

RESOURCE 2: RISK ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This procedure outlining the risk and the mitigation requirements for the return to Public Pastoral Life of the Church is based on material issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO)², and the *Return to Work Safely Protocol*.³ The procedure is concerned primarily with the risk posed by the virus in an indoor setting. While it is currently not possible to eliminate the risk of exposure to the virus, the risk of the COVID-19 virus being transmitted should be sufficiently controlled by completing the actions outlined in the risk assessment checklist.

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

The Coronavirus is spread in minute water droplets that are expelled from the body through sneezing, coughing, talking, singing, or breathing. It can survive for a period on surfaces, from where it can be transferred to others through touch. While for the vast majority symptoms will be mild, outcomes for some from contracting the virus can be so severe it is regarded as a high-risk hazard. The impact of the virus in the Church environment can be moderated by:

- ✓ reducing the level and duration of exposure
- ✓ ensuring the required physical distancing between household groups and individuals
- ✓ practising strict hygiene protocols
- ✓ suggesting that people who are at high risk from the virus should remain at home and continue to access liturgies online or on radio
- ✓ reminding people who are displaying symptoms or who are close contacts of those who have the virus to stay at home, from where they can continue to access liturgies online or on radio
- ✓ Managing movement within the Church building and on the Church grounds
- ✓ Ensuring all clergy, staff, volunteers, and contractors are aware of the administrative controls to be followed.

3. MITIGATION CONTROLS CHECKLIST

The implementation of mitigation measures are designed to control the risk that the gathering will facilitate COVID-19 virus transmission. Before completing the checklist, it would be useful to collect the following information in advance:

- ✓ who is doing what and how?
- ✓ where they are doing it; and
- ✓ what are they using to carry out the task?
- ✓ what is the current capacity of the building and how will this be reduced?
- ✓ does the space outside and around the Church building allow sufficient space for queuing and managing physical distancing, should the reduction of indoor capacity lead to large numbers requiring the ceremonies to be relayed outside the building?

4. FACILITATING CONTACT TRACING

The *Return To Work Safely Protocol* advocates that the employer has a register to allow the tracing of contacts of an employee presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. It is advisable to have a mechanism in place which allows for this process for clergy, staff, volunteers, and contractors etc. The register should be kept in compliance with the principles of GDPR.

2. Mass Gatherings in the context of COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mass-gathering-risk-assessment-COVID-19-key-considerations>

3. Government of Ireland: COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers (Return to Work Safely Protocol) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol/>

KEY CONSIDERATIONS – MITIGATION (RISK REDUCTION) CHECKLIST

A	Understanding of the COVID-19 situation / Public Health Advice	Done
	Have you established your Parish Support Team	
	Are Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team informed on the most up to date COVID-19 outbreak guidance available and committed to following the available guidance. See www.hse.ie	
	Do Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team understand the COVID-19 risks and transmission routes, the steps that Church attendees can take to limit spread, and the recognised best practices (respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, physical distancing, sanitation practices etc.)	
	Are Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team aware of the meaning of the following measures: quarantine, self-isolation and self-monitoring? www.hse.ie	
B	Staff, Volunteers, Partners and Stakeholders	Done
	Have the number of stewards required been determined, recruited and trained	
	Has a team of volunteer cleaners been recruited and trained	
	Has the Parish Health and Safety Plan been updated to take account of public health crisis	
	Have you a created a contact tracing log (e.g., kept duty rotas on file) for staff and volunteers	
	Have you given consideration to the requirements that may arise in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults	
C	Response & Implementation	Done
	Have the following supplies been acquired: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PPE (masks, gloves, aprons etc) for Parish Personnel and Volunteers ✓ Hand sanitiser, tissues, frequently replaced soap canisters for toilets/bathrooms ✓ Hand sanitiser units for appropriate points in the church 	
	Has advice or material for the disinfection of Audio Systems after use been given	
	Has it been established that doors can be propped open while avoiding trip hazards	
	Have the required number of pews/benches to be blocked off been identified	
	Have you made an assessment of the new capacity of the Church	
	Have you considered how the limited capacity will be communicated to the parishioners	
	Has a space been allocated for parishioners with disabilities and their carers	
	Is there a management plan for access to and movement in the sacristy and sanctuary area	

		Done
	<p>Has a plan been developed to manage risks related to the sacristy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sanitising of liturgical vessels ✓ Avoidance of contamination of altar breads, cruets etc. ✓ Use of same vestments by more than one priest ✓ Sanitising of hand basin etc. 	
	Has a mechanism been agreed for providing everyone with an opportunity to come to Mass while ensuring smaller congregations.	
	Has a cleaning schedule been developed, for the church, sacristy and toilet facilities etc.	
	Is there an agreed safe method in place for the distribution of Holy Communion	
	Is there a plan for a secure means for receiving contributions without the need to pass bags or baskets	
	Have you factored in physical distancing and hygiene measures in your arrangements for counting cash	
	Is there a stewarding plan in place	
	Has an area suitable for the Sacrament of Reconciliation been identified and modified	

D	Command, control, and coordination arrangements	Done
	Is it clear who is responsible for decisions and actions to modify, restrict, postpone or cancel the liturgy in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak	
	Is there a plan for the safety of staff members/volunteers, which is consistent with the <i>Return To Work Safely Protocol</i>	
	Is it clear who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the safety plan	

E	Communications	Done
	Has a plan been prepared for communicating new arrangements and potential risks to parishioners	
	Is there a person(s) tasked with managing communications	
	Has signage regarding physical distancing and the movement of people been prepared or sourced	
	Are badges / sashes / hi-vis jackets for staff and volunteers available to be distributed where required	

F	Surge capacity	Done
	Are there arrangements in place in the event that a greater number of people arrives than can be safely accommodated	
	Are there arrangements in place to call on extra stewards to be available at short notice	
	Has a safe area outside the Church been designated to accommodate surge capacity - mark out areas for physical distancing	