

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. THIS ASSESSMENT OF RISK AT GUILDFORD URC WAS FIRST UNDERTAKEN IN MID-JULY 2020 AT A TIME WHEN THE CONFIRMED INFECTION RATE IN GUILDFORD HAS BEEN ZERO FOR SEVERAL WEEKS (SOURCE: PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND DATA AS REPORTED ONLINE IN "THE GUILDFORD DRAGON") . IT IS SUBJECT TO ONGOING REVIEW AND REVISION IN THE CONTEXT OF GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS/ADVICE AND LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES. **LATEST REVIEW: 27.9.20. GUILDFORD INFECTION RATE STILL VERY LOW (13 CONFIRMED CASES IN WEEK ENDING 21.9.20 - SOURCE: PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND) WE ARE NOW OBSERVING THE UPDATED REGULATIONS INCLUDING FACE COVERINGS, RULE OF 6, NO MINGLING AND LIMIT OF 15 ON SUPPORT GROUPS.**

UPDATE: NOTICES REQUIRING COMPLIANCE WITH GOVERNMENT RULES ON FACE COVERINGS NOW DISPLAYED AT ALL ENTRANCES.

UPDATE: CLEANING HOURS HAVE BEEN INCREASED. MEETING HELD ON SITE 14.9.20 WITH CARETAKER, CLEANER AND CLEANING COMPANY SUPERVISOR TO ENSURE THAT CLEANING REQUIREMENTS ARE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD. CARETAKER CONTINUES TO ENSURE TOUCH POINTS ARE CLEANED BETWEEN USES OF ROOMS BY DIFFERENT GROUPS. CHAIRS IN HALLS ARE "QUARANTINED" INTO SEPARATE STACKS TO REDUCE RISK.

UPDATE: AMATEUR CHOIR REHEARSALS NOW PERMITTED SUBJECT TO THE RULES ON SOCIAL DISTANCING ETC. MUST ALSO CONFORM TO RULE OF 6/NO MINGLING.

UPDATE: A "QR" CODE IS NOW DISPLAYED AT ALL ENTRANCES FOR THE USE OF THOSE WHO ELECT TO USE THE TRACING APP. ALL ENTRANTS TO THE BUILDING ALREADY REQUIRED TO GIVE NAME AND PHONE NUMBER (RETAINED FOR 21 DAYS) IN CASE NEEDED FOR TRACING

UPDATE: FUNERAL ATTENDANCE IS LIMITED TO 30, AND WEDDINGS TO 15. SUPPORT (THERAPY) GROUPS LIMITED TO 15. NO UPPER LIMIT ON NUMBER ATTENDING OTHER ACTIVITIES INCLUDING CHURCH SERVICES, UP TO THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL DISTANCING.

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: Guildford URC Risks assessed by: Fiona Yeomans Date: 14.7.2020 updated 27.9.20

Assessment accepted by Elders' Meeting: Rev Wayne Hawkins (Signature of meeting chair or secretary) Date: 28.9.2020

Risk No	Risk	Type*	Inherent risk			Mitigation	Residual risk			Notes
			Likelihood	Impact	RISK		Likelihood	Impact	RISK	
Preparing the buildings for reopening										
1	A Build-up of dust and possibly mould whilst building closed	Property	1	1	1		1	1	1	Building has not been unoccupied. In particular, NHSBT team have done thorough cleaning of Sanctuary etc on each visit. Caretaker and Child's Play team have been cleaning Lower Hall regularly. Floors were professionally deep cleaned (part of our annual cleaning/maintenance routine) during lockdown period (including Hall floor resealed)
2	A General cleanliness of building	Property	1	1	1	Caretaker to arrange thorough clean of each area as it comes back into public use. 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	(See above) and ongoing.
3	A Potential contamination of water system (legionella)	Property	1	1	1	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	1	1	1	Water system has remained in use while building closed to public.
4	A Safety measures against fire are not securely in place	Property	1	1	1	Fire Risk Assessment and regular maintenance by Chubb all up to date	1	1	1	No issue
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	1	1	1	Main entrance doors and foyer are wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic, with consideration from all. Alternatively exit can be by South Door. Both are already emergency exits.	1	1	1	No issue
6	A Seating in areas to be used for private prayer, and public worship once permitted, is too close together.	Property	1	1	1	Space chairs 2m apart. Remove excess chairs and stack safely	1	1	1	Already done

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7	A Electrical and heating systems (including emergency lighting) fully functional	Property	1	1	1	All statutory compliance checks are up to date (gas and electrical safety)				Already done
8	A Items stored and displayed on surfaces makes cleaning regime difficult	Property	1	1	1	Clear surfaces as much as possible and move items to safe storage	1	1	1	Ensure all items removed as appropriate prior to opening
9	A High value items at risk of theft	Property	1	1	1	Very few high-value items, and security measures are in place eg for AV equipment.	1	1	1	No issue
10	B Insufficient staff/volunteers available to supervise the premises for Covid-Secure compliance whilst open	Service delivery	1	1	1	Resident Caretaker lives on premises; Community Worker, Children's Worker, Organist and others provide back-up	1	1	1	No issue
11	A Items may be handled by more than one person, increasing the risk of cross contamination	People	2	1	1	Remove/secure hymnbooks, Bibles, pens, prayer request books, etc. Produce single-use/disposable printed resources Hand sanitisers in place at exit and entrance for mandatory use when entering and leaving the building	1	1	1	Measures to be put in place before services/use of other rooms resume
12	A Issues with outside of building	Property	1	1	1	Building is well-maintained outside and inside with particular attention to safety. Paving on steps from South Door to car park to receive attention shortly (supplier quotation accepted)	1	1	1	No issues except minor paving work
13	A Flow of people within the church causes congestion or makes social distancing impossible	People	1	1	1	The large octagonal shape of the Sanctuary makes easy distanced flow possible. All other rooms have at least 2 doors which permits one-way system if the numbers present require it. Building is essentially circular which permits one way traffic if appropriate. Signage to be put in place by Caretaker according to useage of the rooms (not required for the Sanctuary).	1	1	1	No issue
14	A Excess rubbish builds up at the premises	People	1	1	1	Caretaker and cleaners empty bins daily and organise weekly bin collection. Groups have been instructed to remove their own rubbish	1	1	1	Cleaning regime is in place
15	A Safeguarding information missing or out of date	Legal	1	4	4	Thorough policies in place and numerous URC-trained personnel are present	1	1	1	Safeguarding is up to date

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Social Distancing										
16	A Too many people gather in the building.	People	1	2	2	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. Initially, people to contact Caretaker in advance so we know likely numbers (not expected to exceed 20 for several weeks)	1	1	1	Stewards MUST adhere to agreed numbers
17	A Those using the building don't respect distancing guidance.	People	1	2	2	Display clear signage at the entrance and throughout the space about maintaining distancing during their visit, including when greeting others. Outside groups have been instructed in writing on this.	1	2	2	
18	A People attend who have symptoms of coronavirus	Legal	1	4	4	Clear signage reminding people of the symptoms of Covid-19 and of the importance of self-isolation.	1	2	2	This MUST be adhered to and if suspected people will not leave church to be closed immediately
19	A Congestion at choke points prevent distancing being respected	People	1	1	1	Investigate options such as one way systems	1	1	1	Unlikely to be a problem given the shape and layout, and small numbers of attendee expected
20	A A person known to be on the sex offenders' register attends	People	1	1	1		1	1	1	Extremely unlikely and we already have trained safeguarding people in place

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Cleaning										
21	A Nominated company or rota of volunteers not in place to ensure regular cleaning	Service delivery	1	1	1	Follow current Government guidance on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting Caretaker is responsible for cleaning, ordering supplies, etc.	1	1	1	Cleaning regime is in place and will be maintained throughout opening
22	B Cleaning staff/volunteers unable to comply with safe working practice for cleaning	People	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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 ➤ 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	See above
23	A Materials not available to properly clean surfaces	Service delivery				N/A				Caretaker orders materials regularly
24	A Contamination from high-touch areas such as door handles and switches	Property	1	1	1	<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. 	1	1	1	Caretaker ensuring regular cleaning
25	A Contamination from surfaces in toilets	Property	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clean at regular intervals during the period of opening and when the building is closed for the day. 	1	1	1	Caretaker carries out regular cleaning

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26	A Someone with Coronavirus is found to have visited the building	People	1	4	4	<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 ➤ 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 	1	2	2	This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed
27	A People may carry Coronavirus into the building on their hands	People	1	4	4	<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. 	1	2	2	This process MUST be followed. All relevant individuals briefed by Caretaker and must agree to keep a register/inform Caretaker if a member tests positive
28	A Toilet cleaning between users	Property				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning regime to be in place to ensure toilet facilities safe to use. 				No issue

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29	A Increased risk of airborne transmission of disease	People	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limit the duration of opening times and ventilate the building during and between opening times where possible Groups have been instructed to keep windows open. As from 14.8.20 Groups will be informed of new Government regulations on face coverings 	1	1	1	Unlikely to be a problem in our large airy building
30	A Someone starts to feel unwell/develops coronavirus symptoms whilst on the premises	People	1	4	4	<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. 	1	2	2	Unlikely to occur as infection rate very low in this area. In the event it happens, Caretaker will carry out this procedure

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Additional risks associated with opening for public worship										
31	A Premises are not Covid-Secure prior to opening	Property	3	1	3	➤ 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	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: <u>whilst prohibited in law, churches must NOT include singing in worship</u>)	People	1	2	2	No singing during worship until government advice permits it. UPDATE: small number of singers permitted to form a choir, provided Distancing is observed.	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	1	2	2	➤ 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	Already done
34	A Children's group leaders not willing to resume activities immediately	People				➤ 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.				UPDATE Sunday Club and Messy Church have resumed - see separate Risk Assessments. Child's Play Pre School in the Lower Hall continues, with its own rigorous procedures compliant with the specific government regulations applicable to that sector .

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34	B Children's group leaders not willing to resume activities immediately	Legal/ Reg								See above
35	A No Covid-safe space available for children's groups to meet during worship	People				<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 				UPDATE: N/A see above. COVID-safe spaces in use.
36	A Risk of virus transmission through serving/receiving Holy Communion	People	1	2	2	<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. 	1	2	2	UPDATE: Communion has resumed. Individual glasses plus bread on saucer are prepared in COVID secure manner and placed on table at entrance for participants to collect on arrival. Alternatively people may bring their own elements. Or decline to take part.

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37	A Risk of transmission through administering Baptism	People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that relevant Government guidance is followed ➤ 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. 				No baptisms planned for foreseeable future.
36	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 				No plans for visiting worship leaders to be present at a service.
37	A Equipment may be touched by more than one person before and during worship (e.g. photocopier, computer, audio-visual equipment, etc.)	Property	2	2	4	<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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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	2	2	4	<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.) 	1	1	1	<p>UPDATE: Infection rate in local population still very low. All rooms are covered by our COVID-Secure regime. All hirers subject to strict additional hiring conditions including COVID-19-safe measures. All groups are required to submit their own risk assessment. Resident Caretaker vets each case and monitors compliance, which is observed to be very good. Activity leaders must know the risks and mitigations, adhere to restrictions and enforce them appropriately.</p>
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 				<p>UPDATE: Therapy/12 Steps Groups now subject to maximum of 15 and Rule of 6 in addition to Distancing and other measures. Groups are moved to larger rooms where necessary to permit</p>

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39	A Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	Property				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				No mid-week children's groups meeting until further notice (Cubs, Beavers not before late October at the earliest). Rooms are COVID secure. Cubs and Beavers had rigorous Scout Association Risk Assessment process.
39	B Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	People				➤ 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
39	C Space for mid-week children's groups is not Covid-secure	Legal/ reg				➤ 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.)				See above.
40	A Pressure to resume external lettings so that income can be generated	Property				➤ Ensure that all Covid-Secure measures are in place				This first step is essential before considering re-opening to external groups. NOTE the church's financial reserves are adequate to rule out financial pressures being the chief reason for resuming lettings.

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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 assessment) ➤ 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 				See above

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