

COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

CHURCH NAME: Thatcham Evangelical Church

Activity:	Church services/events at the Thatcham Parish Hall
Description (including assumptions made for risk assessment):	Any church services/events at the Thatcham Parish Hall. This version of the Risk Assessment supercedes prior versions and has been occasioned by entering Step 4 of the roadmap for recovery regarding lockdown easing of restrictions in England from 19th July 2021 . This revision to the Risk Assessment has been made in the light of the Government's document "COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship" as published on 16th July 2021 at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship (accessed on 21/07/2021). In summary this latest Step 4 Guidance has removed the COVID-19 specific legal restrictions that had previously been in place in favour of allowing organisations to make their own judgments regarding the level of risk that might obtain under an organisation's unique environment, situation and uses. This Risk Assessment takes into consideration whether there would be any possible or likely situations of creating a "crowded indoor space" and whether or not it would then be sensible to use the toolkit of possible mitigations such as 1) face coverings, 2) social distancing, 3) ventilation. This risk assessment is intended to dovetail with procedures/measures that have been developed and implemented by the Parish Hall trustees and which are variously displayed on posters put up in the hall for hall users to adhere to.

Assessment date:	21/07/2021
New review due:	21/08/2021

Assessor(s):	Hedley Clemo and Andy Gallagher
Reviewer(s):	Hedley Clemo and Andy Gallagher

Hazard category	Ref.	Hazard description	Who might be harmed	Existing controls	Acceptable (Y/N)	Further actions			
						Description	Owner	Target date	Done
Infected person attending event	1	Person infected with COVID-19 attends event, risking infection of others.	Attendees	<p>No admittance for anyone COVID-19 positive or displaying COVID-19 symptoms:</p> <p>Churchgoers reminded to follow government guidance to self-isolate if displaying symptoms (high temperature, continuous cough, lost/altered sense of taste/smell).</p> <p>Anyone taken ill with COVID-19 symptoms during event to be sent home immediately and advised to follow government advice and seek a test.</p>	Y	Notice displayed prominently on the front door to the Parish Hall that if you have symptoms to NOT enter the building and advised to follow Government advice.	Parish Hall Trustees	N/A	Done
				<p>NHS Test and Trace attendees list/QR Check-in:</p> <p>Those arriving into church will have the option of voluntarily signing the Test and Trace attendance list or alternatively scanning the Test and Trace QR code for the church should they wish to.</p>	Y	Creation of a service attendance sheet which would record Name/Telephone contact number/Time arrived and Time departed. (Where attendees are known to the church then the contact number could be left blank).	Hedley Clemo	N/A	Done
				<p>Infected person attends service/event:</p> <p>If person attends church who is infected with Covid-19, the pastor or service leader is to follow the Parish Hall procedure as displayed in the Hall.</p>	Y				

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Physical contact between persons	2	Transmission of COVID-19 through direct physical contact with an infected person.	Attendees	<p>Physical contact:</p> <p>There is no legal bar to physical contact, such as a handshake or a hug, for example - however people will be advised and will need to recognise that not everyone will feel comfortable with or desire any physical contact with others especially those from a different household.</p>	Y	<p>Church service leader (or the one giving the notices) at start of service proceedings to provide brief reminder regarding the COVID-19 Secure protocols that are in place.</p> <p>Reminders should especially incorporate any aspects where there may have been lapses previously observed.</p>	Church service leader (or the person giving the notices)	Start of each service or as a standardised part of the normal giving of church notices early on in the service	Ongoing/Repeated
Airborne transmission	3	Transmission of COVID-19 through airborne particles.	Attendees	<p>Maximum church service/event capacity:</p> <p>We are setting a maximum capacity for attendance to 40 persons including the minister and any persons assisting in the running of the church service/event.</p> <p>This number is a fairly conservative figure that should allow plenty of space to be maintained for people, especially for any that would like to maintain social distancing.</p>	Y	<p>Create facility on the church website to allow visitors and irregular attenders to book a place(s) for themselves for a face-to-face church service/event.</p> <p>This facility will show the number of remaining spaces available.</p> <p>This number, before anyone has registered for a service/event, will show 40 minus the total of those that are already known as regular weekly attenders.</p>	Hedley Clemo	N/A	Done
				<p>Spacing between speaking points:</p> <p>The church minister/service leader will use the pulpit and main mic at the front of the hall by the stage.</p> <p>Any other service participants will speak from a different mic set away from the main pulpit area.</p> <p>Service participants will not touch/adjust the mic/mic stand to avoid any possibility of contact transfer.</p>	Y				

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				<p>Spacing between groups:</p> <p>Groups to be spaced apart sufficiently to enable social distancing for those that would value/prefer this.</p> <p>Seating to be placed in such a way as to avoid people from different households directly facing others at close quarters without any mitigation e.g. face</p>	Y	Where available someone could act as a greeter at the entrance door and would direct churchgoers (especially visitors) to an appropriate seat/set of seats.	Greeter	N/A	Ongoing/Repeated
				<p>Mobility between groups:</p> <p>Attendees should be thoughtful about moving around between groups during the service/church event recognising that some people may wish to keep to social distancing between households.</p>	Y				
				<p>Wearing of face coverings:</p> <p>People attending a service/church event are not required to wear a face covering (which would cover around the nose, mouth and which would fit snugly around the sides of the face) but may choose to do so if they so wish.</p> <p>Exceptions:</p> <p>All those who are medically or otherwise exempt.</p> <p>Any child who is under the age of 12 is not required to wear a mask though they still can should their parents/guardians think it best.</p> <p>The church minister or any who are assisting/participating in the operation of the service are not required to wear a face covering.</p> <p>This would typically cover those who come to the front at the participants microphone to do e.g. a scripture reading or to conduct a children's talk or</p>	Y				
				<p>Coughing/sneezing etc.:</p> <p>Sensible hygiene is to be observed (e.g. covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using the crook of a sleeved arm or preferably tissues followed by binning them afterwards)</p>	Y				

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				<p>Pinchpoints and "Crowded indoor spaces":</p> <p>Within the environs of the hall which the church uses (i.e. not the upstairs section) there are a couple of pinchpoints where people may choose to operate social distancing if they so choose (either for their own benefit or the benefit of another party).</p> <p>1) The pathway alongside the Parish Hall from the Waitrose Car Park is narrow and therefore some may prefer to adhere to social distancing achieved by only one person/group using it at a time.</p> <p>2) The passageway from the main hall to the kitchen is also narrow though there are some "passing points" which may be used for those desiring to maintain social distancing.</p> <p>Should there arise a situation where a section of the hall might take on the nature of a "crowded indoor space" i.e. such that social distancing would no longer be feasible - then we would take steps for risk avoidance by either using the typical mitigations of 1) wearing face coverings, 2) taking immediate steps to re-enable social distancing and/or 3) providing additional ventilation.</p> <p>We do not anticipate there being any situations of creating a "crowded indoor space" however we would encourage people not to congregate in large</p>	Y	<p>Church service leader (or the one giving the notices) at start of service proceedings to provide brief reminder regarding the COVID-19 Secure protocols that are in place.</p> <p>Reminders should especially incorporate any aspects where there may have been lapses previously observed (this would include where the kitchen area has been too heavily occupied at one time).</p>			
				<p>Queueing:</p> <p>When entering/exiting the service or using the toilets etc., people should be aware and ready to enable social distancing for those that would value/prefer this (e.g. by asking someone already using the ladies toilet whether it's alright for them to also come in and use the second cubicle or whether they prefer they wait their turn).</p>	Y				

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				<p>Exiting after a service:</p> <p>It is no longer a legal requirement that people should leave the service as soon as possible. It is also allowable for people to mix and mingle as they wish before or following the service (which is no longer restricted the minimum time possible).</p> <p>This said people should continue to respect the wishes of others who would prefer to social distance, wear a mask or mingle out of doors where there is increased ventilation.</p>	Y				
				<p>Congregational singing:</p> <p>There is no longer a legal restriction on congregational singing indoors or the requirement to wear a face mask. Given that with appropriate restrictions on numbers attending a service set at a maximum of 40 people we deem that it is therefore safe for congregation singing to take place.</p> <p>Where it is possible (when the temperature outside is good) then we would make use of additional ventilation as an added though not essential mitigation.</p> <p>The use of a PA system will facilitate people assisting the operation of the service to use a normal conversational voice level.</p>	Y				
				<p>Ventilation:</p> <p>Where practical doors and or windows should be opened to facilitate good air circulation.</p>	Y				

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Surface transmission	4	Transmission of COVID-19 through shared objects.	Attendees	<p>Main mic and pulpit:</p> <p>The main mic and pulpit area will be reserved for use by the service leader and preacher.</p> <p>Where the service leader and preacher are not the same person then after one person has finished playing their part in the service they will take a suitable wipe, clear and clean down the area, binning the wipe, before handing on to the other person.</p> <p>Participants mic:</p> <p>Those that use this mic as part of their participation in the church service/event should not touch/adjust the mic or its stand.</p> <p>Where this is deemed necessary, one from the setup team should make the required adjustments.</p>	Y				
				<p>Management of personal items:</p> <p>Personal items e.g. handbags, Bibles, song books, phones etc. should be kept with their owners or within the household.</p>	Y				
				<p>Common surface disinfecting:</p> <p>Contact areas to be disinfected by setup team prior to the start of the service. These teams must also be briefed on the disinfecting regime that needs to be followed each Sunday.</p>	Y				
				<p>Setup/closedown teams:</p> <p>One household/support bubble based setup and close down group each week.</p> <p>These groups would carefully follow the COVID-19 Secure setup/closedown procedure which would include such things as wiping down all touch points.</p>	Y				
				<p>Hand sanitisers, liquid soaps, bins etc.:</p> <p>Hand sanitiser provided upon entering the church.</p> <p>Liquid soap/paper towels/bins to be provided in the toilets.</p> <p>Bins will be provided in the main hall.</p>	Y				

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				Food/refreshments: Refreshments e.g. coffee/biscuits may be provided by the church at any service/event. It is likely (though not specifically required) that paper cups etc. would be used so as to reduce the level of surface contact.	Y				
				Church Bibles: It is strongly recommended that people bring their own Bibles, however there will be a small number of Church Bibles made available for use. Where these have been used they should be wiped afterwards and then quarantined for a minimum of 48 hours.	Y				
				Hymn books/Visitors book/Toys etc.: On occasions hymn books, a visitors book or various children's toys may be placed out for use. Where possible these items will be wiped down by the close down team after the close of proceedings. Parents are encouraged to bring toys/activities for their own children which they would keep with them or in their own household groups.	Y				

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				<p>Offering basket:</p> <p>The offering basket, along a pen and Gift Aid envelopes, will be put out on the side table to allow for attenders to give by way of money or cheques.</p> <p>Counting the collection:</p> <p>The basket will be counted at the conclusion of the service by two church members from different households maintaining social distancing where this might be deemed advisable. Disposable gloves are available for handling the notes, coins or envelopes.</p> <p>The basket contents will then be placed in a disposable bag along with the signed collection record sheet and securely quarantined in the church office for a minimum of 48 hours before being processed.</p>	Y				
				<p>Preparation of Communion/Lord's Supper elements:</p> <p>One member of the setup team should bring a sealed loaf and then using disposable gloves break up pieces of bread sufficient for the congregation and place individual pieces on a large tray sufficiently separated so that when they are taken by an individual they would not end up touching any other pieces.</p> <p>Similarly the communion wine should be poured into individual communion cups and placed on another tray in likewise manner.</p>	Y				
				<p>Taking of Communion/Lord's Supper elements:</p> <p>The elements of bread and wine may now be brought around to people instead each household/individuals coming up in turn.</p> <p>Individual pieces of bread will be widely spaced out on a tray and individual pre-filled communion cups will similarly be arranged for people to take.</p>	Y				

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				<p>Sunday school:</p> <p>Where this takes place it will be in the back room next to the kitchen.</p> <p>Parents, if they would prefer their children remain socially distanced should communicate this to the Sunday school teacher(s) and every effort will be taken to keep any mixing/distancing to an appropriate level.</p> <p>All materials and toys that have been used and are not disposed of after the session will be wiped down by the closedown team following the service.</p>	Y				
				<p>Safeguarding:</p> <p>Where any child needs assistance in using the toilet facilities it will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian or a DBS checked Sunday school teacher to attend to this.</p>	Y				
Building exposed to Covid prior to church service/event taking place	5	Transmission of COVID-19 to Churchgoers.	Attendees	<p>Infection prevention control measures:</p> <p>Measures for covering appropriate IPC (Infection Prevention Control) in the setup/closedown procedure would mitigate this hazard - such things as wiping down door/cupboard handles, chairs, commonly touched surfaces etc.</p>	Y	Creation and distribution of setup/close down procedure.	Hedley Clemo & Bola Clemo	N/A	Done
Transmission to the clinically or otherwise vulnerable	6	Transmission of COVID-19 to those who are clinically or otherwise vulnerable.	Clinically or otherwise vulnerable attendees	<p>Clinically or otherwise vulnerable attendees:</p> <p>Remind these people to follow government guidance if they are in high-risk/shielding categories (ultimately up to individuals to choose how to manage their own risk).</p> <p>High-risk volunteers will not be encouraged to help with setup/closedown activities.</p>	Y	<p>Put guidance on the church website to actively discourage those who are clinically or otherwise vulnerable to not attend face-to-face church activities unless they have been designed specifically with these group in mind.</p> <p>Advise all church members for them to consider whether they have any reasons to perhaps avoid attending services in person.</p>	Hedley Clemo	N/A	Done

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Wider outbreak in community	7	COVID-19 case at event leads to potential wider outbreak in the community.	Attendees and wider community	Test and Trace facilities: List of attendees kept, where people have chosen to sign it, to enable NHS Test and Trace. Record to be kept securely for 21 days after event and then destroyed. NHS Test and Trace Check-in QR Code to be made available on the entrance table for any that would like to make use of it.	Y				
		Local outbreak of COVID-19 raises baseline level of exposure at event.	Attendees and wider community	Cancellation of church services/events: Face-to-face church services/events to be cancelled in line with central or local government guidance if required.	Y				