



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Covid-secure Plan and Risk Assessment for Locking Castle Church

Version 10 issued Monday 19th July 2021

Next planned review – Monday 23rd August

Version Control (For prior version controls see Version 7, available from the LCC office):

08/03/21 Version 8 Approved by ECC	10/05/21 Version 9: Updates following ECC - Main room nos, Chair sanitising.	19/07/21 Version 10 Rewritten following ECC 12/07 and Step 4 19 th July				
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Introduction

The Trustees and Ecumenical Church Council of Locking Castle Church (ECC) are committed to ensuring safety and security of everyone using the church buildings during and following the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Following the Government announcements on 12th July 2021, proceeding with Step 4 of the ‘Road Map’ for the releasing of most Covid restrictions in England from 19th July, the ECC plans to safely reopen church activities and the Locking Castle Church building in accordance with government and denominational guidance.

This Covid-secure plan and risk assessment draws upon both the latest roadmap and its implications for churches and community centres whilst taking into account previous guidance and best practice.

On 16th July 2021 the Church of England released ‘COVID 19 Guidance from the 19th July 2021 v1.0’ which may be found in Appendix 1. The ECC have considered the issues carefully, examined the risks and drawn up the following Covid-secure plan for the premises.

Council Resolutions

The ECC met on Monday 12th July 2021 and agreed to the following resolutions for public worship and use of the building from Monday 19th July.

Although legal social distancing measures have been removed the council agreed that during July and August LCC will offer an in-person 9.00am Sunday communion service for up to **44** people (including

team) for those who are pre-registered. This service is particularly suitable for those who are more vulnerable or those who wish to come to a service where 2m distancing is ensured.

10:30am services will be held fortnightly from 25th July for up to **68** people including team. Weekly 10:30am online live-streaming will be continued.

Face coverings should be worn whilst singing and when moving around the building.

The council also agrees that Hirers and church groups can access the community hall and meeting rooms providing they agree to:

1. follow the measures in this document
2. conduct their own risk assessment and follow their own Covid secure plan which supplements the measures outlined in this document. The plan should apply the following headings specifically for the group activity:
 - a. Meeting management including Track and Trace procedures
 - b. Hygiene including the use of hand sanitisers or washing facilities, toilet arrangements and cleaning before, during and after the activity
 - c. Activity specific measures such as the safe use of toys and sports equipment
 - d. Measures for the safe and hygienic provision of any refreshments offered during an activity.
 - e. Keeping the ECC informed of plans
 - f. Action planning in the event of any reported incidents or Covid infections
3. name the person responsible for managing the group activities, distancing and hygiene measures
4. liaise with the Hall Bookings manager to book all meetings and agree cleaning arrangements

Measures for all users

The following measures are in place for July and August 2021 and will be reviewed at least monthly:

Meeting Management

1. Anyone with symptoms should refrain from attending.
2. A register of all those attending needs to be kept for track and trace purposes for 21 days after the meeting, then managed or disposed of in accordance with GDPR regulations. The activity leader needs to be able to provide a full list of names and contact numbers to the Public Health authority at any time.

Social Distancing

3. Users of the building will be encouraged to maintain social distancing within the curtilage of the church where practical and helpful.
4. Facemasks are required when singing or moving within the building. Facemasks will be available at the main entrances to the building in case anyone forgets to bring theirs.
5. A simplified one-way system for use of the main church room will be retained for services – enter via the main double doors, exit via Room 1.

Hygiene

6. All door handles and contact surfaces to be wiped with anti-viral spray before and after meetings
7. Hand Sanitiser will be available at each entrance.
8. Sanitiser wipes will be placed in each toilet area with signage asking people to wipe round after use.
9. Hall manager to ensure toilets are cleaned on a schedule in agreement with named users, staff & volunteers
10. Windows to be opened during meetings to allow fresh air to circulate.

Refreshments

11. Where the provision of refreshments is a vital aspect of the group function, measures should take into account best practice from the hospitality sector guidance and include the following:
 - i. Minimising potential contamination risks from those preparing or serving foodstuffs. Food should be prepared according to the Locking Castle Food Safety Management system with particular attention to hand washing and wearing face coverings during preparation.
 - ii. Those serving refreshments should wear personal protective equipment and avoid creating unnecessary queues or crowding.

Keeping the ECC informed of plans.

12. As the Trustees of the church, the Ecumenical Church Council is responsible for ensuring the safety and care of all those who attend church activities or use the premises. For insurance purposes, the ECC must be informed of group plans and activities and reserves the right to withdraw permission for an activity to take place at any time.

Additional Measures for Services

13. Chairs will be set out according to the service capacity – in the main body of the church room this equates to 6x6 chairs for 9am services, 60x10 chairs for 10:30am services. Household members may move chairs so they can sit together but taking care to avoid obstructing the aisles.
14. Handwashing station positioned under cover, hosepipe linked for use on entry and exit, complete with contactless automatic soap dispenser, disposable paper hand towels, waste bin.
15. Hand Sanitiser Gel and latex gloves readily available in preparation for serving communion
16. Communion arrangements:
 - a. Minister breaks a roll during the Eucharistic prayer, and blesses pre-cut bread pieces + gluten free wafers to the side at the same time ready for distribution.
 - b. Pre-cut bread + gluten free wafers on bread boards distributed at arm's length.
 - c. Small cups for communion will be distributed across holders to reduce risk of touching any other cup (2 holders each).
 - d. Servers to wear latex gloves whilst distributing (2 aisles each)
 - e. Empty small cups to be dropped in a washing up bowl ready for washing up after the service.
17. Service booklets placed on chairs prior to the service and collected in a basket for quarantining after use.
18. Online streaming of services will continue for those unable to attend in person.
19. Contactless Giving will be encouraged via Online donation, Standing order, Bank Transfer or Givt App. A giving basket will be placed by the exit doors for cash donations and envelopes.
20. The PA system will be used with the loop system enabled. Microphone disposable covers should be swapped out between users.
21. At the end of the service people will be stewarded to the exit doors row by row starting from the front.
22. Duty team to have nominated back ups in case of sickness or absence.
23. Baptisms may take place during acts of public worship in line with Advice for Clergy Conducting Baptisms.

What to do in case of someone reporting Covid-19 symptoms.

24. If a group member or attendee develops symptoms, they should
 - a. Inform their group leader as soon as possible
 - b. request a free Covid test as soon as their symptoms start. Once they have ordered the test, they'll be asked by the NHS Test and Trace service to provide details of anyone who they have been in close recent contact with. This refers to anyone who meets the definition of a close contact. Eg. A close 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 7 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). Group leaders may be contacted to establish the contact details of anyone who has been within 1m of the person for more than 15 minutes.
 - c. Refrain from coming to the church for at least 14 days.
25. Group leaders should inform the Lead minister Tom Yacomeni on 07786 806640 or Emily Cumberbatch on 07905 516624.
26. Whilst the symptomatic person goes for a Covid test, the group leaders will be on alert for any others from the affected group who might report Covid symptoms.
27. If the case is confirmed positive, Track and Trace teams may get in touch with the group leader to ask for details of close contacts and the details of the meeting. They may ask others attending the meeting to self-isolate for 14 days.
28. If a second confirmed case is reported, then according to the '[early outbreak guidance for places of worship](#)' (see Appendix) Tom or Emily will contact PHE South West Centre Health Protection Team in Bristol on **0300 303 8162 option 1 then option 2**, as a local outbreak may be suspected.
29. The local PHE HPT team will work with us to assess the risks and advise what action to take. Steps can include
 - d. Enhanced cleaning, hygiene, ventilation and hand washing regimes
 - e. Additional measures to limit access to the premises – such as quarantining rooms and areas affected.
 - f. Temporary closure of the premises

APPENDIX 1

Opening and managing church buildings in step 4 of the Roadmap out of Lockdown

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
19 July 2021	1.0	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
<p>This guidance has been released to coincide with the Government’s move to Step 4 of its roadmap on the 19th July. Please be aware the contents of this document only apply from the 19th July. This document will evolve as further guidance is published by Government and other bodies that link with our life as a Church. Details about updates will be highlighted in this box.</p>		

This guidance has been written in response to the decision by the Government to move to step 4 of the ‘Roadmap out of Lockdown’. The approach taken by the Government in this step is to remove most coronavirus legislation but to promote guidance that emphasises the personal and corporate responsibility of individuals and organisations to protect others and themselves.

Within the Church we believe that everyone is known and loved individually by God and that as many members within one body we are called to be responsible to and for one another, respecting the more vulnerable whose suffering is our suffering (1 Cor 12:12-27). The move to step 4 means we are being asked to take even more personal responsibility around coronavirus than when we were compelled to adhere to Government restrictions.

These restrictions have necessarily been blunt instruments and for some people and in some places seem unnecessary or overly restrictive. For others, each easing of restrictions seemed to bring additional risk to themselves or those they love who have remained vulnerable to the virus.

As a body we now need to move forward without these legal restrictions and as churches decide how best to manage the risk to ourselves and others. Church leaders are best placed to know their own communities and environments, the situations where there will be many people together who do not normally meet and the places where they will come together; to listen to the voices of vulnerable in their communities and where their fears and concerns lie.

We recognise it may be difficult to agree exactly what to do and how to come to a decision on a specific point. Rural and Area Deans, Archdeacons and Bishops can all be asked for help and advice. As the covid restrictions lift, there remain the legal responsibilities of the Incumbent, the PCC and of course the duty of the church wardens to maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, and, possibly quite relevant, to allocate seating; but it is strongly urged that the approach to

differences of opinion is above all pastoral and that the help and support of senior pastors is sought if and when that is helpful.

In this guidance we will try to highlight sensible measures that should apply to most church situations following the latest guidance we have from Government departments and public health bodies. In addition we will provide a risk assessment template that aims to help parishes decide if additional measures are needed, taking into account those vulnerable in a community as well as (for example) local infection rates. A clear rationale will also help with communicating why additional measures may be taken, and why these measures will vary from place to place and event to event.

In every situation there is likely to be a range of feeling about risk, both to ourselves and to others, that will need to be accommodated by our churches in a way appropriate to each of them. Online and hybrid worship services have opened up opportunities in this regard and local practice at services may differ to accommodate different groups of people.

This document is intended to be a first step in thinking about future practice in relation to coronavirus and public health, briefly covering a spectrum of church activities and signposting where further information can be found.

Current situation with Covid-19

At present, incidence of the virus continues to increase with the probability that during the summer numbers will reach or surpass those experienced at the peak of the second wave of the pandemic at the start of the year. Largely due to the success of the vaccination programme, hospitalisations and deaths are much lower, but these too are beginning to rise substantially.

While the vaccines are very effective in limiting symptomatic infection for those who are fully vaccinated, they are less so for those who have received only one injection. Unfortunately, no vaccine is 100% effective and it is estimated that around 10% of fully vaccinated people will not produce a robust immune response. There are particular concerns for those who are immunosuppressed as well as for those who are clinically vulnerable to the virus. In addition, there are some who, for medical reasons, have not been vaccinated as well as others who, for personal reasons, have chosen not to be vaccinated.

The impact of long-Covid is an ongoing concern, with estimates suggesting that somewhere between 10% and 20% of those infected experience enduring health problems for three months or longer.

Vaccination cannot be the sole means of containing the spread of the virus: hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, face-coverings and good ventilation are also important factors in lessening the spread of the disease. While these are not mandatory after 19th July, they are still important public health mitigations and ought to be recognised as such when planning public worship and other church activities.

Legal requirements

What can we legally do in Step 4?

From Step 4 legal limits on the numbers of people allowed to meet indoors and outdoors will be removed, including all capacity limits in churches and other venues, as well as removal of the 1 meter+ social distancing rules.

It will no longer be a legal requirement to wear a face covering, though the government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed settings to protect themselves and others. Whether a church encourages the use of face coverings will depend on consideration of a number of factors, including the size of the building and the numbers of those present at a particular event. There is no formula for calculating this but carrying out a risk assessment for particular events may help with decision making.

There will no longer be limits on the number of people who can attend weddings, funerals and other life events (including receptions and celebrations). There will also be no restrictions on choirs and music groups, whether amateur or professional, or on congregational singing.

There will no longer be restrictions on group sizes for attending communal worship.

Although social distancing measures and face coverings are no longer required by law, the incumbent may still make decisions to retain some or all of these measures if they believe doing so is important for safety in their building, or if they judge that it will help people to feel more secure in returning to worship and other uses of the building.

Who make the decision on what happens in church settings and at events held in church buildings? The responsibility for making decisions about how to proceed lies with the incumbent. This applies to acts of worship, to events run by the PCC or church community, and to decisions on whether to hire out spaces or allow other events to proceed.

Incumbents should feel empowered to make locally appropriate decisions, including taking different approaches to different types of services and events where the risks may vary. Your Archdeacon may be able to help if you would appreciate support with this.

Is previously issued Church of England guidance still relevant?

The relevant parts of the Church of England guidance for most situations have been gathered in this single document. Where further measures may be considered by local churches we will link to appropriate additional guidance.

If issues covered in previous guidance are not included here it is because they are no longer a specific consideration in Step 4.

If you have a query or concern, do contact your Archdeacon or Bishop who may be able to help, or refer to the national team.

Can we open as a visitor attraction?

Yes. As government guidance relates to the function being performed, rather than to a type of building, you should check the most up to date Events and Attractions guidance and also guidance provided by organisations such as the Association of Large Visitor Attractions.

Can we sing and perform music in church?

Yes, from 19 July singing and musical performances of all kinds are allowed in churches, including congregational singing, and choirs and worship groups can perform without legal limitations.

However, some activities can also increase the risk of catching or passing on coronavirus. This happens where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing or raising their voices. The risk is greatest where these activities take place when people are in close contact with others indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces. In these situations where there is a higher risk of catching or passing on the virus, we advise additional precautions should be considered.

Precautions to reduce transmission of the virus can include improving ventilation, using a larger space, reducing the number of participants, shortening the duration of activity and wearing face coverings.

Singing (and generally meeting) outdoors is a safer way of gathering, and where this is possible it could be a good alternative to meeting indoors.

Bellringing is no longer restricted by social distancing rules, although sensible precautions such as good ventilation and using hand sanitiser, are still recommended. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers has more information on how to think about this.

Government guidance no longer makes a distinction between professional and non-professional activities. There are no limits on the number of people, including choirs or any other amateur performance groups, who can gather indoors or outdoors.

The RSCM has further support guidance for music making in church here, including revised FAQs: [COVID-19 resources for churches | RSCM](#)

Do we still need to do a risk assessment?

Yes, it is important that the person acting as the 'venue manager' carry out a risk assessment. This is part of keeping yourself, volunteers, staff and visitors safe. You can use the template and guidance provided in the government's Events and Attractions guidance, or you can use the Church of England's own template, whichever works best for your context. You can also create your own assessment or re-use a previous template so long as you ensure the assessment is up to date and regularly reviewed.

Welcoming people into church

What is the advice for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people?

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) you are no longer advised to shield. However, you should continue to follow the government guidance for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and are advised to continue taking extra precautions to protect yourself, such as limiting close contacts, shopping or travelling at quieter times of the day, keeping rooms ventilated and washing your hands regularly. Churches should consider how they can provide for the needs of CEV people, which may include clergy, lay leaders and PCC members, as well as members of congregations and visitors.

CEV clergy may wish to discuss with their Bishop or Archdeacon the best way to proceed given their specific circumstances.

What can we do to ensure everyone feels safe coming into our churches?

Everyone has a different set of criteria by which they judge whether they feel safe in different situations. For many people, the relaxation of restrictions is a source of significant anxiety. This could include members of clergy, lay leaders, PCC members, members of congregations and of our wider communities, and care should be taken not to make assumptions about how someone else is feeling about moving to Step 4.

Clergy and lay leaders with specific needs or anxieties which may mean they are unable fully to exercise their ministry should speak to their Bishop or Archdeacon.

The NHS has provided some tips on coping with anxiety about coming out of lockdown. There are steps churches may consider to ensure they provide a safe and accessible space:

- Continuing with online worship provision, in addition to in person services, either livestreaming worship from church buildings or providing a bespoke online provision, depending on resources. Please see here for additional help with this from the Church of England Digital Labs team.
- Providing alternative means of accessing things like orders of service and prayer cards for people who may still feel unsure about using shared materials. For example, many churches have made their orders of service available as a download from their websites, or emailed it to regular congregants.
- ‘Zoning’ spaces if your building is big enough, to allow those who wish to continue to socially distance to do so. In doing this it will be important to consider how people enter and leave your building, as well as ensuring that different areas have equal access to the service or events they are attending, and especially that people are not disadvantaged by their desire to continue to show caution.
- Providing some services which retain aspects of previous such as no congregational singing; full social distancing; no shared materials and so on.
- Continuing to provide hand sanitiser at entrances and key points such as toilets and near catering facilities.
- Providing people with cards to put next to them when sat down, asking people to leave the seats next to them free.
- Providing stickers (red/amber/green or similar) or other visual indicators for people to select, indicating their preferences when it comes to social contact as part of services and events.

What if we decide we want to keep some social distancing and/or use of face coverings?

Although it will no longer be a legal requirement to wear a face covering, the government has stated that it “expects and recommends” that people wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed settings to protect themselves and others.

Churches may well decide to continue to ask people to use them and/or to maintain social distancing, especially during busy events. Although such a request will not be legally enforceable it can be positioned as a way of easing the transition back towards pre-pandemic ways of worshipping whilst showing consideration for others.

The Association of Large Visitor Attractions (ALVA) has produced a note on easing of measures after 19 July, in which it notes that a significant majority of the public are happy to retain social distancing and other measures at Visitor Attractions.

The full guidance provides advice to venues that may wish to continue to maintain measures. Although this is aimed at sites that are primarily visitor attractions, it is applicable to many church contexts and may be useful for PCCs considering this option.

Do we still need to ask people to register for Test and Trace?

From 19 July it will no longer be legally required to display or ask people to register for NHS Test and Trace. You may still choose to display the QR code to offer people the chance to check in but you do not have to, and you cannot insist on people registering.

The government is asking that venues do continue to ask people to register for venue check in (the QR code) as it will continue to form one of the main ways of them identifying people who may have

been exposed to coronavirus. Testing, contact tracing and self-isolation will remain in place as key protections against the virus – including the need to self-isolate if you are a contact of someone who tests positive. That requirement will be lifted for double-vaccinated people and under 18s on 16 August.

Can/should we ask people if they have been vaccinated?

It is not a requirement, nor is it appropriate, to ask people if they have been vaccinated. Whilst emerging evidence suggests vaccines are having an impact on transmission, we do not know by how much the vaccine stops coronavirus from spreading. Even if you have been vaccinated, you could still spread coronavirus to others, even if you do not display symptoms.

Vaccines have been shown to reduce the likelihood of severe illness in most people. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective, so those who have received the vaccine should continue to take recommended precautions to avoid infection.

Public worship

What is the guidance around Holy Communion?

This advice note seeks to support the celebration of Holy Communion in a safe and appropriate way as we move into this new step. It is important to highlight that this is guidance, not instruction; those directly responsible for activities in churches and other buildings are advised to make decisions in the light of this and guidance from the Government in accordance with their specific circumstances.

Where either ministers or members of congregations have concerns about participating in a service of Holy Communion, it is important that no pressure is placed on priests to preside at Holy Communion or on parishioners to receive the Sacrament.

The common cup may now be shared, but the Bishops wish to make clear that, given continued potential risks to health, it remains permissible for the president to be the only person who receives Holy Communion in the form of wine. Whilst variations in forms of service are at the discretion of the minister who is to conduct the service, it is recommended that a consistent policy is worked out in a parish and carefully communicated.

Before the service

- The president and other ministers may wish to wear face coverings, especially when working near other people in confined spaces such as the sacristy.
- Some suggestions for the use of face coverings by the congregation, especially around the time of receiving Communion, could be posted in the church.

- Use good hygiene when preparing the bread and wine. Consider how to handle the elements as little as possible, placing them in clean vessels, and keeping them covered.
- Consider the use of small wafers or pre-cut bread (rather than large priest's wafers or loaves for breaking) to minimise contact.
- Consider making hand sanitizer available for the congregation on entry and before receiving Holy Communion.

During the service

- Decide if and when in the service the president and other ministers will wear face coverings, especially when physical distance cannot be maintained and at the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Consider a policy of how to share the Peace. Many congregations will now be familiar with offering a sign of peace without touching one another. In churches where the Peace is shared with touch, consider providing badges for those who may not wish to do so, and whether the Peace might be shared only with those people in one's immediate vicinity.
- If it is customary for the bread and wine to be brought to the table in an offertory procession, consider how this should be done with minimal risk.
- When words are spoken over the bread and wine at the offertory, during the Eucharistic Prayer, or at other times in the service, consider whether the portion for the congregation should remain covered.
- If it is customary to uncover the bread and wine (by removing a pall or ciborium lid), consider whether this can be done without potential risk of contamination, or whether the elements to be consumed by the congregation should remain covered during the Eucharistic Prayer. Breathing and speaking over the elements can involve aerosol and droplet spread which a covering would help mitigate.
- At the fraction (breaking of the bread) consider whether the president's portion alone should be broken with the rest remaining covered.
- If the consecrated bread and wine are shown to the people, consider using the president's portion alone for this purpose.
- At the giving of Communion, it may be helpful to provide sanitizer for communicants to use. Consider whether the words of administration can be spoken to each communicant (face coverings may be helpful), or whether the words of distribution (for instance, 'The body and blood of Christ') might be spoken once to all.
- Depending on the layout and features of the church, consider arrangements for where and how Holy Communion should be distributed, and in what posture.

Administration of Holy Communion

- Careful consideration needs to be given to the question of whether the sacrament should be administered in one kind or in both kinds, given the continued potential for risks to health posed by the common cup.
- Consideration should also be given to if and when the minister(s) and communicants sanitize their hands, and when they remove and replace any face coverings.

- There are three possibilities for administration: 1) under the form of bread alone, mindful that the president must still receive in both kinds; 2) in both kinds in the customary manner with a shared cup or chalice used to administer the consecrated wine; 3) in both kinds by simultaneous administration. Intinction should not be practised by individual communicants, and methods of administering the wine other than by means of a shared cup or simultaneous administration should not be employed.

- It is important that no pressure is placed on members of the congregation to receive the sacrament if they feel unable to do so. Because of ongoing potential risks to health, an individual communicant may choose to receive only in the form of bread even if consecrated wine is being distributed.

- Common Worship (following the Book of Common Prayer) indicates that 'Any consecrated bread and wine which is not required for purposes of communion is consumed at the end of the distribution or after the service' by one of the ministers leading the service, or by another person. Consider whether any surplus consecrated bread and wine will be reserved (if this is customary) or consumed during the ablutions or at the end of the service.

- Reservation of Holy Communion in churches is regulated by law. If you wish to reserve the sacrament for reasons of safety (for instance until a minister who is not CEV is available to consume left-over consecrated bread or wine) please speak to your archdeacon.

After the service

- Arrangements for the cleaning of communion plate, linen, and shared surfaces should be made. Linen can be washed in the normal way, and plate should, after any ceremonial cleansing, be washed in warm water, being careful not to use damaging detergents or solvents.

- Plan how any consecrated bread which has been reserved will be conveyed to and distributed at subsequent celebrations or home communions.

Can we have different Covid protection measures for different services?

This is certainly an option, especially if your pattern of worship means you regularly hold multiple services on a Sunday.

If you have multiple services one after the other (for example a 9am mass followed by a 10.30am sung service) bear in mind that because Covid 19 particles can remain in the air you should have services with more measures before those with less, to minimise the chances of infection and give greater security to those who are continuing to act cautiously. Outdoor worship continues to be safer with regards to the virus spreading than indoor situations and where conditions and circumstances permit is a helpful option.

Making our buildings safe

What can we do to make our church building as safe as possible?

It is still recommended to keep buildings well ventilated, ideally by opening doors and windows. Do not prop fire doors open, and always be mindful of building security.

In general church buildings, especially in rural areas, can be left safely unlocked during the day. Advice from Ecclesiastical Insurance confirms that assuming the right precautions have been taken, there is no additional risk to a building by keeping it unlocked and it does not affect insurance premiums.

Most churches, especially historic ones, are likely to have naturally good ventilation. If you are concerned that your building might not have adequate ventilation you can read through the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas.

Continue to provide hand sanitiser at key points such as entrances, internal doors, toilets and candle stands, with signs encouraging people to use it.

Although social distancing and one-way routes are no longer mandated, you may wish to refer to the guidance on Covid safe churches to consider how you might adapt your layout to encourage people to share and move about the space as safely as possible.

What sort of cleaning should we be doing?

Government guidance continues to remind us that increased frequency of cleaning of general room surfaces reduces the presence of the virus and the risk of contact transmission.

However unless notified specifically by NHS Test and Trace, there is no need to quarantine a building or individual items between uses/opening periods, so long as some form of cleaning of touchable surfaces is able to take place. Asking people to use hand sanitiser gel on their way in and out of the building is also a helpful measure.

Frequently touched surfaces and well used areas such as entrances should still be regularly cleaned using appropriate materials, with particular care taken if surfaces are historic.

If historic fixtures and fittings have been restricted from access, they should not need to be cleaned more regularly. If they form part of the accessible areas that will be touched by the general public, for example pews, the following advice should be followed. Please also refer to the more detailed Historic England advice on cleaning historic features of buildings.

If a surface cannot be touched, it does not need to be disinfected.

For metal, wood, stone, glass, ceramic, and modern painted surfaces, these can be cleaned with a dilute solution of non-ionic conservation-grade detergent or sensitive washing up liquid and distilled water, rinsed with distilled water and dried immediately with white paper towel. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times.

Getting hold of conservation grade materials may be difficult. If you can't get hold of conservation grade materials, try to use products with as few additives as possible but that will still clean a surface, such as detergents with no added perfumes and no harsh chemicals. The Ecover range, for example, has few harsh chemicals but will be effective if used correctly. Other examples include Boots Sensitive, and SurCare Sensitive Washing Up Liquid.

Distilled water is preferable. This is water that contains no salts, so that there are no residues or corrosives to interact with delicate surfaces. However, distilled water may be difficult to obtain, so in these circumstances tap water or filtered tap can be used instead. If there is no water source in the church, bringing in spray bottles filled up at home may be useful. Try not to spray surfaces directly. Spray the cloth with the detergent and not the object, to ensure the detergent goes exactly where it is meant to, and to prevent staining.

If none of the above options are possible, then cleaning wipes can be used instead, but be aware this is not a good solution for delicate surfaces, and wipes with alcohol in them should be avoided. Use of wipes is not recommended for long-term use on historic or varnished surfaces, but will work as a

temporary measure to keep frequently-touched areas such as door handles clean. Metal surfaces can also be cleaned with industrial denatured alcohol (IDA), such as methylated spirits or isopropanol.

Do NOT use any household detergents or disinfectants containing chlorine (1000 ppm dilution) on any historic surface since these could cause permanent damage.

Cleaning materials should be disposed of appropriately, wrapped up and binned daily. Waste does not need to be wrapped separately unless an individual in the setting shows symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.

Seek advice from a conservator before undertaking any cleaning to more fragile historic surfaces.

What should we do if someone who has been in our building contracts Covid?

If there is a known case of coronavirus then cleaning and disinfection will be necessary; or closing for at least 48 hours. Public Health England has specific guidance on this. Any objects handled by the person where cleaning is not possible should be quarantined for at least 3 days. The minimum PPE to be worn for cleaning an area after a person with symptoms of coronavirus, or confirmed with coronavirus, has left the setting, is disposable gloves and an apron. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after all PPE has been removed.

Given the damage that may be caused through the use of disinfectants on historic surfaces, closing for at least 3 days where there has been a suspected or confirmed case may also be a preferable course of action for historic church buildings.

Continuing to ask people to register for NHS Test and Trace is one way of being able to know if those who come into your building have been exposed to the virus. Although it has never been possible to insist on registering, it is recommended you continue to ask people to provide details, either through the app or another means, to aid management of future infections.

Anyone who develops coronavirus symptoms should self-isolate and immediately book a PCR test. If this is positive they will be asked to self-isolate for 10 days. This will remain the law.

You must also self-isolate if you are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace, for example if you have come into contact with someone who has tested positive. This remains the law, regardless of your vaccination status.

From 16 August, if you have been fully vaccinated you will be exempt from the requirement to self-isolate if you are a contact of a positive case. You will instead be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible. You will also be exempt from self-isolation from 16 August if you are under 18 and a contact of a positive case.

Life events

Life event services, such as weddings, baptisms and funerals, can be some of the most important pastoral encounters in a parish and in the life of a family, but also may pose particular challenges as we move to step 4 of the Government's roadmap. For practical ideas and resources that help families have a good experience, whatever the situation, see www.churchsupporthub.org. More information for families can be found at www.churchofengland/funerals or www.yourchurchwedding.org or www.churchofenglandchristenings.org

The lifting of legislation means that the numbers at these events are not mandated by law but potentially by the pre-pandemic capacity of the building. However, there is an expectation by Government that people act responsibly in indoor spaces, particularly where large numbers of people are involved.

Where an incumbent feels a life event service will have additional risk because of the numbers of people involved they can ask the party to comply with additional measures such as face coverings and limited numbers for the safety of all those attending. A risk assessment for the service may help to identify what additional measures would be most helpful and provide a clear rationale for decisions taken. The incumbent may refuse to take those services they are not legally obliged to take, if they are not comfortable in taking them. They can also seek alternative ministerial cover for any service where they would feel put a risk by taking it themselves. A conversation with your Archdeacon may be helpful in looking at the options. In those cases where additional covid measures are requested a pastoral and collaborative approach would be strongly advised clearly stating the reasons why these are being asked for.

Additional measures may include:

- Appropriate use of face coverings • Restricting numbers
- Limiting or avoiding singing by the congregation • Asking people to stay at home if they are unwell
- Considering individual risks for all those likely to attend, such as clinical vulnerabilities, illness and vaccination status

These measures should complement existing good practice for making our buildings safe above. Government guidance on weddings and funerals has also been updated with further information.

Children's groups and youth work

What are the rules around children and youth groups?

There are no longer any legal restrictions on children and youth groups, and it is no longer required to keep children in 'bubbles'. This applies in all contexts, wherever groups are meeting.

Sensible cleaning and hygiene practices such as use of hand sanitiser gel are still a good idea.

Social events and building hire

What is the advice on holding social, community and fundraising events?

The government's Events and Attractions guidance applies to churches and should be taken into account by those managing church buildings, as well as anyone hiring or otherwise running events in church buildings.

Should people hiring our venue to provide a risk assessment?

Yes, this is an important requirement for all events and venue hires and should continue. They may wish to make use of the available template and tips in the Events and Attractions guidance.

It is the activity being performed, rather than the building itself, which needs to be assessed for risk when running events. The incumbent should satisfy themselves that they have seen a competent risk assessment for events, and check that those completing it have referred to the relevant guidance for their event or organisation. For example, an event run by a school should pay attention to all relevant guidance on children and young people. The incumbent has the right to challenge aspects of events management if it conflicts with their own risk assessment for other activities.

What sort of events can we run in Step 4?

All and any events are legally permissible, as are any number of people gathering (so long as it is within the usual health and safety and fire safety capacity of the venue). We would always recommend carrying out a specific risk assessment for any event, whether in a pandemic or not, to identify the sort of public safety measures you might need to take.

What guidance is there on running events safely?

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) has produced a useful suite of advice on running events. Although it is aimed at their churches it would be a useful starting point for any PCC and can be accessed [here](#). Please note it will be regularly revised and updated so it is worth checking the link as government guidance changes.

Catering

Can we provide food and drink?

Yes, there are no longer any restrictions on serving food and drink, and people no longer have to be seated in their households or bubbles to eat and drink. You should still consider ways to protect those doing the serving and washing up, such as providing gloves and appropriate cleaning materials. Government guidance that face coverings are expected and recommended in crowded and close-contact settings should be taken into account

Can cafes and restaurants re-open?

Yes, with no restrictions in place, although government guidance that face coverings are expected and recommended in crowded and close-contact settings should be taken into account.

APPENDIX 2

General guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

There are important actions that everyone should take at all times to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Refer to [Working safely during coronavirus](#) guidance or search the title on GOV.UK. This has practical steps to take and explains how you must carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment for your organisation.

The information contained on this card is specifically in relation to an outbreak, and should not replace health and safety and infection steps you already take, or have implemented as a result of consulting the 'Working safely during coronavirus' guidance.

Information your local PHE HPT may request from you:

Details of your organisation

- name of organisation
- location (including postcode and Local Authority)
- key contact details: name, phone number, email
- number of staff, volunteers, typical size of congregation and notable demographic factors

Details of the cases

- contact details of the people affected, where appropriate
- when the individual(s) became unwell
- when they were last present on the premises
- nature of the roles/job undertaken by any staff/volunteers affected
- known links between the individual(s) with COVID-19 (in or out of the premises)
- number of people with which the individual(s) had close contact
- nature of the environment (for example layout and nature of the building)
- details of control measures
- has there been any contact with other agencies? for example Local Authority, Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Types of actions you may need to put in place include:



Enhanced hygiene, hand washing and cleaning regimes, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).



Increased staff/volunteer/visitors' awareness of and adherence to preventative measures.



Additional measures to limit access to the place of worship.



Temporary closure of the premises.

To access more information refer to the guidance below or search the titles on GOV.UK:

- [guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection who do not live with the person](#)
- [COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#)
- [coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for mass gatherings](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#)

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