

# The Church of Scotland , Church Buildings Covid-19 Risk Assessment (V2)

This risk assessment must be completed before any church building reopens. This risk assessment will help congregations identify appropriate control measures that must be in place to protect members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors from the risk of Covid-19 infection. The control measures highlighted in this risk assessment reflect current best practice and should be regarded as the minimum standard for your church buildings and congregation. Additional control measures may be implemented to reflect local circumstances. Please note: this risk assessment reflects current policy in Scotland and may not be suitable for congregations in England or those within the International Presbytery. Further advice should be sought from the Church of Scotland General Trustees OR by emailing [covid19guidance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:covid19guidance@churchofscotland.org.uk). Your presbytery may request a copy of this risk assessment as they work with the congregations to reopen church buildings.

Congregation		
Presbytery		
Which building(s) does this risk assessment relate to?		
Name of assessor(s)		
Date		
Date of review		
Signature		

## Infection prevention, cleaning and members, volunteers and visitors Safety

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

As church buildings reopen after the restrictions on places of worship are eased, congregations must ensure that their buildings are safe and do not increase the risk of virus transmission.

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

There is a direct threat to anyone who enters a church building due to its public nature that they may be exposed to Covid-19.

People can catch the virus from others who are infected in the following ways:

- virus moves from person-to-person in droplets from the nose or mouth spread when a person with the virus coughs or exhales
- the virus can survive for 72 hours or longer on surfaces which people have touched or coughed on, etc.
- people can pick up the virus by breathing in the droplets or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their eyes or mouth

Not all people infected with Covid-19 show symptoms. Therefore, it is vitally important that reasonable precautions are in place and followed at all times.

### Control measures

The congregation will comply with its statutory duty to provide a safe environment, with particular reference to the Covid-19 pandemic by:

- ensure that all members, volunteers and visitors are aware of the infection prevention and control precautions that are in place within your buildings and the behavior expected of them during the pandemic to keep themselves and others safe
- require all members, volunteers and visitors to practice physical distancing when in or around your building, including outside areas

The congregation will communicate and reinforce key Government public health messages to all members, volunteers and visitors who visit their buildings:

- anyone who is unwell or who shows symptoms of Covid-19 (High temperature/fever, cough or loss of smell), who is in the extremely vulnerable group, who is isolating, or who is living with someone who is isolating or is unwell must not attend church
- recommend the use of an appropriate face covering when inside the building.
- if a face covering is not used for medical or other reasons, cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing (Catch it – Bin it – Kill it)
- put used tissues in the bin straight away
- wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (use alcohol base hand sanitiser/ gel if soap and water are not available)
- avoid close contact with people who become unwell when within your buildings
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- do not touch face, eyes, nose or mouth if hands are not clean

### Further actions required

## Infection prevention, cleaning and members, volunteers and visitors Safety (continued)

**Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic**

**Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards**

### **Control measures**

The congregation will fully implement in all areas of their church buildings Health Protection Scotland (Public Health Scotland), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Scottish Government advice and guideline relevant to the Covid-19 Pandemic, including the following safety precautions:

- make any adjustments to the space within your buildings to facilitate effective infection prevention and physical distancing
- follow Government health and travel advice
- provide alcohol based hand sanitiser/ gel as required
- provide infection control and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, and masks if required
- increase environmental cleaning in the church building including hand-touch areas; and ensure cleaning staff and volunteers have access to suitable detergents, disinfectants and PPE
- provide additional waste removal facilities and more frequent rubbish collection if required
- display appropriate public health posters and notices around the building and on websites informing members, volunteers and visitors of the control measure that are in place and their own role and responsibility to follow them.

### **Further actions required**

## Physical distancing

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Effective physical distancing is a key element in reducing the transmission of Covid-19

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Physical distancing refers to people being required to maintain a distance from each other of 2 meters, wherever possible

Physical distancing effectively puts people at a safe range from anyone coughing

The main route of virus transmission is through droplets exhaled or coughed by an infected person

### Control measures

All members, volunteers and visitors are required to practice effective physical distancing while in and around the building by:

- avoiding non-essential contact with others
- keeping a safe distance of at least 2 metres (about 3 steps) from others whenever possible
- avoiding physical contact (e.g. hugs, handshakes, etc)

Adaptations to the building to support physical distancing will include:

- a review of the church building to identify suitable adaptations which will support physical distancing, for example layout changes, appropriate signage, stickers and floor markings to denote safe distances, etc
- establishing maximum occupancy limits for all areas of the buildings
- all meetings will take place using telephone or video conferencing facilities

The congregation will display notices in throughout the church building reminding members, volunteers and visitors of the key infection prevention requirements, including the need to maintain safe physical distancing

### Further actions required

## Higher risk areas of the building

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Some areas of the church building may present a higher risk than others; for example toilets and restrooms.

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Heavily used areas of the building are more likely to present an infection transmission risk

Toilets are essential for members, volunteers and visitors to wash their hands regularly but also the toilets must be kept clean and free of coronavirus contamination

A number of people going to the toilet together may compromise their ability to comply with physical distancing

Increased risk of people coughing and touching door handles, taps and toilet flush handles

### Control measures

Ensure higher-risk/ high-traffic areas of the building are effectively controlled by applying appropriate safety precautions, including:

- stressing the need for everyone to follow good hygiene practice at all times (i.e. regular handwashing, using tissues and disposing of them appropriately, etc)
- the congregation will ensure that adequate hand-cleaning resources are provided; all toilets to be supplied with adequate supplies of hot water, liquid soap and paper towels
- printing handwashing instructions/ posters and displaying throughout the building, especially in toilets
- limiting numbers of people who can use high traffic areas such as corridors, stairs, toilets and restrooms at any one time to ensure physical distancing
- limiting lift occupancy
- monitor high-traffic area use and regulate access as necessary
- prioritise disabled use where necessary, e.g. disabled toilet use, use of lifts, etc
- establishing safe queuing systems by use of room occupancy limits and floor markings/signage, etc
- placing alcohol hand sanitisers/ gels at convenient places around the building with instructions for use
- increasing environmental cleaning, especially in and around toilets and; special attention to be paid to frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, toilet flush handles, light switches, etc
- increasing toilets/washrooms inspections to check for cleanliness/ adequate stock of soap/toilet paper, etc
- where possible, providing paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities

### Further actions required

## Vulnerable and Extremely Vulnerable members, volunteers and visitors

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Some members, volunteers or visitors may have pre-existing medical conditions which render them more vulnerable to the dangers of coronavirus infection

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Those who are classified by the Scottish Government as being at greater risk from Covid-19 include people in the vulnerable (higher-risk) and extremely vulnerable (extremely high risk) categories

Vulnerable (higher risk) people include those who:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 and instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds
- pregnant

The Scottish Government regularly reviews their classification of those in the Vulnerable and Extremely Vulnerable group and as part of this risk assessment, this will be regularly reviewed by the congregation to ensure that all appropriate hazards are identified and control measures implemented ([www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/)).

### Control measures

The congregation will ensure that those in the extremely vulnerable category will still be able to participate in church life during the Covid-19 pandemic without the need to attend church.

The congregation will ensure that those in the vulnerable category will be appropriately supported in their choice to participate in church life in a way that meets their own individual needs and preferences whilst safeguarding their own health, safety and welfare and those of the wider congregation and community.

### Further actions required

## Premises access and travel

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Members, volunteers and visitors who come to your church building must be able to access your building safely

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Travel to and from your building may lead to a greater risk of virus transmission

Public transport may be restricted in order to achieve physical distancing on trains, buses, etc

Access to church buildings may create a virus transmission risk if people all seek entrance at once or are channeled through single points of entry

Risks may be increased for disabled people who may have reduced options for access

### Control measures

The congregation will apply the following arrangements to ensure safe access to their building:

- ensure that sufficient access points to the church building are provided so that people do not congregate at entrances and exits; ensure that all access points have supplies of hand sanitiser/gel available for use
- review disabled access arrangements to ensure safe entrance or exit for disabled people
- use floor markings and signage at entrances and exits and introduce one-way flow systems at entry and exit points where appropriate. Consideration to the historical nature of the building will inform the extent of this provision.
- provide alcohol based hand sanitiser/gel at entrances and exits

### Further actions required

## Cases of possible infection in the church building

### Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

A members, volunteer or visitor may become unwell whilst attending the church building, or a symptomatic person may attend the building

### Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

High risk of transmission

### Control measures

If a member, volunteer or visitor of becomes unwell in the church building with coronavirus symptoms (a new, continuous cough or a high temperature) they should be sent home and advised to follow Government advice to self-isolate

- Health Protection Scotland (HPS) "Covid-19 guidance for non-healthcare settings" guidance will be followed.

The following actions should be taken within the building:

- all surfaces that a symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, especially objects visibly contaminated with body fluids and all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets
- public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids, can be cleaned thoroughly as normal
- cleaning staff should use disposable cloths or paper roll and a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1000 parts per million available chlorine
- cleaning staff must wear appropriate PPE
- waste from cleaning of areas where possible cases have been (including disposable cloths and tissues) should be "double-bagged" and tied off; it should be placed in a secure holding area for 72 hours before being disposed of in general waste

### Further actions required