

## Five Steps To Undertaking A Risk Assessment

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### Step 1: Identify The Hazards

The first thing to do is identify each and every hazard. This includes hazards in your actual building but also in the processes you have. So you need to risk assess the way you welcome people into church as well as the actual doors and passage-ways. There is no way of getting around the fact that the only way that you can really do an effective process of identifying hazards is to actually walk around your facility and think with mindset of your various services and activities. In essence, at this step you look around and think, what are the hazards here?

Often churches have been writing the actions they need to take under the category of “what are the hazards?” It is important to read the italic text underneath each heading and do as it asks.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	H, M or L?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Date Completed
<i>List the hazards or risks that you have identified? Use a separate box for each hazard or risk identified</i>	<i>List the person(s) or personnel groups</i>	<i>Is the risk High, Med or Low?</i>	<i>Briefly describe any actions that you have already put into action</i>	<i>Briefly describe actions that you, Your department or the organisation need to undertake</i>	<i>Name the person responsible for making it happen</i>	<i>Please put the date by which the action needed to be completed</i>	<i>Please put the date here when the action has been completed</i>

Therefore, when it says “what are the hazards?” you are looking at what actions are hazardous and then are going to work across the columns from there. What we are not looking for in that first column is a list of ‘requirements’ as they are not hazards. In order to help you move forward, it may be useful to provide a list of possible hazards and some of the potential “reasonable measures” which can be applied to them.

- Leaders, volunteers, congregation or visitors introducing Covid-19 into the building.
- Contracting or spreading coronavirus due to ‘droplet’ transmission.
- Contracting or spreading coronavirus due to ‘aerosol’ transmission.
- Risk of transmission of coronavirus from those leading the service.
- Risk of transmission of coronavirus through sharing of communion.
- Risk of transmission of coronavirus from relaxed activities in homes.
- Risk of isolation and loneliness related anxiety for those choosing to remain at home.
- Risk of increased anxiety for those wanting to return but who may not have been in crowded places.

If you are hiring a building from someone else (eg A Community Hall), you will still need to undertake a Risk Assessment yourself for what YOU control (social distancing in the building, provision of hand sanitiser) but the first item on your Risk Assessment should be a general Building Risks category and the action should be that you Receive and Review the building owner’s Risk Assessment. You ought to ask for a copy which you can attach to your own Risk Assessment. If they don’t have one, I would question whether you should be considering returning to the building. Similarly, if you hire your own building out to others, you should ask them to undertake a Risk Assessment on their processes and protocols (and provide it to you) and you should provide them with a copy of your Building Risk Assessment.

## Step 2: Decide Who May Be Harmed And How

So, you've spotted an issue. Now you need to decide who is potentially at risk and in what way. For some issues, it may be everyone entering the building but for other risks it may just be staff or volunteers. Don't just say 'everyone' for everything as that is unlikely to be true. So, be specific. An example may be the regular enhanced cleaning that will now become the norm for churches as we move forward. You may want to say that all staff/volunteer cleaners are at some level risk and so you will provide appropriate equipment and PPE for everyone involved in cleaning. However, you may decide that some groups of staff/volunteers are at greater risk, such as those over 50 or 70 years of age, men or part of the BAME community (or a combination of these). In these circumstances you may decide to risk assess individuals or prevent them from being involved in the cleaning of the building. We will come to how you make these decisions in a moment but the key here is deciding who may be harmed and how.

## Step 3: Evaluate The Risk

This is the bit that many people find difficult, when it doesn't need to be. We have asked you to grade the risks as either Low, Medium or High. Why is this important? Well, in a document that may have 20, 30 or more risks, you need to know which risks are going to have the greatest impact so that you can focus on removing or reducing those risks as a priority. The easiest way to measure these is by giving them some form of grading, using two criteria – *likelihood* and *impact*.

Before, you go on to grading your risks, I would note down what controls you already have in place. This is because you may already have things in place which reduce the risk. So, taking a general example of the risk of fire taking hold in the building. This would rank in the very high category in terms of impact and possibly in a church that had lots of real candles, the likelihood could also be high. However, you probably would already have fire detection systems (fire/smoke alarms, sprinklers etc) and would probably also have fire doors around the building to prevent the spread. So you have already reduced the risk without doing anything new. Therefore, I would list what is already in place first and then grade your risks. However, you should do the grading before deciding on NEW steps you are going to take.

*So, how do you do this grading?*

The danger of sitting and asking yourself if something is High, Medium or Low is that this is incredibly subjective. Therefore, most professional Risk Assessment processes use a matrix which you may want to have in your thinking, even if you don't use it directly. It easiest to show it initially as a diagram.

IMPACT	High	Medium	High	High
	Medium	Low	Medium	High
	Low	Low	Low	Medium
		Low	Medium	High
		LIKELIHOOD		

There are two factors you look at with risk.

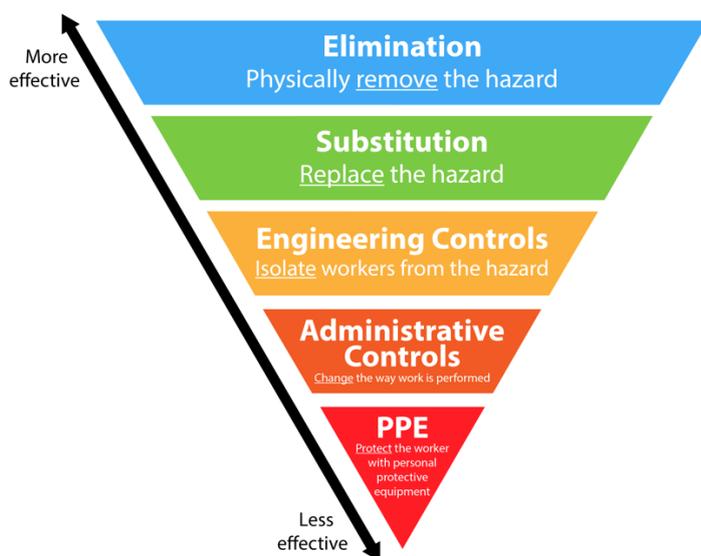
1. What is the impact/consequence/outcome of this risk? You can also define the levels of this as Minor/Negligible (Low), Moderate (Medium) and Major/Catastrophic (High)
2. What is the likelihood/chance of this risk happening? You can also define the levels of this as Rare/Unlikely (Low), Possible (Medium) and Likely/Almost Certain (High)

You could, if you wanted to, put a 1, 2 or 3 score against each of these and multiply the two together to give you an overall risk score (Impact x Likelihood = Risk and then give an overall risk grade according to the score (1-2 = Low overall risk, 3-4 = Moderate overall risk, 6 or 9 = High overall risk)). For most church based risks simply referring to the grid above should be sufficient to make a straight forward judgment. It should be noted that if you have something in the top right hand box (perhaps an Extreme Risk) then this should be a priority for removing or reducing the risk as it is your highest risk item.

Once you have decided the risk level for each hazard, then you should record this on your form.

#### Step 4: Decide On Action To Remove, Reduce or Mitigate The Risk

The new [Welsh Government guidance for employers, businesses and organisations](#) recommends you use the five steps outlined in the “Hierarchy of Controls” as described in a diagram similar to the one below:



The guidance document goes into quite a lot of detail for each of the five steps and what types of action can be put in place, but in essence you ask yourself two questions,

1. Is there anything I can do which would remove this risk completely? In the example regarding candles above, you could decide to not have any naked flames in the building and use battery powered candles. If you did that, you would have removed the risk altogether.
2. If you cannot remove the risk completely, are there any steps you can do which would reduce or mitigate the risk? For many of your risks, you won't be able to get rid of the risk completely but you can reduce the risk. If what you are thinking of wouldn't make any difference at all, it may not be worth doing! But there are often things you can do both in terms of structural/physical/building changes but also in terms of processes and procedures. Therefore, using the candle fire risk once again. If it was decided that you couldn't get rid of real flame candles for some reason, you could introduce both structural changes (such as a metal frame for real candles, fire extinguishers placed near candles, only small candles to be used etc) and procedural changes (regular checks on areas with candles by staff members, building closure protocol which checks on areas with candles etc). These steps would mitigate or reduce the risk of a large scale fire breaking out and reduces the risk.

Once you have decided on the actions and controls you can put in place and have graded each risk, you should make sure that this is all recorded on your Risk Assessment/Register. Make sure that for every control/adaptation you are going to do that you put a name (or role) for who is going to do this and a date by which the action will be completed. These are so important in order that individuals know who is responsible for undertaking the various controls. Ideally, distribute the work, so that it doesn't rest on one person's shoulder in terms of workload but also in terms of responsibility. Risk and safety is everyone's responsibility and if you distribute the work out, people will quickly realise that this is not just the Senior Pastor's hobby-horse. Everyone plays their part.

To help you moving forward, I have given some ideas of mitigations/actions, based on the risks outlined in Step 1 above. You should realise that this is not an extensive list, nor does it cover every action you ought to be considering, but it may help you with the revision of your Risk Assessment.

	<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Possible Reasonable Measure</b>
1	Leaders, volunteers, congregation or visitors introducing Covid-19 into the building.	<p>The key here is to prevent people who have been exposed to the virus attending the building. So,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who have symptoms of Covid-19 or have tested positive for Covid-19 should not attend the building and this expectation should be communicated to the congregation.</li> <li>• Ensure you have signage to explain the requirements on the main entrances of the building and on your website.</li> <li>• Encourage leaders to take regular Lateral Flow Tests, prior to attending the building when services/activities will take place.</li> <li>• Encourage everyone eligible to have both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination.</li> </ul>
2	Contracting or spreading coronavirus due to 'droplet' transmission.	<p>Droplets are heavy and will fall to the ground or a surface rapidly but will survive for some time on surfaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure everyone entering the building washes or sanitises their hands and that hand sanitiser is placed in prominent places around the building.</li> <li>• Regular and enhanced cleaning of regularly used surfaces around the building. This to take place after each occasion the building is used.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate enhanced cleaning protocols are followed (PPE, disposal of materials etc) to ensure protection of cleaners.</li> </ul>
3	Contracting or spreading coronavirus due to 'aerosol' transmission.	<p>Aerosols are smaller particles which are carried in the air and don't usually land on surfaces. They are easily inhaled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate and extensive ventilation of the building, opening doors and windows for at least 15 minutes before each activity and ideally kept open during the activity.</li> <li>• The higher the capacity and density of people in the room, the greater the risk. Therefore, a minimum of 1 metre should be kept between people in the building and the building capacity should be capped at a manageable level</li> </ul>

		<p>and only increased slowly over time as case numbers decrease in the local area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face coverings should be worn by everyone (unless exempt) when in the building for services or activities.</li> </ul>
4	Risk of transmission of coronavirus from those leading the service.	<p>Those leading a service, who will often not be wearing a face covering, are at a greater risk of transmitting the virus to others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of lateral flow tests on the night before a service for those leading the service.</li> <li>• Use of Perspex screens in front of singers to protect congregation, or at least an increased distance between platform team and the front row of the congregation.</li> <li>• Restricting duration of services</li> </ul>
5	Risk of transmission of coronavirus through sharing of communion.	<p>The passing around of elements and the sharing of elements can lead to the spread of the virus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only use 'prefilled communion' sets which are distributed as people arrive and are then dropped into rubbish bags at the end of the service.</li> </ul>
6	Risk of transmission of coronavirus from relaxed activities in homes.	<p>Home Groups are an important part of the life of the church but are also higher risk venues as people are more naturally relaxed and less vigilant in these venues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce guidance for all Home Group leaders on the steps they can take to reduce the risk of transmission, these include:</li> <li>• When weather permits, meet outdoors.</li> <li>• Opening doors and windows before and during the gathering to increase ventilation.</li> <li>• Providing hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser on entry.</li> </ul>
7	Risk of isolation and loneliness related anxiety for those choosing to remain at home.	<p>It is wise to not only talk about the explicit Covid-19 risks but also the associated other risks which Covid-19 has impacted on, caused or made worse, and how you will overcome them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure those remaining at home are able to access online services.</li> <li>• Ensure that they are contacted regularly by a Home Group leader or member of the Pastoral Team.</li> </ul>
8	Risk of increased anxiety for those wanting to return but who maynot have been in crowded places.	<p>Again, this is another linked risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise the safety and public health precautions which will continue to be in place, to give assurance of the safety of the venue.</li> <li>• Publicise the Risk Assessment.</li> </ul>

These are only a selection of hazards and mitigations which you could put in place. You should ensure that you develop your own based on your original Risk Assessment and its revision.

## Step 5: Monitor Your Risk Assessment & Update Regularly

A Risk Assessment is a live document which is constantly evolving. You should certainly have a final column on your Risk Assessment for you to show when the controls you state you are going to put in place have actually been completed. If you can't complete them by the date you said, don't just change the target date, give an explanation and an updated target.

Once you have held completed tasks on the Risk Assessment for a specific period (perhaps 6 months but it is up to you) and they have been reviewed by your Leadership Team, they can then be archived in the document so that the live Risk Assessment is holding the current risks and you don't need to trawl through pages of completed hazards. However, don't remove them completely, otherwise you might find someone new coming along and putting the risk that you have completed back on the Assessment as a new one.

18.08.2021

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Swyddfa gofrestredig/Registered office: Tŷ Hastings House, Llys Fitzalan Court, Caerdydd/Cardiff CF24 0BL

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