

Risk Assessment for Public Worship

Date of Risk Assessment: 5/2/21 (Version 6)

Review Date: When guidance changes

This risk assessment has been agreed by the Coronavirus working group and the PCC standing committee.

Scope of Risk Assessment

This risk assessment is for public worship that continues to be permissible, following the updated government guidance issued 11/1/21 during the third lockdown period. Public Worship in this context includes morning, prayer, evensong, compline etc. and Holy Communion. Specific risks and controls that relate to Holy Communion are addressed in appendix 1 to this risk assessment. Specific risk and controls that relate to Baptisms, which are a form of Public Worship are addressed in appendix 2 to this risk assessment. Specific risks and controls that relate to special church services including those during Lent, Holy Week and Easter are addressed in appendix 3. See the separate risk assessment for funerals and weddings.

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Managing numbers of worshippers	In line with published guidance the limits on numbers of worshippers permitted to attend at any one time has been decided locally.
	At St Anne's careful measurement of the space and consideration of seating arrangements has resulted in a decision that the number of individual worshippers that can be easily accommodated on the ground floor is 30.
	Numbers attending each service will be managed using a telephone booking system, details of which are posted on the church website.
	If groups of worshippers from the same household are seated together and socially distanced from other groups and individuals, it may be possible to accommodate more than 30. This is determined by those managing the booking system.
	From time to time special church services take place which are a form of public worship. (e.g. harvest, remembrance, parade services etc.) . On these occasions the upstairs balcony seating will be used and therefore more than 30 worshippers can be accommodated (see appendix 3).
	Young children and those from uniformed organisations attending services, should be supervised by the parent or guardian who is responsible for ensuring appropriate hygiene precautions are followed
Social Distancing	In order to maintain 2 m social distancing a maximum of 30 individual worshippers may be present in the ground floor of the church at any one time. More can be accommodated when the upstairs area is used.
	Clergy and Nominated Church Officers (NCO's) are also able to maintain social distancing because of the areas of the church where they will be located
	When the upstairs seating are is used then only every other 'boxed pew area will be used. At all other times the area is cordoned off.
	A fixed seating pattern is used to manage social distancing and allow access/egress from pews

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Social Distancing continued...	Seating positions are marked in the pew area
	Households or those in the same support bubble/linked households can be seated on the same pew.
	All worshippers will be directed to the appropriate seating positions by the nominated church officials (NCO) on duty
	Social distancing should be maintained throughout attendances at church and worshippers are requested not to mingle or gather with other households outside the church before or after the service
	It is recognised that sometimes for pastoral reasons it is not possible or would be insensitive or uncaring to strictly adhere to social distancing. For example in the cases bereavement or other distress
Access/egress at the Church	A strict one-way system will be operated with worshippers entering via the right-hand west door and leaving by the left-hand west door. This system would be overridden should an emergency evacuation be necessary
	Steps to the balcony are cordoned off, when these areas are not in use for special church services
	Outer entry/exit doors will be permanently propped open at all times the church is in use, to minimise touch points and enhance ventilation. The NCO will open the inner doors to minimise the number of people in contact with these surfaces
	At least two NCOs will be on duty at all times that the church is open, one positioned outside to greet and check names against the pre-booked list; and one inside to manage the door opening/closing, so touch points are minimised
	Church will only be opened by the Clergy or church warden 30 minutes before the appointed service time, to allow sufficient time for worshippers to arrive in a staggered way
	The NCOs will be issued with a copy of this risk assessment and briefed about their role
	A noticed is placed outside church indicating that at this time no one but the Clergy and NCO's must unlock church. No other key holders may do so
Record of attendance	At the time of booking worshippers will be required to give for their name and contact details, in case track and trace is necessary in the event of local covid-19 cases. We verbally check everyone's consent with this requirement at the time the attendance is recorded
	Records of attendance will be kept securely for 21 days and destroyed when no longer needed, in line with requirements of GDPR
	The list of those booked to attend a service will be available to the NCOs before the service, so they can confirm who actually did attend. These records too will be kept for 21 days
	For some services where bookings do not reach 30, then other worshippers can be admitted and their names and contact details added to the pre-booked attendance list at the time, by the NCOs
	The NHS QR code is displayed outside church for use by visitors

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Hygiene	Hand sanitiser will be available at both the entry and exit points to the church
	NCOs will request all worshippers to use the sanitiser
	The sink in church will not be available for use and will be cordoned off for general use. The NCOs, in the event of an emergency, may use the sink
	The toilets in the church hall will not be available and worshippers are informed of this
	A lidded bin with foot pedal will be available for use in church and will always be lined with a plastic liner

Face Coverings	Social distancing at 2 m is possible and is being complied with at St Anne's. This remains the most effective control measure in the hierarchy of control. However Government guidance extended the wearing of face coverings to include places of worship from 8 th August 2020
	Clergy may or may not wear a mask or other face covering, and this is based on an assessment of risk and other requirements such as their ability to be able to communicate clearly and be understood by Worshippers. Clergy are not included in the list of 'staff in indoor workplaces' specifically required to wear a face covering. This a local case by case assessment
	Disposable facemasks are provided in church for any Worshippers who may require one on arrival at Church.
	In line with Government guidance exceptions to wearing face covering are permitted and these include if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress. Anyone not wearing a face covering may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. Therefore exception badges/notices will also be available in Church. These are also available free on the Gov.uk website.
	It is not the role of NCO's or other Church officers to enforce the use of face covering by Worshippers, but instead reasonable steps are taken to achieve this. Enforcement is a matter for the police. In line with Government Guidance anyone with reason not to wear a face covering should not be routinely asked to give any written evidence of this.

Church cleaning	Weekly thorough cleaning of the church is arranged by a professional cleaning company, each cleaning session lasting 3.5 hours
	All touch points and the entry areas will be the focus of the cleaning regime
	Cleaning regime includes the use of Fumite OPP that is a type of fogging and this cleaning will be used regularly and as required.
	In church there are sanitising wipes and gloves for use by NCOs
	Where there are multiple services on one day, then services, door handles and other touch points will be wiped with sanitising wipes between the services. If the use of the church is infrequent, with more than 72 hours elapsing between use, then this additional cleaning is not required
	The use of the upstairs seating area remains infrequent, with typically more than 72 hours elapsing between use, therefore in these situations additional cleaning is not required. When use of the balcony is more frequent then NCOs will undertake the same cleaning regime in this area of the church.
	All soft furnishings, kneelers, banners etc. and all other loose materials have been removed from church for the time being to assist with the cleaning processes

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Nature of Worship	The times for services will be decided typically a month in advance and the schedule will be published communicated via the website and other means
	Simple notices will given at the start of each service reminding worshippers of the need for social distancing and to follow NCO's directions during the service and when leaving at the end of the service.
	The clergy/cantor will always face east towards the altar and away from the congregation and at distance of more than 2 meters, when speaking or singing
	Spoken responses during worship should be in a quiet voice.
	Worshippers are requested to avoid shouting, or raising voices to minimise the risk of transmission from aerosol and droplet.
	The organist at St Anne's maintains the organ, therefore no one else has access to the instrument and a notice is posted to this effect. The organ is more than 2 m from the pew area, so organ music will be played during the services as appropriate
	Singing by the congregation is not permitted at present and the choir will not form part of the service
	Prayer books and hymn books will be used and following the service each person will place their copy in the plastic box, the lid will be placed on the box by the NCO and this box will be quarantined for 48 hours. The date and time the books were last used will be marked on the lid, to ensure the quarantine period is managed.
	Worshippers may bring their own prayer books/bible/other texts for personal use during the service, but must take these away with them.
	The single church bell may be rung for 5 minutes before each service. It will always be rung by one of the NCOs from the wardens pew (not upstairs) and they will wear gloves
	Candles can be lit by worshippers, using a single use taper and while social distancing is maintained. A metal bin is provided for the disposal of the used tapers
	An open collection plate will be placed at the back of church, to receive any cash or enveloped donations or collection. NCOs will wear gloves, to handle and safely store the collection. Those who subsequently handle the cash will wear gloves. Online donations and giving remain the preferred option.
	At this time only the clergy and the crucifer will process, while maintaining 2m social distancing
	The crucifer only will handle the Cross and will wipe clean the item after it has been returned to the storage location at the end of the service
Coronavirus Symptoms	In line with government guidance anyone self-isolating with symptoms or from a household where there is someone self-isolating, or they have been requested by test and trace to self-isolate, should not come to church until their period of self-isolation is over.
	If it is subsequently determined that a worshipper who recently attended the church is confirmed as having coronavirus then the church may be closed and thoroughly cleaned by a professional cleaning company prior to any reopening. This may result in a revised schedule for services being published.

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Clinically Vulnerable and over 70's	Any worshippers in this group should make their own personal decision as to whether they wish to attend.
Extremely Clinical Vulnerable	Any potential worshippers in this group are advised not to attend, but this is their personal decision, which will be influenced by their receipt of the vaccine.
Role of NCOs	As indicated above at least two NCOs will be on duty at all times that the church is open, one positioned outside to greet and confirm/record names and one inside to manage the door opening/closing, so touch points are minimised
	NCOs will greet worshippers, and confirm pre-booked attendance on the list of worshippers provided.
	NCOs will explain the seating arrangements, the one-way system and exit point, the location of the hand sanitisers etc.
	It may be necessary for worshippers to wait outside for a short period of time if social distancing does not allow them to enter just at that time
	NCOs record the name and contact details of the worshippers who have not pre-booked and can still be accommodated in church
	In the event of an emergency the NCOs will give clear instruction on how to leave the building, (both doors can be used for exit in this event) and how social distancing can be maintained at that time
	NCOs are recommended to use the gloves provided and bring their own pens to confirm or record details of worshippers
	NCO's are recommended to use the gloves provided when ringing the bell, handling collection and when cleaning/wiping surfaces after the service
	NCOs will give clear direction to worshippers on when/how to leave at the end of the service, so that social distancing can be maintained

Appendix 1 – Additional controls for Holy Communion

The risk assessment takes account of guidance issued by the Church of England on the Administration of Holy Communion issued on 12th January 2021 (version 5.3) by the House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group.

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
The Peace	The giving/receiving of the peace will remain, as it always has been, only a verbal exchange.
Preparing the elements	Only one member of the clergy will handle the elements and this will be done only when hands have been sanitised using the lavabo containing water and a 70 % alcohol based sanitiser.
	The elements will be not be handled by anyone other than the Clergy administering the Communion
	The Clergy will not speak over the bread that is to be administered to the communicants, these wafers will remain covered in a ciborium with a covering
Distribution of the elements	Only bread will be offered and this will be, as always, individual wafers
	The organ will be played during the distribution of the elements
	The consecrated wafer will be administered in away that avoids contact with the hands of communicants
	Only the Clergy administering the Communion will receive the Sacrament in both kinds
Receiving Holy Communion	Individual worshippers will be invited by the NCO, one at a time to approach the chancel step, receive their Communion and return to their place, before, the next worshipper is invited
	Only bread will be received by communicants and this will be as always individual wafers
	Worshippers are requested to remove any face covering before they leave the pew, store it in a hygienic way and sanitise their hands before receiving Holy Communion
	The bread to be administered to communicants will remain covered in a ciborium while the elements are consecrated
	Communicants are encouraged to sanitise their hands before receiving the bread
	Communicants should hold their hand open to receive the bread and avoid coming into contact with those administering the bread
After the distribution of the elements	Only those worshippers comfortable to do so, should come forward to receive the Sacrament
	As the Clergy is the only person who will touch the chalice and paten both during the service and after, then these can be cleaned in the normal way.

Appendix 2 – Additional controls for Baptism

The risk assessment takes account of guidance issued by the Church of England on the Conduct of Public Worship issued on 12th January 2021 (version 4.6) by the House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group.

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Numbers attending	At St Anne's Baptism is part of the programme of communal worship, therefore all control measures relating to numbers attending are already detailed in main body of this risk assessment. Should a family request a private ceremony then numbers will also be determined in the same way as these are for communal worship.
Infants being presented for Baptism	The infant will be held by their parents/guardian throughout the service including during the Baptism.
Handling items	The Clergy only will handle the item used to pour water onto the forehead, and this will be done only when hands have been sanitised.
	No one other than the Clergy will come into the contact with the baptismal water.
	Anyone presenting a lighted candle will have santised their hands before doing so.
Making arrangements	Clergy will as far as possible, carry out planning discussions with the family via telephone or video link, and documents/papers should be shared electronically.
	To manage numbers and ensure social distancing is maintained a pre agreed seating plan will be produced by the family, using a template of the church seating. The family will inform those attending of these seating arrangements in advance and again at the time, thereby overcoming the need for an NCO to be present during the Baptism service.
	The family must maintain a list of those who attended along with their contact details and if required will make this available to the Church, for the purposes of track and trace.

Appendix 3 – Special Church Services

From time to time special church services will take place. On these occasions, in order to accommodate more worshippers the upstairs seating area (balcony) will be used. This appendix addresses additional control measures necessary on these occasions. Additional risk assessments for specific services may be required.

Aspect of Control	Controls in place
Access/egress	When arriving and leaving Church a one-way system will be used on the staircases, with worshippers entering via the right-hand west door and going up that staircase and leaving by the going down and existing left-hand west door. However during communion a different system will operate and communicants will be guided by the NCO's on the balcony. These systems would be overridden should an emergency evacuation be necessary.
	There will be no movement in and out of the 'boxed pew seating' during the service, other than when directed by NCO's for the purpose of receiving Communion.
	Boxed pew areas to be used are marked on the entry door
	Queuing on staircases is avoided where ever possible
	When the balcony is in use additional NCOs will be on duty to manage the use the of staircases and direct worshippers to the correct boxed pews
Numbers of worshippers	When the balcony is used this will be managed using the telephone booking system
	At St Anne's careful measurement of the space and consideration of seating arrangements has resulted in a decision that the number of individual worshippers that can be easily accommodated in the balcony is 22
	Greater numbers can be accommodated in the balcony when households and those in the same support bubble attend together and are seated in the same 'boxed pew'. This number and seating pattern will be managed at the time of booking
Nature of Worship during Lent, Holy Week and Easter	All services scheduled during in Lent, Holy Week and Easter will follow all the control measures outlined in this risk assessment for communal worship. The following summarise other specific control measures that will be applied during this time.
	Imposition of ashes for all worshippers will not take place during the Ash Wednesday services, this is in order to maintain social distancing and minimise direct contact. An alternative means of signifying this important part of the worship will be used.
	Palm crosses will be distributed, but by only one member of the clergy in order to minimise contact. Hand sanitiser will be used prior to the distribution of the palm crosses.
	The Passion Narrative will be said rather than sung.
	During the Dawn service on Easter Day candles will be lit from the Paschal Candle and distributed by only one member of the clergy; in order to minimise contact. Hand sanitiser will be used prior to the distribution of the candles.
Singing and music	Recorded music will be used during The Watch service on Maundy Thursday
	Singing by the choir congregation is not permitted at present and the choir will not form part of the service.
	Soloists may sing at some of the services. Those singing will be socially distanced from all other worshippers