

Health and Safety Policy

Approved by the PCC at its November 2025 meeting.

St James Church Health and Safety Policy is to:

- a) record what we do;**
- b) make sure that we do it; and**
- c) review what we do to make sure that it is still appropriate.**

This document describes how St James Church aims to comply with statutory health and safety legislation. (NB, it does not cover safeguarding risk assessments.)

Changes should be noted in red on an "amendments collector" for this document as they arise over the course of the year, so they are not overlooked at the annual review.

Summary of Statutory Requirements

All organisations are expected to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other regulations made under it, and UK legislation arising as a result of European Union Directives.

The requirements can be summarised as follows:

- As far as is reasonably practicable, provide a healthy and safe working environment.
- Provide suitable and sufficient information and instruction to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities for their own safety and the safety of others.
- Carry out an ongoing risk assessment programme that will identify the hazards and controls required to reduce or eliminate the risks.
- Operate a mechanism to audit and monitor the implementation of this policy.

Scope

All activities undertaken by the church are covered by this policy.

All church employees and volunteers are covered by this policy. There is no distinction between paid and unpaid activities.

This policy and its accompanying schedule have been kept as brief as possible. A full policy document along the lines of the Ecclesiastical Insurance proforma would run to some 20 pages, plus individual risk assessments and procedures for a wide range of activities. By keeping the document simple, the aim is to make it easier to ensure that we actually do what we say we will do.

The schedule attached to this policy lists those activities that are deemed to have health and safety implications, and describes the action that is being taken to manage, reduce or eliminate the risk. This includes the provision of notices, information and training as appropriate.

Annually, the PCC is to review this policy and its schedule to ensure that it is still relevant and complete. The schedule is based on a model policy document issued by Ecclesiastical Insurance which provides a useful list of risks that need to be considered. The PCC, through the Health and Safety Officer, should also check that the action prescribed for managing, reducing or eliminating each risk is still taking place; for example, by checking that Health and Safety Notices are still displayed as recorded in the schedule, and that people are obeying them.

Also annually, "Safe Working Reminders" should be distributed to all volunteers.

These two items are included in the annual schedule in the "PCC Standing Orders".

Health and Safety Officer

The churchwardens jointly act as Health and Safety Officer.

If more extensive management of Health and Safety matters becomes necessary, a dedicated appointment may need to be made.

Schedule of Risk Assessments and Action Taken

The main headings and numbering in this schedule follow an Ecclesiastical Insurance model Health and Safety policy.

1. Accidents and First Aid

All accidents requiring first aid are to be recorded on an Incident Report Form, copies of which are available from dispensers in the corridor outside the Large Hall and in the church. Completed forms are stored in a ring binder in the office. The church administrator should inform the churchwardens when new reports are received. The churchwardens should record any notifiable incidents in the Incident Book, which is held in the office; all incidents are to be considered in terms of their potential recurrence and measures taken to reduce or eliminate the risk if required. The churchwardens should sign off each report to say that it has been reviewed.

(Note: report forms are used to record incidents as it was found that any accessible reporting book quickly went missing.)

First aid supplies are checked regularly and a record book kept of injuries and treatment.

Discovery of a drug-user's needle near the crèche area indicates an increased need to be particularly aware of such hazards. All wardens, sidespeople and crèche workers are to be reminded. (See also section 16, Activities in the Churchyard.)

First Aid Training

The PCC notes (December 2018) that there does not appear to be a statutory requirement to provide first aiders for activities involving children or vulnerable adults in the voluntary sector. The Government's *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage* requires a trained paediatric first aider in professional establishments, but we are not such an establishment. Ecclesiastical Insurance's *Accidents and First Aid* guidance talks only of appointing someone to "take charge of first aid arrangements" and does not specify that first aiders must be present. Indeed, it recognises that there may be periods where adequate first aid support is not available.

Nevertheless, the PCC concluded that having a trained first aider available is highly desirable.

It is the responsibility of the Churchwardens to ensure regular Basic First Aid Training is undertaken.

2. General Fire Safety

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Order sets out the duties of a 'responsible person' for fire safety, a 'competent person' to provide advice, and requires that a fire risk assessment is undertaken and kept under review, and action is taken on any findings of that assessment.

As with much legislation, the Order is written to cover a very wide range of buildings and circumstances, so is not prescriptive on many points. More detailed official guidance is published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the publication which is appropriate for St James Church is *Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly*, which covers buildings designed to hold up to 300 people.

Guidance is also available through the Church of England's parishresources.co.uk website and the Ecclesiastical Insurance website.

Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly says that:

Responsibility for complying with the Order rests with the 'responsible person'. In a workplace, this is the employer and any other person who may have control of any part of the premises, e.g. the occupier or owner. In all other premises the person or people in control of the premises will be responsible.

If you are the responsible person you must carry out a fire risk assessment which must focus on the safety in case of fire of all 'relevant persons'. It should pay particular attention to those at special risk, such as disabled people, those who you know have special needs and children, and must include consideration of any dangerous substance liable to be on the premises. Your fire risk assessment will help you identify risks that can be removed or reduced and decide the nature and extent of the general fire precautions you need to take.

You must appoint one or more competent persons, depending on the size and use of your premises, to assist in undertaking any of the preventive and protective measures required by the Order (you can nominate yourself for this purpose). A competent person is someone with enough training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to be able to implement these measures properly.

It should be noted that the Order does not specify formal qualifications for the 'competent person' or the format for recording the risk assessment or the review period (but the guidance indicates that re-assessment is not required for minor changes).

In St James Church:

- The role of 'responsible person' is undertaken by the churchwardens.
- The role of 'competent person' is undertaken by someone nominated by the PCC.
- The fire risk assessments are recorded on a form published by Ecclesiastical Insurance.
- The fire risk assessment is reviewed annually.
- The muster point is in the road leading to Pegasus Court, which is off site, clear of the church car park, and clear of traffic to the Coal Orchard car park. There is a sign about this on a board outside the Large Hall, and another in the church.
- The Churchwardens' *Aide Memoire* includes a fire evacuation procedure.

Fire extinguishers, smoke and CO alarms

The Church Administrator arranges an annual inspection by an approved contractor of all fire extinguishers in the church, hall and office.

For monthly and weekly testing of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and visual inspection of fire extinguishers see section 20, below.

No smoke detectors are fitted to the church itself. This is because the presence of smoke should be obvious across the whole space, and the high ceiling provides plenty of space for smoke to rise such that evacuation can be completed before it reaches down to head height. (This is from a discussion with a previous church architect.)

Fire evacuation procedures

Fire evacuation procedures for the church are in the churchwardens' "Aide Memoire".

An Emergency Exit sign should be displayed over the South-East door (next to the Side Chapel) when it is unlocked for a service or other event. It should be removed when the door is locked because it is not then a fire exit. The Emergency Exit sign over the North-West door (next to the servery) is hidden when the grille is closed, so does not need to be removed.

Fire evacuation procedures and muster points for the hall and rooms are displayed on notices.

All fire exits must be kept clear of obstructions at all times.

The Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service carried out an inspection on 18 February 2020 and advised "that a reasonable standard of fire safety was evident in the areas that were sampled". In respect of evacuation from the tower, a stretcher case could be brought down the spiral stair from the ringing chamber, but an accident in the belfry might mean seeing if it's possible to lower someone down the central well. If there was a fire trapping people up the tower, the exit onto the nave roof would be usable, and they could get a platform up to the north roof valley.

Maximum Capacity

The capacity we state for the church on the booking form is “around 200 seated with reasonable sight lines, plus a further 150 with restricted view.” Ecclesiastical Insurance advise that capacity is the number of people that can leave the building through fire escapes in 2½ minutes. Their rule-of-thumb is that a single door can accommodate 60 people leaving over this period. (Telephone advice to church administrator November 2017.)

Using the Ecclesiastical rule-of-thumb, this works out as follows:

Main church doors (double)	120
Door to link corridor (single)	60
North door into churchyard (single)	60
Vestry to churchyard (single)	60
South-east door (single)	60
Total	360

Most of these doors have level and straight access, so the numbers are probably conservative. *Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly* (page 64) states: “A width of at least 750mm can accommodate up to ... 120 people in lower risk premises”; i.e. double the number used by Ecclesiastical.

Note: the premises work plan includes a reference to the desirability of converting the north door, the vestry door and the south-east door into proper fire escapes with crush bars and emergency lighting.

Fire escapes for the halls are more than adequate to enable the maximum capacity to leave the building in 2½ minutes.

Fire training

Training in fire awareness and prevention for wardens, deputy wardens, sides people and group leaders is arranged periodically by the churchwardens.

It would also be sensible to remind the congregation of the exits and assembly points annually.

Lightning Conductor

The lightning conductor on the tower is inspected annually.

Donated furniture

Any upholstered furniture donated is to be checked for fireproofing, which should be indicated on a label (not to be removed).

3. Electrical Safety

Fixed Wiring

An EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report) is conducted every five years, and its recommendations are followed up.

All sockets are protected by RCD breakers at the distribution boards, other than those in the boiler house, which will be changed to RCD sockets soon.

Portable Appliances

The Health and Safety Executive’s guidance (HSG107) calls for an appropriate level of testing of electrical equipment. It is not a requirement of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 that every item of electrical equipment fitted with a plug has to be PAT (Portable Appliance Test) tested every year. Ecclesiastical Insurance’s *Electrical Wiring in Churches - Guidance Notes* follow the HSE guidance, though referring to the more detailed IET (Institution of Engineering and Technology) regulations.

For the 2019 round of appliance testing a more detailed schedule has been drawn up, based on whether the appliance is Class I (single insulated) or Class II (double insulated) and the frequency of its use. The testing periods are based on the IET guidance for “offices and shops” (the closest category to our premises). As the IET document is not readily available, here is an excerpt from the table relating to Offices and Shops:

Type of Equipment	User checks	Class I		Class II	
		Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Stationary	none	24 m	48 m	24 m	None
IT	none	24 m	48 m	24 m	None
Movable	weekly	12 m	24 m	24 m	None
Portable	weekly	12 m	24 m	24 m	None
Handheld	before use	6 m	12 m	6m	None

The annual Safe Working Reminders ask all users to watch out for any signs of damage to electrical equipment. If an item of equipment causes a circuit breaker to trip, the reminders say to put an “unsafe” label on it and report it to the church office.

Where an item is suspect, and the church’s technical team do not consider themselves competent to repair it, a repair by a professional firm shall be arranged.

Socket inserts

Socket inserts for 13A mains sockets are not to be used. British mains sockets are safe by design. There are concerns that socket inserts (sold as safety devices) make the sockets less safe. See NHS Estates and Facilities Alert EFA/2016/002.

<https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=102494>.

4. Gas and Pressure Equipment Safety

The Church Administrator arranges an annual inspection by an approved contractor of the main gas boilers and the gas heaters in the hall and link corridor.

The kitchen gas supply is fully equipped with automatic cut outs.

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000 (PSSR)

An annual engineering inspection is carried out of the two gas boilers and associated pressure equipment to ensure compliance with the above regulations. This is because the heating system operates under pressure and includes a pressure vessel. The inspection procedure constitutes the Written Scheme of Examination required by PSSR.

[Note: this used to be organised by Ecclesiastical Insurance, but from 2024 we have had to arrange it ourselves. We use BES Group to do this, as they were the firm used by Ecclesiastical.]

The safety valve on the pressure vessel circuit needs to be replaced every four years to meet the regulations. The old valve is then sent away for recertification and acts both as a spare and the next replacement. The safety valves on the two boilers (which operate at 1.5 bar) do not need to be replaced because this part of the system is contained within the boiler casings and so poses minimal risk to anyone in the boiler house should there be a malfunction. Furthermore, the boiler house is not used for any other purpose, which reduces to a minimal level the possibility of someone being present during a malfunction.

5. Hazardous Substances

Discarded Drug Users’ Needles and other dangerous detritus

From time to time, drug users leave needles in unexpected places. Previously, this was especially a problem when the Medical Centre operated a needle exchange service; since that ceased, needles are found only occasionally. A thorough search in October 2017 revealed no needles. But it should be assumed that a needle may be present, anywhere on the premises that is accessible to the public.

The caretaker keeps an approved container for collecting used needles. When full, this is collected by the local authority and a new container supplied.

If available, gloves should be used when handling needles. Otherwise, used syringes may be picked up carefully by the body, taking care to keep the needle well away from the skin.

The Safe Working Reminders recommend that anyone finding a needle does not touch it, but instead to report it to the caretaker or a church officer, who will deal with it.

A check should be made for needles before any children's activity.

- Crèche: the sofas should be examined carefully by removing the cushions – don't feel between the cushions with your fingers.
- Churchyard: first search the perimeter and under trees, as these are the locations where needles are more likely to have been used. If any needles are found, consider relocating the activity. While conducting this check, also keep a lookout for other detritus that would be dangerous for children – dead birds and broken glass have been found from time to time.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

Cleaning chemicals are kept in a locked cupboard, inside the cleaners' cupboard in the inner storeroom.

A file of chemical datasheets is held in the office (to comply with COSHH regulations). The hazard level of all cleaning chemicals is low.

The Church Administrator's weekly checklist refers to the need to obtain data sheets for any new chemicals that are ordered. The monthly checklist calls for an annual review of the datasheets in the COSHH folder.

Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 (Updated 2012)

Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 concerns the management of asbestos in non-domestic premises. HSE booklet L127 (2nd edition, 2006) is the Approved Code of Practice which explains what is required. Essentially, building managers must take reasonable steps to find asbestos, otherwise they must presume that asbestos is present unless there is strong evidence to the contrary; if asbestos is found, it must be dealt with appropriately. It is recognised that it is not practicable to open up every part of every building to see if asbestos is present, and that it is better to leave asbestos undisturbed if there is no work planned on a building. A full survey of premises is therefore not mandatory.

We are not aware of any asbestos on the premises:

- We are certain that there was no asbestos used in the construction of the church or subsequent repair using the same type of materials.
- We presume that the organ maintainers would have notified us if any asbestos had been found in the area of the organ and its blower.
- The hall was built before asbestos was used. The kitchen was refurbished in 2011 and the Large Hall in 2014, and no asbestos was found.
- The hall roof uses concrete slate substitute, and we have been informed by people working on it that it does not contain asbestos.
- The other buildings were erected after building regulations prohibited the use of asbestos: The link corridor, offices, and toilets were built in 1985 and the boiler house rebuilt at the same time. The Small Hall and Lounge were added in 1995.

In the words of the Code of Practice, "Employers of building maintenance and repair workers are required to carry out a risk assessment before undertaking any work which exposes, or is liable to expose, employees to asbestos." We should therefore be able to rely on contractors to tell us if they think that asbestos might be present.

If asbestos is found (and not removed), there is a duty to maintain a record of it. We have only been asked on one occasion to present our "Asbestos Register", but there is no such document referred to in the regulations. Should anyone ask to see a record or register, they should be referred to this present statement.

Legionnaires' Disease

HSE has issued publication L8: *Legionnaires' Disease - Approved Code of Practice and guidance on regulations*, which sets out building managers' duties (under the Health and Safety at Work Act) in preventing outbreaks of the deadly Legionnaires' Disease.

Ecclesiastical Insurance has issued guidelines based on these regulations. They state:

In many cases, the risk will be low, particularly where:

- *The building is small without individuals especially 'at risk' from legionella bacteria*
- *Daily water usage is inevitable and sufficient to turn over the entire system*
- *Cold water is directly from a wholesome mains supply (no stored water tanks)*
- *Hot water is fed from instantaneous heaters or low volume water heaters (supplying outlets at 50 °C)*
- *The only outlets are toilets and wash hand basins (i.e. no showers).*

Where simple checks show that the risk is low and being properly managed, you may need to take no further action.

A Legionella Risk Assessment was carried out (by Convections Ltd, our usual plumbers) in January 2021. The overall assessment was low risk. Points to note are:

- The hot water temperature from the two water heaters (toilets/servery and kitchen) is a little over 50°C, so within the range at which legionella cannot multiply. This is above the 44°C recognised as the lower limit of the range at which scalding can occur, but not so high as to pose a risk when washing hands. Accordingly, mixing valves are not needed to reduce the temperature at hand washing basins.
- It is advisable to display "hot water" signs at the hand washing basins.
- It is recommended to periodically check the temperature from both water heaters, say annually.
- The cold water supply pipe to the vestry toilet runs close to the heating pipes in church, so could warm up to above the 20°C at which legionella can multiply. Weekly flushing of this pipe is recommended: if the toilet is flushed each week when being cleaned this may be sufficient, alongside people using the outside tap when attending graves in the churchyard.
- There are no dead legs in the water system where legionella could accumulate. The disused supply to the lounge has an isolation valve.

6. Safety of Plant and Machinery

Inspection

The churchwardens shall carry out annually a visual check of all items that have a safety implication (for example, the suspended OHP screen and its fittings; the First Aid boxes, etc). A report shall be made to the PCC that this has been done, and the list of relevant equipment updated.

Tombstones

Maintenance of the monuments in the churchyard is the responsibility of Taunton Deane Borough Council. TDBC took over this responsibility in 1972, following a request from the Parochial Church Council under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the church still owns the land itself). Nevertheless, the church still has reputational risk should any incident occur, so the churchwardens inspect all monuments annually and report any work required to TDBC.

In 2013, the churchwardens identified health and safety risks with some chest tombs and reported them to TDBC, who visited the site but did not carry out any work. Enquiries with TDBC were fruitless, as it seemed that nobody at the council had responsibility for these matters. A letter was later sent to the chief executive, and acknowledged, but there was no further response.

7. Slips, Trips and Falls

There are no notable trip hazards in most parts of the church premises in regular use.

Trips have occurred on the upper step from the nave to the chancel. This is now marked by a wooden edging strip in a contrasting colour to the carpet.

A potential trip hazard is formed each Sunday Morning in the chancel by the cables for the music team and projector. Since the only people using the area are those setting out the equipment, no special precautions are normally needed. If audio/visual cables might create a trip hazard elsewhere, they should be taped down.

On wet days, the stone slabs outside some doors become very slippery, and should be checked before use:

- South-West door (by the crèche): if this is used as main entrance (e.g. for some school events) or as a fire exit, "Slippery when wet" signs should be displayed on the inside of the outer door, and on the gate to the street.
- North-East door (from the outer vestry): this is generally only used by working parties, so a verbal warning is sufficient.

The outside path leading to the South-East door (by the Side Chapel) is uneven and can lead to falls if care is not taken. The worn stone slabs need to be replaced or surfaced with tarmac, which will need a faculty.

The car park is gritted over each winter by a contractor employed by St James Medical Centre. The need for gritting is determined by the contractor according to a weather-forecast dependent formula. The church reimburses the Medical Centre for one-third of the cost via a rebate on the annual charge for their use of the car park.

8. Lighting

There are no lighting issues for those parts of the church premises in regular use.

For changing light bulbs in most high fittings, there are no risks other than those detailed below under "Ladders".

The preferred method for changing the main lights in the nave and aisles is to use a contractor.

Emergency lighting

Emergency lighting is installed throughout the premises. For monthly and annual testing see section 20, below.

9. Working at High Levels

The general policy is to always have two or more people present when working at height. Having a mobile phone is insufficient mitigation, as a fall may render you unconscious, and there may be no signal in the place where you fall. The second person is there primarily to render assistance in case of an accident, and to provide a second opinion on whether the ladder is set up safely. They may also steady a long ladder. Holding the base of a ladder is not an adequate protection against slipping (this applies mainly outside, if the ground is wet).

There are no areas within the church that require the use of harnesses or other safety devices when carrying out routine work (e.g. changing light bulbs, painting, cleaning, minor repairs).

Working at Height Checklist

- ☐ Is there somebody with you?
- ☐ Is the ladder at the correct angle: one unit out for every four units high?
- ☐ Is the base of the ladder level so that it does not lean sideways?
- ☐ Is the base of the ladder secure so that it does not slip on the ground?
- ☐ Is the top of the ladder resting on a solid surface, and not twisted?
- ☐ Don't lean out – if you can't reach with your arms alone, it's not safe.

Ladders

Each ladder storage location should have a notice requiring that a minimum of two persons should be present during all work involving a ladder.

The tall ladders in the choir vestry are secured to prevent unauthorised use (and theft).

For most ladder work, such as when changing light bulbs, the amount of time a person is up the ladder is less than would be needed to attach the ladder to a secure fixing point; therefore no such points have been provided.

The two-part tall ladder in the vestry must not be extended beyond the red mark painted on it. It is safe to use at lower heights, but the frame above this point is damaged. A notice is displayed at the ladder storage location explaining this.

Roof work

At least two people should be present when venturing onto the roof from the door in the tower. The main risk is in slipping off the roof ladders leading down to the valleys.

When requiring access to the roof void, at least two people are required to remove the heavy covers from the roof hatches. The presence of a third person is desirable.

Gutters

When undertaking the annual gutter clearing exercise, the churchwardens shall ensure that at least three people are present, at least two of whom should have a good head for heights. This is so that one person does not have to work at height for a long period. No anchor points for ladders are in place, but consideration may need to be given to installing these in future.

10. Preparation of Food

The kitchen has been assessed for health and safety, and to meet current food hygiene regulations. Several church members have been trained in food preparation. When food preparation involves cooking, a trained person should be present.

The gas supply in the kitchen is interlocked with the fire system, and the roller shutter also closes if the gas alarm is activated.

There is a safety notice next to the roller shutter control advising that anyone closing the shutter should watch out in case children are playing nearby and take too close an interest – the shutter is heavy and could cause injury if a hand is in the way.

Children should not normally use the kitchen unless supervised. There is a safety notice outside the kitchen explaining this.

Food thermometers are available. The Church Administrator should check periodically that they have not gone missing.

The 2016 Food Standard Agency guidelines state that

A community hall kitchen will not need to be registered as a food business on its own, even if it used by several volunteer groups. Registration only applies to (e.g.) a group using the community hall kitchen if their food activities meet the description of an undertaking. Of course, groups using halls should ensure the kitchen areas are kept clean. The hall management should ensure it is structurally sound and meets any other relevant legislation.

The example activities in the guidelines indicate that the present use of the kitchen and servery at St. James' does not need to be registered.

Several church members have been trained in food hygiene.

11. Manual Handling

Most tables are lightweight and do not require special procedures. A trolley is available for the stacking of the majority of the tables and can be transported from the halls to the church if required. The large table in the hall and the communion table are both obviously heavy and can only be moved by two people, so present little risk. Trolleys are available for the movement of stacks of chairs. Special trolleys are available for the storage and movement of the main communion rails.

Pianos and the Clavinova are positioned so as to minimise the need for movement. The Clavinova is obviously very heavy, and there is no need for a notice to draw attention to the fact.

Suspended OHP screen

Persons erecting and removing the suspended OHP screen shall be supervised by at least one person who is familiar with the correct procedures for doing this.

Staging

The storage location for the staging shall have a notice drawing attention to the need to take great care when placing chairs on the staging to minimise the risk of chair legs from moving over the edge. The notice should also draw attention to the desirability of using the guard rails when the staging is used at its higher level.

The staging units require at least two people to lift them and do not present any particular risk when handling.

12. Display Screen Equipment

Computer equipment and display screens in the church office have been arranged to suit the requirements of their users. Screens have an adjustable viewing angle and chairs are also adjustable. The present desk is not adjustable, but would be modified if required.

13. Hazardous Buildings/Glazing

Windows below waist height

The only windows below waist height are those in the office and link corridor. They have a horizontal wooden bar midway and there is no danger of anyone walking into them unawares.

Doors with glazing below shoulder height

The internal main church doors have glazing below shoulder height. It is understood that safety glass was specified when they were installed.

Glazing panels in other doors are narrower than the maximum width for non-safety glass.

14. Safeguarding

The operation of the Safeguarding Policy is covered elsewhere and is reviewed annually by the PCC.

A high-level latch is provided on the external door from the Link Corridor to the Car Park to prevent young children letting themselves out.

15. Personal Safety / Lone Working

The diocesan guidance (as at 2017) for lone working (primarily for home visiting) is as follows:

- Carry a charged mobile phone
- Know your church's policy
- Make sure a colleague or a family member knows where you are going and the time to expect you back
- Whist on home visits make sure you can easily access and exit
- If the person you are visiting seems under the influence of alcohol or drugs, rearrange the visit
- If you think you are in danger – leave immediately – and seek advice from a church colleague, the safeguarding officer and/or the vicar
- Make a record and pass your concerns on.

The church recognises that the layout of the building makes it impossible to secure the office spaces separately from areas used for public events. As much as possible has been done to enhance safety of staff, including:

- spy-holes in the office doors,
- latches that do not need a key to operate,
- a pendant that can be used to activate the alarm system,
- a CCTV system to enable anyone in the office to see what is happening in the corridor outside and the approach to it from the car park,

- an electrically-operated lock on the main door into the link corridor that can be controlled from the corridor or the office.

Anyone working alone on church premises outside office hours is encouraged to keep the outer doors locked and to have access to a telephone in case of emergencies.

Abusive persons on church property should not be tackled directly, whether verbally or physically. If a situation develops:

- The person should be warned that if they do not leave church property, the police WILL be called.
- Whoever gives the warning should then move away from the abusive person and be prepared to leave the site if they are followed.
- The police should then be called (101 normally, 999 if someone is being threatened).
- If there is the possibility of damage being done, a keyholder may be called if it is safe to access the church or hall doors.

16. Other Activities

Bell ringing

Bellringers should follow safe working practices as determined by the Diocesan Association of Change Ringers (ref: *Health and Safety in the Bell Tower*, January 2021).

Any work on the bells should be supervised by the Tower Captain. At least two people are to be present during any work on the bells in case of an accident.

The main risk to other people arises from leaving bells “up” after ringing. It is the practice of the bell ringers to always “ring down” the bells after use. On some occasions (e.g. weddings), bells may be left “up” after practices so that they are ready to be rung; on such occasions, the ringers group the ropes together in the centre of the ringing chamber and attach a notice to them.

Tower tours

It is considered that there are no unusual risks associated with running tours up the tower.

Most potential visitors will be aware of the nature of the staircase from the initial view from the bottom door, and will also be aware of the amount of climbing involved. Nevertheless, it is good practice for guides to remind visitors (especially elderly persons) of the number of steps.

Parties should be restricted ideally to a maximum of ten visitors, at least two of whom should be adults.

The ringing chamber may be used for parties to pass each other. Visitors should not be allowed in the ringing chamber, the chamber above or the belfry when the bells are “up”.

On emerging on top of the tower, guides should point out the risk of walking into the wires supporting the flagpole.

It is an insurance requirement that no child under the age of 8 goes up the tower.

Consideration has been given to installing a rope handrail up the tower. There have been no recorded slips or falls in the tower, and the narrowness of the stair means that sufficient support may be obtained directly from contact with the walls. There is insufficient width to install a rope on the topmost section of the stair.

Sponsored events

A risk assessment should be carried out for any sponsored event organised by the church. An assessment is not required for events organised by other bodies in which church members are participating.

Fireworks

The space within the trees in the churchyard is too small to maintain a full safety zone for firework displays.

Parish Ramble

The person organising the annual Parish Ramble is to complete a risk assessment to ensure that the route is suitable for the expected participants and to ensure that advice is given as to the type of footwear, weatherproof clothing, etc that is recommended. He or she shall also ensure that the party is equipped with at least one first aid kit. A mobile phone should be carried by the leader.

Concerts and events in church

For all one-off hirings of the church itself, a church representative will unlock, brief the organisers and return to lock afterwards.

For small numbers (under about 100), the main church doors are a sufficient means of escape in case of fire. Normally, the link corridor is also open for access to the toilets, and provides an alternative means of escape. For larger events, the church will decide whether to unlock additional doors for fire escape purposes and put up green “running man” fire escape signs, as detailed in the churchwardens’ “Aide Memoire”.

Hirers are offered a church representative to be present all of the time, if someone is available.

Community Places of Safety scheme

St James Church and halls are registered with Somerset County Council’s *Community Places of Safety* Scheme, which holds details of buildings that can be used as temporary refuge in the event of people needing to be evacuated in an emergency, for example fire or flood. Operations would be directed by the council, acting through the multi-agency Somerset Prepared Partnership (<https://www.somersetprepared.org.uk/about/>). We have assumed that any hirers who might be on the premises would recognise the nature of an emergency and cooperate with the authorities.

17. Risk Assessments

The Risk Assessment Policy provides:

- Guidance on how to conduct risk assessments, including reference to the risks detailed in this present document;
- A form for recording such assessments;
- A list of risk assessments held on file in the church office.

A risk assessment should be carried out for any new activity, and the results recorded.

Key points from this document are issued as the *Safe Working Reminders* summary to all volunteers annually.

18. Contractors

When contractors are working on church premises, the person admitting them (normally the Church Administrator) shall satisfy him/herself that the work is being undertaken safely.

The church architect will normally manage larger contracts involving the church building, and will take health and safety issues into account via standard terms of contract.

19. Information and Enforcement

The HSE poster “Health and Safety Law – What you should know” is displayed outside the office. This is required when an organisation has paid employees.

A copy of the latest Health and Safety Policy document shall be displayed alongside the statutory notice.

20. Monthly and Annual Testing of Safety Equipment

Safety equipment is examined and tested as follows:

- Weekly: Smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.
- Monthly: Emergency lights (plus an extended annual check) according to BS5266-1:2011.
- Monthly: Fire extinguishers (visual check).

The test procedure and results are recorded in a ring binder held in the church office.