



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

BIGGLESWADE

PCC of the Parish of St Andrew's Biggleswade

Health and Safety Policy

August 2025

St Andrew's Church Shortmead St, Biggleswade SG18 0AT

As a church, we understand that we owe a duty of care to ensure the safety of those who visit or use our church, hall or churchyard. We also know that, where we are an employer or control premises in certain circumstances, we have to meet the requirements of health and safety law. In particular, we know that if we are an employer having five or more employees, we are required to have a written health and safety policy. As such, we have drafted this policy to meet our duty under Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

General statement of policy

Our policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that our activities are carried out safely and do not pose a risk to the health of our employees, volunteers, congregation, visitors and others who may use the church, churchyard or any other building we are responsible for. This will be in accordance with good practice and any relevant statutory provisions where they apply.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) accepts its overall responsibility for this. We will ensure that adequate resources are made available to achieve this objective. Any decisions we make will have due regard for it.

We will appoint a member of the PCC to have specific responsibility for this policy and its implementation. To keep matters under review, we will include 'health and safety' as a standing item on the agenda for all meetings of the PCC. We will monitor the effectiveness of the policy, amending it where we believe it is no longer valid.

It is the duty of each employee and volunteer to exercise personal responsibility for their own safety and that of others. This policy will be brought to their attention. We will try to ensure that everyone involved with the church plays their part in its implementation.

Further detail about our organisation and arrangements for managing health and safety is set out in this document. A copy of it will be kept in the church and made available to others on request.

Signed:

On Behalf of the Parochial Church Council

Date:

Organisation and responsibilities

Responsibility of the Vicar

Overall responsibility for Health & Safety is that of the Vicar (or in a vacancy, the Churchwardens), who will ensure that arrangements are in place to satisfy Health & Safety Regulations and appropriate Codes of Practice. Specific responsibilities may be delegated to church personnel.

Responsibility of the Churchwardens

Responsibility to ensure that the arrangements outlined in this policy are carried out and updated as necessary is with the Churchwardens.

Responsibility of the Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council has general responsibility to ensure that the Health & Safety Policy is implemented.

Health and Safety Officer

The person with overall responsibility for implementing our policy is:

Chris Parker

Peter Giles (Interim)

They will ensure that the arrangements set out in this policy satisfy any health and safety law, seeking specialist health and safety advice if necessary.

Other Health and Safety Personnel

The following persons have day-to-day responsibility for implementing our policy. They are:

No Current Appointments

They will ensure that the arrangements set out in this policy are carried out.

Employees and Volunteers

All employees and volunteers have a responsibility to cooperate in the implementation of this policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others while on church business or premises.

Arrangements

This section sets out our general arrangements for managing health and safety and dealing with specific risks.

General Arrangements

Competent Assistance

Where necessary, we will appoint someone who is competent to assist us in meeting our health and safety obligations. Where such an appointment is made, we will record the details here:

No Current Appointments

Risk Assessment

Where necessary, we will complete risk assessments to identify what we need to do to comply with health and safety law. We will record our findings, implementing any necessary precautions. We will review and revise these where we suspect that they are no longer valid.

Information and Training

We will provide any necessary information and training for our employees and volunteers in a timely manner. We will keep a record of what is provided. We will also give relevant information to contractors and self-employed people who may need this to complete their work safely.

First Aid

We will provide adequate first aid facilities including – as a minimum – a suitably stocked first aid box and a person who will take charge of the first aid arrangements. We will also provide relevant information for employees and volunteers.

Location of First Aid Boxes:

First aid boxes are located in the Chapter House kitchen, Ivel Room and Church vestry and are maintained by the First Aid Coordinator.

The church will maintain a defibrillator outside the North door (Foyer entrance) that is accessible at all time.

People in Charge of First Aid Arrangements are:

The Church Wardens

A list of trained first aiders will be recorded on the H&S notice board.

Groups using the Church or Chapter House facilities are responsible for their own first aid provision as stated in the Conditions of Hire.

Accident Reporting

We will record details of any accidents that occur, (in an accident book if required). We will report to the enforcing authority and keep records of certain accidents to employees, volunteers and members of the public in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

All accidents and incidents must be reported to one of the Churchwardens within 24 hours using an Accident Report Form. Accident Report Forms shall be available on the H&S notice board in the Chapter House.

Groups using the Church or Chapter House facilities are also required to report accidents in this way, as stated in the Conditions of Hire.

Records of any Accidents are kept in:

The Church Log Book in the Sacristy

Accident report forms are available in the foyer.

Additionally, the Health and Safety officer will keep a record of concerns raised and near misses reported and, where necessary, report any issues or trends to the Church Wardens.

Monitoring

We will make periodic checks to ensure that our precautions remain effective and adequate. We will also ensure that any lifting, work or electrical equipment and church utilities are inspected as necessary to ensure that they remain safe. We will keep records of the checks we make.

Contractors

If we employ contractors, we make sure that they have their own health & safety policy and Public and Employers Liability insurance by asking to see copies of the relevant documents.

Specific Arrangements

Asbestos

We will take steps to identify the presence of asbestos in our buildings and, if so, assess any risk from it. We will then implement any plan to manage that risk. We will also provide relevant information to others who might need it (e.g. building contractors). We will keep records of the checks, assessments and plans we have made.

Bell Ringing

We will ensure that adequate precautions are in place to protect bellringers and others who may enter the ringing room and bell chamber. This may include any emergency evacuation procedure; a safe means of heating; the provision of fire extinguishers, the provision of emergency lighting and the notification of safety procedures to visiting bellringers.

Church Buildings

We will ensure that the fabric of our buildings is regularly inspected to make sure it is safe. Defects will be repaired as soon as is practicable bearing in mind that a faculty may be required. Where necessary, temporary measures will be taken to prevent danger until permanent repairs can be made. This will include glazing.

Churchyard

We will ensure that boundary walls and gates are kept in good repair. Where appropriate, we will have trees inspected by a competent person and have any necessary work carried out to make them safe. Headstones tombs and monuments will be checked regularly to ensure they are properly maintained. Where our churchyard is formally closed, we will report any concern to the Local Authority or Parish Council.

Construction Work

Where maintenance, refurbishment and restoration work is planned for our church, we will identify what we need to do to ensure the safety of all those concerned before work starts. We will also determine if we have any responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and comply with these if necessary.

Display Screen Equipment

Where our employees regularly use computers daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more we will analyse workstations to identify precautions, implementing these as necessary. We will also provide information, training, eye/eyesight tests (on request) and special spectacles if needed.

Electricity

We will ensure that any electrical system, fixed machine and portable appliances is inspected, tested and maintained by someone who is competent to prevent danger. Any defective equipment will not be used until it is repaired or replaced. We will keep records of the checks made.

Events

Where we intend to hold large or unusual concerts, services or other fund-raising events, we will identify any additional precautions that are necessary and implement these.

Fire

We will complete a specific risk assessment to identify what steps are necessary to prevent, detect and take in the event of a fire. We will record our findings, implementing any necessary precautions. We will review and revise these where we suspect that they are no longer valid.

Normal Fire Procedures can be found at Annex 1 of this policy.

Fire extinguishers and other fire protection equipment are kept in the following locations:

Location	Type of extinguisher or other equipment
Church, nr Vestry Door	CO2 extinguisher
Church, nr Barnet Door	Foam extinguisher
Church, back of Rood Screen	Fire blanket
Church, nr South Door	Foam extinguisher, fire blanket
Church, nr North Door	Fire blanket
Church, behind PA desk	CO2 extinguisher
Church, Choir Vestry	CO2 extinguisher
Ivel Room, nr main door	Foam and CO2 extinguishers
Chapter House, main hall	None
St John's Hall, by fire exit doors	Foam extinguisher
Kitchen, by kitchen door	Powder extinguisher
Kitchen, on work surface	Fire blanket
Kitchen Between Shutters	CO2 Extinguisher

Heating Systems

We will ensure that any oil or gas heating system is suitably maintained and checked annually by a competent person. Any defects found will be corrected immediately and we will keep records of the checks made.

Hazardous Substances

We only use domestic cleaning or horticultural products and petrol. We will ensure that these are stored, used and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions taking any necessary precautions that are specified.

Lifting Equipment

We will ensure that any lifting equipment is properly maintained and thoroughly examined periodically by a competent person.

Manual Handling

We will avoid the need for lifting or carrying heavy objects as far as is possible. Where this is not practical, we will make use of lifting aids (such as, trolleys) or other precautions including team lifting.

Preparation of Food

We will ensure that on those occasions when we prepare food we use a clean and disinfected work surface, utensils and equipment. We will store food in such a way as to avoid contamination, provide hand-washing facilities and suitable arrangements for the disposal of waste. We will comply with CBC Food Safety Inspections, ensuring certificates are available to anyone who uses the kitchen, with copies stored by the Health and Safety Officer.

Slips and Trips

We will implement suitable precautions to prevent slips or trips, taking account of any difficulty the frail, elderly or disabled may have in negotiating access. We will make periodic checks to ensure that floors, coverings, steps and pathways remain in good condition, free from obstruction and that any precautions (such as, hand rails, lighting) remain adequate. We will correct any defects identified, keeping records of the checks we make. We will have arrangements in place to manage pathways in winter weather.

Working at Height

Where possible we will try and avoid the need for work at height. Where this is not practicable, we will ensure that any work is properly planned to identify suitable

precautions. We will make sure that these are implemented, including the provision of any training and checks to ensure the safety of any equipment used.

Appropriate locations and methods for regular working at height are in annex 2 of this policy.

Work Equipment

Any work equipment (including any hand tools) we provide will be suitable, in good condition and properly maintained. Where necessary, some equipment (such as, ladders) will be regularly checked to make sure they are safe. We will keep records of any checks we make.

Working Alone

We will identify circumstances where our employees and volunteers work alone, and implement suitable precautions to ensure their safety.

Annex 1: Normal Fire Procedures

These procedures for the normal running of events and services. For specific events or activities, additional or amended processes might be needed following risk assessment.

Procedure on discovering a fire (no matter how small)

1. Immediately raise the alarm.
2. Telephone the emergency services.
3. Check the building for occupants.
4. Assist in the evacuation of the building, ensuring that all doors are closed behind you. The general rule is people before property.
5. Evacuate to the designated assembly point (in the churchyard by the Vicarage garden).
6. Ensure clear access for the emergency vehicles.
7. Ensure no one re-enters the building until the all-clear is given.

Evacuation procedure

For large services or events, our procedures for stewarding and evacuation are as follows:

1. All designated fire doors will be unlocked before the service or event commences and must be clearly marked as fire exits using the 'Running Man' symbol.
2. A check will be made that all doors can be opened.
3. A trained steward will be allotted to each door and have responsibility for persons in a specific part of the church.
4. Torches will be made available for each steward.
5. Persons will assemble in the area of the churchyard outside of the Vicarage garden.
6. The emergency services will be contacted immediately by a steward or group leader.

Annex 2: Working at Heights.

These procedures are for the normal running of the church. Certain activities may require additional or different procedures follow risk assessment or on specialist of contractor guidance.

The following areas are designated as high levels:

- The clerestory, church roofs, and church hall roofs.

Only the following persons may work at high level:

- Approved contractors, competent voluntary workers.

Competent voluntary workers must use the following methods to gain access to and work in the following locations. Voluntary workers must always work in pairs in these locations.

Location	Access method
South aisle roof	Access via the Priest's room stairs only.
South nave roof	Access via ladder from south aisle roof.
Vestry roof	Access via ladder from ground level.
North aisle roof	Access via ladder from vestry roof.
North nave roof	Access via ladder from vestry roof.
South chancel roof	Access via ladder from ground level to perimeter of roof only. Special care to be taken due to low parapets.
North chancel roof	Access via ladder from vestry roof to perimeter of roof only. Special care to be taken due to low parapets.
Tower roof	Access via bell tower, special care to be taken by low parapet.
Chapter House roof	Access via ladder from ground level.
Bell chamber	Access via the ringing chamber.
Clerestory	Access via tower scaffolds erected by a competent person. Access via ladders by volunteers is not permitted.

Only the following work is authorised at high levels without special agreement from the PCC:

1. Replacing light bulbs in the nave,
2. Clearing leaves and debris from the roof gutters and hoppers (see note **),
3. Access to the flagpole on top of the church tower,

4. Routine bell maintenance, including clock winding.

** Note, when clearing debris from Church gutter hopper heads, access should be made via a ladder on the outside wall, not by leaning over parapets from the roof.

Annex 3: Information

Environmental Health Service Information:

Central Bedfordshire Council,

Priory House,

Monks Walk,

Chicksands,

Shefford,

Beds.

SG17 5TQ

Tel: 0300 300 8302

Email: customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Website: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Employment Medical Advisory Service Information:

The Medical Advisory Service is a part of the Health and Safety Executive and is able to provide guidance on health matters.

Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS),

AW House,

6 – 8 Stuart Street,

Luton,

Beds.

LU1 2SJ

Tel: 01582 444200