



Our Parish Health and Safety Policy

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, Charity Registration Number 1129833 (hereafter Abingdon Parochial Church Council / the PCC) must meet the requirements of health and safety law as an employer and controller of premises. This policy is intended to meet our statutory responsibilities and specifically Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

More importantly, as a parish community, we have a pastoral duty of care to those who visit us or who use our churches, halls or churchyards.

Our Commitment and General Statement of Policy

Abingdon PCC is committed to ensuring, so far as it is reasonably practicable, that our activities are carried out safely and do not pose a risk to the health or safety of our employees, volunteers, congregations, visitors, contractors and others using our buildings.

We acknowledge and accept our statutory responsibilities to provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment for all in accordance with relevant legislation and best practice.

This policy outlines our responsibilities and the arrangements we have put in place to carry them out. By adhering to this policy, we aim to create a safe and welcoming church community for everyone.

This policy will be kept up to date, particularly in the light of any changes to our buildings or activities. To facilitate this, the policy will be reviewed annually, and any appropriate changes will be made.

Signed...Revd Dr J Brown, Team Rector

On behalf of the PCC as agreed at a meeting on 18 November 2025

Address: Parish Office, St Helen's Court, Abingdon, OX14 5BS

Next Review date: October 2026

The success of this policy depends on everyone's co-operation. It is therefore important that the document is read carefully, so that the overall arrangements for health and safety and personal responsibilities are understood.

Our 'KEEPING US ALL SAFE' Noticeboard

A Safety Notice Board will display information for Health, Safety, Safeguarding & Governance official information (only) in each church and hall, as detailed below:

- Accident Book (location/s)
- Address, Post code of Church & What Three Words for calling 999
- Contact information for those responsible for Health and safety
- Domestic Abuse Awareness and Reporting poster
- Electoral Roll (when published)
- Evacuation plans and Assembly points in case of emergency
- Fire Fighting Equipment location
- First Aid Kit (location/s) and person in charge of First Aid for building
- GDPR Policy
- Health & Safety: General Statement & Policy
- Insurance Certificate (copy)
- Lone Working Policy
- Risk Assessments (Location)
- Safeguarding: PSO & DSO Contacts & information
- Safeguarding Policy
- Statutory Fees
- Statement of Parish Share paid by each church in the Parish

Welcome Notice Board

- Welcome statement from Church leaders
- Photos of Clergy & Wardens
- Contact information for the Rector, Vicar, Associate Priests, Churchwardens, Parish Office
- Contact details for House Group leaders
- Contact details for choirs
- DCC List of members
- PCC List of members
- Minutes of last DCC meeting
- Eco-policy, carbon footprint of church and parish (last 3 years) and Eco-church awards
- List of local places that can help people in need & a map indicating their location

Our Organisation and Responsibilities

The Rector (or, in the case of a vacancy, the Chair of the PCC):

Overall responsibility for Health & Safety is that of the Rector, who will work with the PCC to ensure that, so far as it is reasonably practicable, arrangements are in place to satisfy compliance with current legislation. Specific responsibilities may be delegated to church personnel.

Responsibilities of Abingdon Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC has overall responsibility for health and safety. The PCC will, so far as it is reasonably practicable:

- Be familiar with health and safety matters relevant to each church, this policy and its arrangements
- Ensure that the standards and arrangements set out in this policy are implemented and maintained
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy and amend it where it is no longer valid
- Keep health and safety matters under review as a standing item at PCC meetings
- Ensure that employees and volunteers are engaged with and consulted in implementing this policy
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available for health and safety matters, including training
- Where necessary, obtain specialist Health and Safety assistance from a qualified advisor
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out as necessary, and findings implemented
- Lead by personal example to promote a culture of safety

Responsibilities of Churchwardens

The Churchwardens have day-to-day responsibility in their respective churches for implementing arrangements outlined in this policy, with the support of the District Church Councils (DCCs). Churchwardens will, so far as it is reasonably practicable, ensure that

- They are the first point of contact for health and safety issues at each church in the Parish
- Each church has a Safety Notice Board that displays all required documentation
- Risk assessments for all church activities are carried out to ensure risks are identified, assessed and reduced where possible and safe systems of work are in place
- All plant, services, equipment, machinery & tools are routinely maintained by competent people
- Only competent people carry out repairs, modifications, inspections and tests
- All employees and volunteers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities
- Training & information is provided for employees and volunteers and a record of training provided kept
- Safety equipment and clothing is provided and used by all personnel where this is required
- Any hazards or complaints are investigated and dealt with as soon as possible
- Emergency interim steps are taken where defects cannot be corrected immediately
- Accidents are investigated, recorded & reported in line with the requirements of this policy
- Risk assessments are reviewed following any incidents or accidents to keep them up to date
- A fire risk assessment is carried out and any hazards identified are rectified including:
 - adequate firefighting equipment is available & maintained
 - identified fire exits are clear
 - adequate stewards are available & aware of fire evacuation procedures
 - fire drills are carried out in the parish centre
- Safe storage and use of substances, eg cleaning materials
- Food hygiene regulations and procedures are observed
- Relevant assessment findings are recorded; documents are retained and reviewed.
- They will report to PCC as a Standing Item to share learning outcomes
- A Person in charge of First Aid Arrangements (for 1st aid box) is nominated

Responsibilities of District Church Councils (DCCs)

DCC members have a responsibility to cooperate with Wardens & PCC in implementing the policy.

Responsibilities of Employees and Volunteers

In a church context, Employees and Volunteers are all regarded as 'workers'. All have a personal responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst on church business or premises and to co-operate in the implementation of this health and safety policy. They must:

- Read this policy and understand personal responsibilities and what is required of them
- Attend any training required to enable them to carry out their duties safely
- Comply with all safety rules, operating instructions and other working procedures
- Complete tasks by taking any necessary precautions to protect themselves and others
- Use protective clothing and equipment when it is required
- Report any accident (however minor), injuries, near misses as soon as possible
- Co-operate in the investigation of accidents
- Report any hazard, defect or damage, and warn others of known hazards
- Not undertake any repair or modification unless they are competent to do so
- Not interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety

Responsibility of Visitors & Contractors

Contractors must comply with safety rules and should not be allowed to carry out any work on site without approval. This is to ensure that any work on and in our buildings is carried out in accordance with safe work practices.

Members of the public are encouraged to follow safety guidelines on entering and visiting church premises and should report any concerns to church staff, wardens or stewards.

Our General Arrangements

1. Accident & Incident Reporting

We will keep an Accident Book for each building and record details of accidents, incidents or near misses therein. We will report accidents and injuries to the enforcing authority under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). We will review the Accident Books at each DCC Standing Committee. We will share any learning outcomes with each other at DCC and PCC level to prevent accidents or errors occurring again. Our accident book locations will be displayed on the church [Safety Notice Boards](#)

2. First Aid

We will provide basic first aid facilities including a suitably stocked first aid kit. Our First Aid Arrangements, location of First Aid Boxes and other emergency contacts will be displayed on the church [Safety Notice Board](#)

3. Information and Training

We will provide necessary information and training for our employees and volunteers. We will keep a record of what is provided. We will give relevant information to contractors and self-employed people who need this to complete their work safely. We will clearly display health and safety information on our [Safety Notice Board](#) in each church, so all members of our community can be kept informed.

4. Record Keeping

The location of documents relevant to keeping our community safe will be displayed on the [Safety Notice Board](#). Records are to be kept in accordance with current legislation, currently for a minimum of 5 years.

5. Review and monitoring

We will monitor by regular inspection any lifting, work and electrical equipment and church utilities as required to ensure they remain safe and will keep records of the inspections carried out. We will make periodic checks to ensure that our precautions remain effective, adequate and up to date. We will make provisions for health and safety matters to be considered as a Standing Item at DCC and PCC meetings. We will review this policy following any significant changes to our buildings, activities, current legislation or in response to incidents or accidents. We will review this policy and make a written statement upholding our procedures annually.

6. Risk Assessments

We will complete risk assessments for all church activities and events identified below. We will record our findings and implement any necessary precautions to reduce risk to the lowest reasonable level possible in compliance with health and safety laws. We will review and revise these as necessary.

We will keep our church risk assessments in a location detailed on the church [Safety Notice Boards](#).

We have identified the following activities (but not limited to) that must have Risk Assessments:

- Activities and Events: all church-sponsored activities and events, including (but not limited to) Bell Ringing, Choir practices, Cleaning, Coffee & Hospitality, Computer Use, Events, House/Home groups, Pastoral visits, Services (regular services, Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals, Seasonal services), Junior Church / Quest Tower access and Church sponsored or endorsed events happening off site
- Risk assessments as appropriate
 - Fire Safety: Maintenance of fire exits, availability of firefighting equipment, regular fire drills
 - Emergency Procedures: Clear evacuation plans, procedures for dealing with emergencies and first aid
 - Building Safety: Regular inspections and maintenance of the church building, including electrical safety

7. Safeguarding

The location of documents relevant to safeguarding will be displayed on the [Safety Notice Board](#)

Our Specific Arrangements

Asbestos

We will take steps to identify the presence of asbestos in our buildings. If discovered, we will assess any risk from it and implement a plan to manage that risk. We will provide relevant information to others who might need it, (for example, building contractors) and limit access to operators.

Bell Ringing (*see also Bell Tower Access*)

We will ensure that adequate precautions are in place to protect bellringers and others who may enter the ringing room and the bell chamber. This will include any emergency evacuation procedure, a safe means of heating, the provision of fire extinguishers, the provision of emergency lighting and the display of safety procedures to visiting bellringers. We will require a risk assessment to be carried out by Bell Ringers Group.

Candles (& matches)

We will ensure that adequate precautions are in place when using Candles & matches during a service, and pay particular attention to services that use candles in the candelabra or where congregants have a candle

Child protection – see separate Safeguarding arrangements

Church Buildings

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

Church Grounds and Church yard

We will ensure that boundary walls, fences and gates are kept in good repair. We will notify the Town Council who have responsibility for these areas, to have trees inspected by a competent person and have any necessary work carried out to make them safe. Where appropriate, headstones, tombs and monuments will be checked regularly to ensure they are properly maintained.

Construction Work

We will identify what we need to do to ensure the safety of all concerned when planning maintenance, refurbishment or restoration work for our churches 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.

Contractors

We will manage the safety of contractors on our premises by complying with the C of E Logbook Scheme. Church wardens will log all work carried out. The log will include detailed instructions regarding areas where contractors are permitted to work, the extent of the work they are authorized to undertake and specify any safety information and enforcement.

Display Screen Equipment

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

Electrical safety

We will ensure that any electrical system, fixed machine and portable appliances are appropriately checked and maintained. We will keep records of the checks made where appropriate. A list of portable electrical appliances is maintained by the churchwardens.

- Every year, we will arrange for portable appliances to be tested by a competent person. Equipment declared unsafe will be repaired or safely disposed of without further use.
- Every five years, our fixed electrical system will be inspected and tested by a competent contractor. Any part of the system declared unsafe will not be used until necessary remedial work is carried out.
- At intervals of not more than four years, our lightning conductor system will be examined and tested by a competent specialist firm of lightning engineers.

Misuse and abuse of electricity is a significant cause of fires and injury. Faulty electrical equipment can kill. All employees and voluntary workers must observe the following:

- *Visually check all electrical equipment before use*
- *Report all faults immediately to a warden*
- *Do not attempt to use or repair faulty equipment*
- *Electrical equipment should be switched off and disconnected when not in use for long periods*
- *Position and protect flexible cables so that they do not constitute a tripping hazard and are not subject to mechanical damage.*

Emergency Lighting

We will ensure that all emergency lighting will be regularly checked

Evacuation Procedure

We will complete a Church specific Risk Assessment to identify procedures to evacuate the church in different situations. We will ensure that training is provided as required. We will ensure that designated fire exits are unlocked and clear of hazards. We will display Assembly Points on the [Safety Notice Board](#).

Events

Where we intend to hold large or unusual concerts, services, and fundraising events, we will identify any necessary additional precautions and implement these by carrying out (or reviewing) a risk assessment. External groups will need to comply with terms and conditions of hiring to ensure that they can manage their event safely.

Fire Safety

We will complete a Church specific Risk Assessment to identify what steps are necessary to prevent, detect and, in the event of a fire, take. We will record our findings and implement any necessary precautions. We will review and revise these where necessary. We will carry out monthly fire alarm check and record the results. We will carry out annual checks of smoke detectors in church buildings and in the Parish Centre to ensure the batteries are working. We will ensure that our firefighting equipment is in place and is serviceable, and that there is an annual maintenance contract in place. We will ensure that relevant people have sufficient knowledge to assist with the evacuation in case of a fire. We will take steps to ensure that exits and walkways are clear so people can exit without hindrance in case of a fire

If you discover a fire (no matter how small)

- Immediately raise the alarm
- Telephone 999 and request the fire emergency services
- Do not take any personal risks but check the building for occupants and assist in the evacuation of the building, ensuring that all doors are closed behind you. People's safety has priority over property
- If it is safe to do so, fight fire using equipment provided
- Evacuate to the designated assembly points

- Ensure clear access for emergency vehicles.

Food Hygiene

We will ensure that we follow the appropriate regulations governing the preparation and storage of foodstuffs. We will ensure all food handlers have received adequate supervision, instruction and training.

We will ensure that when we prepare food, we use a clean work surface, utensils and equipment. We will store food in such a way as to avoid contamination and provide handwashing facilities and suitable arrangements for the disposal of food waste for recycling. We will take reasonable precautions regarding allergies and, when practical, endeavours to offer allergen free options, such as gluten free bread at communion.

Gas equipment safety

We will ensure that our gas boilers and other gas equipment are maintained and checked annually by a competent contractor who is registered with the Gas Safe Register. A. Any part of the system declared unsafe will not be used until necessary remedial work is carried out.

Hazardous substances – Control of substances hazardous to health (COSH)

We will review our use of substances and, where possible, eliminate the use of hazardous substances or substances which are known to potentially cause damage to the environment. Hazardous substances will be clearly labelled, locked away and must only be accessed by persons with the appropriate experience.

Heating Systems

We will ensure that the heating system is suitably maintained and checked annually by a competent person and we will keep records of the checks made. Any part of the system declared unsafe will not be used until necessary remedial work is carried out.

Ladders – see Working at Height

Lifting Equipment

We will ensure that any lifting equipment is included in the asset register and that it is properly maintained and thoroughly examined periodically by a competent person.

Lighting

We will visually inspect all lights and light bulbs on the premises to ensure that the church is adequately lit. Any lights that require replacement should be reported to Church Wardens, who will ensure that they are replaced following current procedures.

Lone Working – see Personal Safety

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 carry out risk assessments, use lifting aids (such as trolleys) or other precautions, including team lifting. We will provide training to all employees and voluntary workers who are required to undertake manual handling. Only those who have received the appropriate training are authorised to undertake manual handling tasks.

Noise – see Bell Ringing

Personal Safety (Including Lone Working, Working Alone, Home Visits)

We will identify circumstances where our employees and volunteers work alone and implement suitable precautions to ensure their safety. Generally, employees and volunteers should not work alone unless they have notified someone of their plans, agreed a procedure to ensure their safety is checked on and they have a means of communication with them.

Pest Control

We will ensure that a reputable company will be used for pest control on our premises to prevent risk from poison.

Plant, Machinery and Equipment (PME) and Planned Preventative Maintenance

We will ensure that an asset register of all plant, machinery and equipment is made. Planned Preventative Maintenance required to keep all Plant, Machinery, and equipment safe will be routinely carried out. We will keep records of all routine checks carried out. We will ensure that access to any PME is kept locked away as far as possible. Access will only be permitted if an employee or volunteer has had the necessary training. Any defect or damage must be reported to a Churchwarden.

Play Equipment

We will ensure that any toys, books or equipment made available for younger members of our congregations are cleaned on a regular basis. We will record this with other routine checks.

Safeguarding - Lone working, giving lifts, visiting people at home.

See Safeguarding arrangements

Slips, trips and falls – condition of floors, steps and paths

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 handrails or lighting or marking) 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.

Smoking & vaping

Smoking and / or vaping is not allowed anywhere on our premises, inside or outside.

Residential Properties

We will ensure that any other property recorded as an asset of Abingdon PCC, is managed in accordance with current legislation, either directly or with assistance from a Managing Agent. We will produce an Asset Manual for each property recording all assets in the property (eg boiler, cooker etc), together with a Planned PPM schedule and record of checks.

Tower Access

We will identify any specific precautions that are necessary. This will take account of the size of the tower, the control of movement within the tower, the number of stewards available, and the ease with which people can safely evacuate the tower in case of emergency.

Waste Management

We will encourage users of our churches and buildings to reduce, re-use or re-cycle. We will provide clearly labelled waste bins to assist with recycling everyday waste. We will comply with local authority regulations regarding commercial waste.

Work Equipment

Any work equipment (including any hand tools) will be recorded as property in an asset log. Equipment 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 it is safe. We will keep records of any checks we make.

Working Alone - see *Personal Safety*

Working at Height – including ladders and step ladders

We will try to avoid the need for work at height where possible. We will plan any job to identify suitable precautions where this is not practicable. We will make sure that these are implemented, including providing any training and checks to ensure the safety of any equipment used.

Health and Safety Information

Environmental Health Services are provided by
Vale of White Horse District Council
Abbey House
Abbey Close
Abingdon-On-Thames
OX14 3JE

email: env.health@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
Phone: 01235 540555

Health and Safety Executive Information Line: 0845 345 0055

To meet legal requirements, all employees are provided with a copy of the leaflet 'Health and Safety Law – what you should know'.