

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL - Health & Safety and Security

A preliminary overview assessment with input from Mel Balloch, Ian Reekie and Anthony Bailey was undertaken in September, 2016. This was an attempt to consider every aspect and offer solutions.

Cyber Security

Although older members of the church community in particular may not have access to computers or the internet, the vast majority of the population at large do have it. There are particular risks that need to be understood in this regard.

Internet

Internet access is readily available but unfortunately, computers are vulnerable to security risks such as viruses, malware, or keyloggers (which record users' keystrokes). It is important that computers used in connection with church activities have adequate security software and that programs and operating systems are regularly updated to ensure that security fixes are applied in a timely fashion. Sensitive data is often transferred via the internet or stored in 'cloud' servers in locations remote to users. There is potential for email and other accounts to be hacked and data accessed by unauthorised users. Changing passwords regularly and ensuring that they are robust (not obvious like dates of birth) and kept secure (not accessible by unauthorised users), reduces this risk considerably.

Due to the Coronavirus the internet has been used successfully with zoom and other similar programs for Church services etc, PCC meetings and House group meetings. It has proved very successful.

Email

Emails frequently arrive containing spam (unsolicited email) and may have dubious or risky content. Email users must not open anything suspicious. Instead such items should be marked as JUNK to be checked later by someone with IT skills who can identify whether those items are safe or not. Bearing in mind that clergy and members of the congregation share group emails, adhering to safe practice with emails is important.

Passwords

These should be different for every website or account online. Similar or identical ones are easy to hack into once one of them is 'broken'. The recommended safe practice is for passwords to be recorded and stored securely. In fact it is safer to keep them in a book rather than electronically – if a book goes missing you know there is a problem but keep the book in a secure place. If the secure storage is compromised all passwords would need to be renewed.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

Although this document does not directly consider matters around personal data protection, it should be noted that the use of email groups and BCC when sending emails will help protect individuals and reduce the possibility of hacking.

Security Survey

Sussex Police was asked to carry out a security survey in September, 2016 of St. Mary's Church Newick in the light of terrorism attacks in Europe and the UK. A very comprehensive report which is still applicable was prepared by a Counterterrorism Officer (CTO) but does need to be re-visited to ensure that any recommendations are being acted upon. A copy of this report is held by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator and maybe viewed by the Church Wardens, Chairman for the PCC and Rev'd Paul Mundy.

Online Terrorist Awareness Course have been undertaken in the last couple of years by Anthony Bailey and other members of the PCC.

Health & Safety and Security

A Health and Safety Risk Assessment was addressed by Ian Reekie and the relevant documents produced in 2017. This has been revisited in 2019 by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator using some of the documentation produced by Ian Reekie and Tony Bailey which has been updated and approved and using templates provided by the Churches Insurers Ecclesiastical. Risk Assessments are carried out for a number of reasons:

- 1) To ensure as far as practicable, the safety and welfare of the congregation and visitors. The church as an organisation has a 'duty of care' towards anyone on church property or church business.
- 2) To meet the requirements of church insurance policies, in particular public liability insurance. A failure to do so could possibly result in a claim not being met if significant health and safety failings are discovered.
- 3) Peace of mind for those individuals i.e. churchwardens, who are tasked with health and safety and security, should an incident occur. No one need carry a burden of moral responsibility when they have done everything possible to keep people safe.

Sites Risk Assessed

St Mary's Church

Church Barn Centre

Churchyard, car park and access road

Rectory, Allington Road

Risk Assessments For anyone unfamiliar with a risk assessment, it is designed to study every apparent, potential risk in a given situation. Each risk is itemised in a list table and assigned a hazard number which indicates the level of risk. Each hazard has a brief description and, in another column the appropriate control measure is shown. The persons who carry out the risk assessment are named on the document and it must be dated. Control measures are acted on with the aim of reducing each risk to an acceptable level wherever possible. Copies of risk assessments are available for inspection at any time with copies on the Church Website and in a file at the rear of the Church.

There need to be three different risk assessment documents:

General – this covers things like trip hazards, sharp objects, unstable fixtures and fittings, falls from height, etc. This should be carried out by two or three competent persons rather than just one, as perception of risk can be subjective.

Fire – this covers things like extinguisher provision, safe egress from buildings in an emergency, flammability etc. It should be informed principally by a report from a fire officer from East Sussex Fire and Rescue and other competent individuals.

Security – this covers the risk of burglary, theft, violent acts and in the light of recent events, terrorism and protective measures needed. The police can put us in touch with a security consultant who can give advice should it be required.

There had been a spate of mass casualty terrorist attacks in Europe and the UK during 2018. The risk to Newick is minimal but more recently there have been various 'lone wolf' or small group attacks, often with bladed weapons. These can be quite devastating such as the one at the Catholic church in Saint Etienne-du-Rouvray a few years ago.

In our case it is more likely to be a violent theft or assault on a person. Another possibility might be a disturbed individual or someone with a grudge. This seems fanciful now but if we take appropriate steps for safety and security we are better prepared in case of an incident.

NaCTSO (National Counter Terrorism Security Office) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office

This government department is responsible for giving advice on countering terrorism but that advice also contains some common sense steps that apply to safety and security in general, so it is well worth researching the website.

CCTV has now been installed in Church because the church when in use has various vulnerable blind spots and is often open when anyone can wander in and out. CCTV might not necessarily prevent an incident, but it could be invaluable for evidence afterwards provided it was compatible with police requirements.

The following has now been completed and has either been adopted by the PCC/Barn Committee:

Barn Centre

General Risk Assessment

Fire Risk Assessment

Barn Centre Policy

Barn Centre Terms and Conditions of Use

Barn Centre Booking Form

Barn Centre Preparation of Food Policy which is also appropriate for use at other Church events i.e. in the Church

PAT Test Report for Barn and Church

Activities in the Barn Centre

Risk Assessments Carried out and other lists prepared for good record keeping

Dancing for Fun and Fitness

Pastoral Care List

List of attendees with addresses and contacts kept with permission.

Coffee Morning – Solo Group

Go Galactic – Holiday Club - Children

Owl Club – Children

Youth Club in the process of being reviewed

A number of Protocols have been introduced for activities carried out by the Pastoral Care Group in line with general good housekeeping.

Risk Assessments for Lunch Club, Ladies Suppers, Men's Suppers and Coffee Mornings in the Barn Centre.

DBS Check List for Pastoral Care Team

DBS Check List for Drivers

List of members of the St. Mary's PCC prepared

Pastoral Care Team Volunteers Form

Permission to keep data information form

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Risk Assessment Checklist – For Barn and Church

Risk Assessment Blank Form – For events in Barn and Church

Churchyard

Risk Assessment incorporated within the Keeping People Safe Risk Assessment Report.

Tree Policy – All recommended work has been carried out. Documentation together with Tree Report and quotations has been filed. This includes the TPO tree at the Rectory in Allington Road

CCTV has been installed in several places in the Churchyard (old part and new) with the relevant notices displayed

Church

Keeping People Safe – Health and Safety Policy – computer copy

The Policy defines the responsibilities of-

1. Vicar/Rector - overall responsibility
2. Churchwardens – ensuring that the arrangements are carried out and maintained
3. PCC – to ensure that the policy is implemented
4. Health & Safety Co-ordinator/ Sexton / Chairman of the PCC - day to day implementation of the HSAW policy arrangements
5. Employees and voluntary workers
6. Responsible persons – responsibilities allocated by area of the church (eg Barn) or activity (eg bell ringing)

Fire Risk Assessment – computer copy.

Keeping People Safe – Self Assessment – identifying needs. Keeping People Safe – Risk Assessment for the Church incorporating the Churchyard but not the Barn Centre – computer copy

Safeguarding and Protection

Promoting a Safer Church

Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults – on the Church Website

Risk Assessment:

Bell Ringers in the Tower and Ringing Room

Churchyard Work Days

Christmas Tree Event

No policies were approved during the last year.

The following policies have been reviewed by the Sexton and Health and Safety Co-ordinator:

Health and Safety Policy

Lone Working

Policy for Legacies

Policy for introducing and accepting Art Work offered to the Church

Churchyard Regulations plus shortened version for noticeboards

Whistleblowing Policy as developed by Chichester Diocese.

Parish E Safety Policy – Chichester Diocese

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CCTV Policy

Privacy Policy & GDPR – Chichester Diocese

Responding to Safeguarding Allegations in Parish: Parish Policy and Guidance

St. Mary's Church Safer Recruiting Policy

St. Mary's Church Behaviour Code for Adults Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults

Tree Policy

Policies for the use of Church Computers and private computers which have access to or store church information.

Pastoral Care in the Community and Church

Pastoral Support – Application Form for Volunteer Activities

Guidelines for the operation of the Pastoral Fund

Action in the Event of Fire

Sexton Duties

The Rectory

Risk Assessment to be undertaken by the occupant.

Linda Farmer

Health and Safety Co-ordinator

February 2024