14 | A | Excess rubbish builds up at the premises | People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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 | | Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening |
| 15 | A | Safeguarding information missing or out of date | Legal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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 | | |

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| Social Distancing | | | | | | |
| 16 | A | Too many people gather in the building. | People | <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 | | Stewards MUST adhere to agreed numbers |
| 17 | A | Those using the building don't respect distancing guidance. | People | <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. | | Stewards be briefed to remind people to adhere to distancing guidance |
| 18 | A | People attend who have symptoms of coronavirus | Legal | <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 | | 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) |
| 19 | A | Congestion at choke points prevent distancing being respected | People | <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 | | Stewards must be fully briefed to enable smooth flow |

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| Cleaning | | | | | | |
| 20 | A | Nominated company or rota of volunteers not in place to ensure regular cleaning | Service delivery | <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> | | Cleaning regime must be in place prior to and maintained throughout opening |
| 21 | B | Cleaning staff/volunteers unable to comply with safe working practice for cleaning | People | <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 it 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. | | Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening |
| 22 | A | Materials not available to properly clean surfaces | Service delivery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delay opening until materials are available. | | Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening |

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| 23 | A | Contamination from high-touch areas such as door handles and switches | Property | <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. | | Cleaning regime must be in place prior to opening |
| 24 | A | Contamination from surfaces in toilets | Property | <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 | | |

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| 25 | A Someone with Coronavirus is found to have visited the building | People | <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 | | This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed |
| 26 | A People may carry Coronavirus into the building on their hands | People | <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. | | This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed |

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| 27 | A | Toilet facilities cannot be cleaned adequately between users | Property | ➤ Cleaning regime to be in place to ensure toilet facilities safe to use. | | 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 |
| 28 | A | Increased risk of airborne transmission of disease | People | ➤ Limit the duration of opening times and ventilate the building during and between opening times where possible | | |
| 29 | A | Someone starts to feel unwell/develops coronavirus symptoms whilst on the premises | People | <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. | | |

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| Additional risks associated with opening for public worship | | | | | | |
| 30 | A | Premises are not Covid-Secure prior to opening | Property | <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 | | 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) |
| 31 | 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 | <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 | | There is divided scientific evidence and opinion on whether singing increases the risk of virus transmission |
| 32 | A | Risk of virus transmission from shared resources (Bibles & other books, offertory plate, etc.) | People | <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 | | |
| 33 | A | Children's group leaders not willing to resume activities immediately | People | <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 soft 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. | | |

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| 34 | A | Risk of virus transmission through serving/receiving Holy Communion | People | <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 President 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. | | |
| 35 | A | Visiting worship leaders are not aware of COVID-19 secure arrangements | People | <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 | | |
| 36 | A | Equipment may be touched by more than one person before and during worship (e.g. photocopier, computer, audio-visual equipment, etc.) | Property | <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 | | |
| 37 | A | Reading from the lecturn | People and property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send out information about precautions with the usual information regarding that week's reading | | |

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| 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 | <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.) | | 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 | <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 | | 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 | <p>In addition to the mitigations for adult groups, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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 | | Activity leaders must know the risks and mitigations, adhere to restrictions and enforce them appropriately |
| 40 | A Pressure to resume external lettings so that income can be generated | Property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that all Covid-Secure measures are in place | | 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 | <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 asesement) ➤ 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 | | 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 |