

# Guidance Note for Risk Assessments

**Completing a risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork.** It is about identifying sensible precautions for our church.

**The level of detail required should be proportionate to the risk.** This means that for most small churches presenting few or simple hazards, the risk assessment can be based on informed judgement and reference to appropriate guidance.

Generally, **you can ignore insignificant** risks or those associated with life in general. However, where the church activity adds to or significantly alters these, you will need to consider them. You are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks.

## How do we get started?

Risk assessments sound complicated; the sort of thing only a trained person could undertake. This is not the case. In fact, for most churches it can be quite straightforward to complete. Put simply, you need to think about what might cause harm to people. You then need to decide if you are taking reasonable precautions.

As with other tasks we are faced with in everyday life, this can seem daunting at first. It is often difficult to know where to start, how best to go about it, or decide when you have done enough. However, following these simple steps while using this template should guide you easily through the process.

## Step 1: Identifying the hazards

These are the things that can harm people. Walk around the inside and outside of your church to identify them, deciding how likely it is that harm could occur. Remember to include those hazards that might arise from particular activities, or other events.

Sometimes, it is much easier if you break this task down into bite-sized pieces, completing one piece at a time. Imagine you are about to decorate your house, you wouldn't think of attempting to do every room in one go. Normally, you would start in one room and gradually work your way through the house until the task is complete. The same is true of completing risk assessments. In some cases, it may be easier to consider separate areas of your church, one at a time. These could include:  
Areas open to the public e.g the Vestibule, the Sanctuary The Hall, the toilets the classrooms outside areas etc.

Areas only accessed by a small number of people with specific roles (for example, the Kitchen (apart from hiring out) office, loft, boiler room, etc.)

Areas sometimes accessed by the public for example the Kitchen when hired out)

## Step 2: Deciding if your precautions are adequate

Having identified the hazards, you should then consider the adequacy of the precautions you have in place. You should also decide if there is more that you need to do. You can then record your findings on the template.

It will normally be sufficient to note the main points about the significant risks and what you concluded.

Keep your comments simple, but bear in mind that you may want to show that you made a proper check. This would include showing that you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be harmed **and that the precautions are reasonable**.

Remember that removing the hazard is always the best form of prevention and many things can be put right straightaway.

For Example:

You discover a large quantity of combustible material in a cupboard. Here, disposing of this safely and removing the need for their use in future will be very effective.

Sometimes, understanding what health and safety regulations apply to you and referring to guidance will help you decide if you are doing enough. This is particularly so where there is a significant risk of injury – for example, from working at height or using electrical equipment. To make this easier, we have provided some simple information to help you understand what is required.

## Step 3: Record and review your assessments

Using the template will help you record your findings.

As we own premises, we have to complete more specific risk assessments for certain hazards (for example, asbestos, fire, etc.) Any assessment you make must be reviewed (and amended if necessary) where you think it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change. Any review you complete should be recorded.

Before completing the form consider whether there have been accidents in the past. Ask if anyone could remember any accidents. Also ask if any other users of the church or anyone who had done work for the church had reported any concerns regarding health and safety.

Walk around the area to be assessed and note anything that might cause harm. Consider how accidents might happen and how serious the outcome of those might be. Note if there are any precautions in place or any additional ones we could take. If it is possible to eliminate the risk entirely, do this as soon as possible but check with the Fabric steward/ church secretary

Communicate the findings to the Fabric Steward and the Church Secretary who will put the risk assessment into practice, making sure that each identified action is progressed, noting when each one is completed on this template.

Review and update your risk assessments where it is possible that they are no longer valid.

### **Some things to look out for:**

**Remember, this list is not exhaustive and there could be others you may need to consider.**

#### **Trip Hazards:**

- Worn or unfixed carpet edges, rugs or doormats
- Trailing wires, cables or leads
- Worn, damaged or uneven steps or stairs
- Poor lighting
- Missing or defective handrails
- Variations in the level of floors
- Uneven footpaths
- Damaged paving stones and slabs
- Worn, damaged or uneven steps
- Kerbs causing obstruction
- Protruding tree roots and undergrowth
- Poor lighting

#### **Slip Hazards:**

- Smooth floor surfaces
- Cleaning activity making floors slippery (e.g. wet mopping, use of polishes, etc.)
- Wet or contaminated floors from poor maintenance (for example, leaking roofs)
- Spillages of food or drink (particularly in kitchen areas)
- Walk-in contaminant from adverse weather (mud, rainwater, etc.)
- Poor drainage of footpaths
- Growth of algae or moss
- Accumulations of wet leaves or loose materials
- Inadequate precautions for adverse weather (snow, ice, etc.)

#### **Fall From Height:**

- When changing lightbulbs
- When cleaning or decorating
- When putting up decorations or displays
- Fragile ceiling material where work or access is required
- Trap door in the loft
- Damaged ladders, stepladders or other access equipment

**Fire:**

- Accumulations of combustible waste
- Accumulations of flammable materials (not merely stationery)
- Blocked or obstructed exit routes
- Locked escape doors
- Portable heaters
- Candles
- Matches/ lighters

**Electricity:**

- Faulty or damaged fixed wiring
- Faulty, damaged or unauthorised portable electrical equipment
- Faulty or damaged extension cables or adaptors
- Defective or poorly maintained power tools (e.g. vacuum cleaners, etc.)

**Gas:**

- Defective or poorly maintained gas boilers or pipework

**Asbestos: (there are statutory provisions)**

- In insulation, lagging or fire protection
- In wall and roof linings

**Glazing:**

- Non-safety glass in doors or partitions

**Hazardous Substances: (COSHH Regulations)**

- Cleaning products (for example polish, drain cleaner, etc.)

**Manual Handling (lifting or carrying):**

- Bulky or unwieldy furniture
- Heavy audio visual or computer equipment
- General rubbish that may include breakages (e.g. glass)

**Kitchen Tools**

- Sharp or bladed articles (knives, Scissors, Skewers etc)

**Other Sharps and hand tools**

- Hand tools (Chisels, screwdrivers, knives, scissors, ) used in maintenance work or crafts)
- Defective or poorly maintained hand tools (e.g. garden shears, hammers, etc.)