



NEC Reopening Church Buildings Checklist

To be read in conjunction with NEC Risk Assessment Template (July 2021)

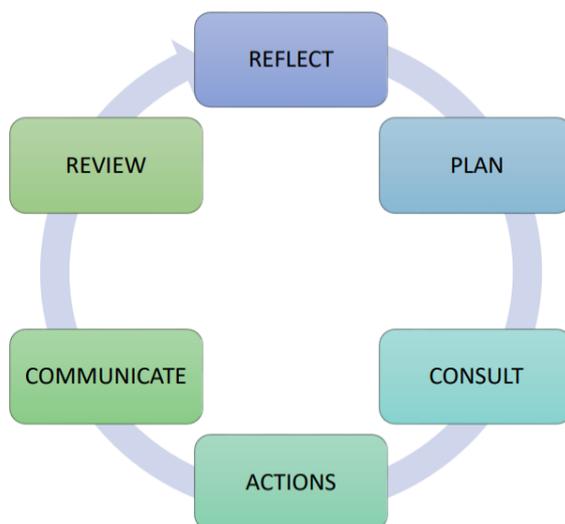
Guidance

The NEC have always communicated the importance of churches carrying out building checks for any activities wishing to take place. With the recent relaxation of restrictions announce by the government, it is crucial that churches adopt a formal process for reopening their buildings to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose. The guidelines below are generalised and to try to cover every eventuality, but we appreciate that all church buildings are different and therefore, any specific queries not addressed by this guidance should be directed to the NEC Executive Secretary and COVID-19 Committee.

Mission, Planning & Monitoring

Deciding to welcome people back to your church building is a significant decision. Allow for planning before opening, with careful management and regular reviews once the building is in use. Taking a positive approach to this will encourage positive discussion, you might consider:

- Allowing plenty of time to fully consider matters, risks, approaches and options.
- Not assuming you can immediately do things 'as you used to do'.
- Being creative and open-minded to new ideas and approaches.
- Managing expectations, listening and learning from mistakes.
- Accepting that 'no', 'not yet' or 'not like this' can be positive decisions.
- Working together and sharing ideas.



The checklist below is designed for use and retention by the local church to inform the risk assessment submitted to NEC. The diagram above promotes a continuous process that churches should endeavour to adopt so that decisions being taken reflect the current (and not a dated) position of the church.

Checks to be Made

1. Airing the Building

Open up the windows and doors where possible in advance of services / events to let the building air out. If the building has been closed during lockdown, there is a risk of excessive dust and mould. The number of persons in the building during this time should be kept to an absolute minimum for safety reasons.

2. Outside the Building Checks

While the building is airing out, check the outside of the building for any obvious concerns which may compromise security or health and safety to those visiting your building.

3. Check Cleanliness of Building

Once the building has aired, check the general cleanliness of the building. Look for any leaks from pipes and make a note of anything that needs to be included during cleaning activity.

4. Electrics

If the electrics were turned off, these will need to be switched back on. Check the lights, light bulbs, emergency lights, fire alarms, security systems are in good working order.

There is risk of deterioration of portable electrical equipment. It is recommended to carefully check all electrical appliances, preferably by having a PAT test. More information can be found [here](#).

5. Heating

If the heating system was turned off, it is recommended to switch it on in order to check for leaks. It is also recommended to gradually increase the temperature as a high spike in temperature could affect any delicate fabrics or natural materials in the building.

6. Water Systems and Legionella

Legionella can occur when water is stagnate for long periods of time. The bacteria can form where droplets of water remain stagnant. During this unprecedented closure of our church buildings, the risks of this happening are increased. It is important that this risk is taken very seriously as part of the overall process of re-opening a church building. Here is the checklist of what should have been done:

1. All water systems should be flushed on a weekly basis (ideally twice/week).
2. All hot water storage systems should be switched off (but not drained) and flushed to prevent the storage of hot / warm water.
3. All taps (hot and cold) should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing.
4. All outside taps should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing.
5. All toilets should be flushed twice at every flushing.
6. All showers should be run for five minutes each at every flushing (ideally run these into a bucket to prevent mist and droplets being breathed in by the tester).
7. All hot water boilers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
8. All dishwashers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
9. Any other water appliance should be flushed (i.e. washing machines).

Checks to be Made

10. If a church has air conditioning and condensers, then they should take separate advice from their maintenance contractor.
11. All inspections and flushing operations should be recorded on a [register](#).

If a building has remained empty for a period of time, then there is a risk that the systems are infected. Therefore, when flushing the systems, ensure that spray and water particles aren't breathed in (wear a mask or stand well clear of the running water and run showers heads into buckets or containers).

Legionella Testing

If the water system **has not** been flushed weekly as described above, then a **test is essential** before re-opening the building. Even if accepted practice has been followed as outlined above, since church buildings of varying ages and conditions, there may still remain some risk, and therefore it is very strongly advised that a test is carried out before reopening. For more information, please refer to [HSE's Guide on Legionella for Duty Holders](#)

7. Musical and PA Equipment Maintenance

Persons responsible for providing music for worship and playing musical instruments (PA personnel, singers and musicians) should take steps to ensure all equipment is cleaned periodically with use and the surfaces sanitised in line with government guidelines. Particular attention should be taken to the likelihood of any equipment coming into contact with anyone attending the church. This may include ensuring you have a supply of wipes, face coverings and gloves to take with you.

8. Cleaning

The building will need to have a good clean to bring it back into good working order. If no one has entered the building for 72 hours, then cleaning for COVID-19 is not required. For further information, read more on [Cleaning Churches during Covid-19](#).

9. COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Use this checklist to complete and submit your NEC Risk Assessment Template for approval by NEC; reflecting what measures have been put in place to enable safe reopening of your church building.