

Health and Safety Policy for Heath United Reformed Church

This is the statement of general policy and arrangements for:	<i>Heath United Reformed Church, Halifax</i>
Overall and final responsibility for health and safety is that of:	<i>The Elders Meeting</i>
Day-to-day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice is delegated to:	<i>Elder with responsibility for property (Jane Simmons) and chairperson of Heath Building Management Group (John Seager)</i>

Introduction

The Eldership of this church is committed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to providing a safe and healthy environment and conditions for its staff and volunteers, church members, all involved in its activities and all who use its premises. This policy outlines how this can be achieved and incorporates the requirements of the:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (and the regulations made under it.)
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Food Safety Act 1990, and EU food hygiene law (as interpreted by the Food Standards Agency).
- However, the policy goes beyond statutory requirements in some areas, as a matter of good practice and care for all people involved in church life (e.g. provision of basic first-aid provision during church activities.)

The policy will of course be most effective if all church staff and volunteers, other church members, and those who participate in church activities or use its premises, do the following:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do or not do
- Cooperate with the church on health and safety
- Correctly use work items provided by the church (including personal protective equipment) in accordance with training and instructions
- Not interfere with or misuse anything provided for health, safety or welfare.

This policy and procedures should be interpreted in the light of detailed advice and guidance from sources such as:

- the PLATO Property Handbook, produced by the United Reformed Church's network of Property, Legal and Trust Officer's, available at <http://www.urc.org.uk/plato-property-handbook1.html>
- the United Reformed Church's good practice guidance for safeguarding, available at <http://www.urc.org.uk/ministry/safeguarding-children.html>
- Congregational & General's Safer Places of Worship website, <http://www.spow.co.uk/start.php>
- Ecclesiastical Insurance Church health and safety policy with guidance notes, <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/churchguidance/churchhealthandsafety/index.aspx>
- Health & Safety Executive, <http://www.hse.gov.uk>

1. To prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health and provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from church activities.

Name of responsible person(s): *Elder with responsibility for health and safety (Jane Simmons) and chairperson of Heath Building Management Group (John Seager)*

Risk assessments

Risk assessments will be completed for the church premises and church activities. Actions arising out of those assessments will be implemented. Risk assessments will be reviewed at least every year, or sooner if changes are made to church premises or church activities.

They will include:

- [A general risk assessment completed by the church health & safety officers](#)
- Specific risk assessments completed by employees and volunteers for the groups / activities and events which they organise. These risk assessments will take account of children's changing needs as they grow and develop, and will be mindful of needs resulting from physical and learning disabilities and factors that may make some children and adults more vulnerable than others.
- Specific risk assessments completed for each off-site activity. If transport is organised by the church, then the risk assessment will include travel arrangements and measures will be taken to ensure: qualified and safe drivers; roadworthy vehicles' suitable insurance cover; and use of seat belts or appropriate car seats or booster cushions.
- Group / activity leaders should carry out a quick visual inspection of the area being used for their meeting / event / activity before starting, note any concerns, take whatever immediate action is possible to reduce the risk of harm, and report any concerns to the health & safety officer as soon as possible after the event.

Electrical issues

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 the responsible person.
- Do not attempt to use or repair faulty equipment
- Electrical equipment should be switched off and disconnected when not in use for long periods.
- Anyone bringing Electrical equipment onto the premises and used are responsible for ensuring that the equipment is safe. Ideally it should be PAT tested.
- Flexible cables should be positioned and protected so that they do not constitute a tripping hazard and are not subject to mechanical damage.

Manual handling

We will eliminate the need for manual handling as far as is reasonably practicable.

Where it is not possible to avoid the need to move loads, we will carry out risk assessments and make use of lifting aids, including trolleys, lifts and hoists as far as possible. The necessary training will be given to all employees and volunteers who are required to undertake manual handling as part of their church work.

Contractors

Anyone entering church premises for the purposes of carrying out work, other than an employee or voluntary worker of the church, will be regarded as a contractor.

All contractors, including the self-employed, must abide by the following:

- Provide a copy of their own health and safety policy (where required by law)
- Provide evidence that they have appropriate Public and Employers' Liability insurance in place.
- Where plant and machinery is brought onto the church premises by contractors, they must be able to show where necessary that the equipment has been inspected and tested to ensure its safe operation

- Contractors may only use sub-contractors or persons other than their own direct employees with permission from the church. However, responsibility will remain with the contractors.
- All contractors will be given instructions regarding the areas where they are permitted to work, the extent of the work they are authorised to undertake, and any safety precautions they must take.

2. To provide adequate information and training to ensure employees and volunteers are competent to do their work

Name of responsible person(s): Secretary (*Jane Simmons*), Caretaker (*Jude Williams*),

Staff and volunteers will be given necessary health and safety induction and provided with appropriate training.

Other building users (e.g. organisations letting the church premises) will be given necessary health & safety information, including a copy of this policy and a risk assessment for the premises.

3. To engage and consult with employees and volunteers on day-to-day health and safety conditions and provide advice and supervision on occupational health

Name of responsible person(s): Secretary (*Jane Simmons*)

Staff and volunteers will be routinely consulted on health and safety matters as they arise. The Building Management Group will review H&S annually.

4. To implement emergency procedures - evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident - to fulfil the obligations under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Name of responsible person(s): Elder with responsibility for health and safety (*Jane Simmons*)

Fire risk assessment reviewed annually (either separately or as part of the annual health & safety review).¹

Fire detection, warning and evacuation procedures are tested regularly and updated as necessary.

Fire drills are the responsibility of individual user groups, especially for groups involving children or people with a disability. Evacuation procedures are clearly displayed in all rooms. It is been assessed that the risk of carrying out a physical fire drill with the elderly congregation carries more risk than not having a fire drill.

Fire/Emergency exits clearly identified with the appropriate signage and emergency lighting systems installed where required.

Fire alarms, smoke detectors and fire fighting equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers) should be in place, regularly tested and properly maintained by a competent technician or electrician.

¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities>
 Assistance with a church fire risk assessment can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly>

5. To maintain safe and healthy working conditions, provide and maintain plant, equipment and machinery, and ensure safe storage / use of substances

Name of responsible person(s): *Elder with responsibility for health and safety (Jane Simmons), Care taker (Jude Williams)*

Basic provision for employees and volunteers

Adequate heating and lighting, toilets, washing facilities and drinking water will be provided for the use of employees and volunteers.

Regular inspection and maintenance of premises

Inspections of premises (during monthly check of emergency lighting) and grounds, to include:

- general cleanliness and tidiness (as a build-up of debris is a fire risk)
- adequacy and proper functioning of lighting, heating and ventilation (especially checking that light bulbs working well in areas where there is no natural light)
- ease of access and movement (particularly checking that doors and corridors are free from obstruction, especially any emergency exits and evacuation routes)
- general fabric of building.

Any defects noted on the risk assessment form then immediately reported to the designated person and the procedures put in hand for repairs. Where necessary, temporary measures are taken to minimise the risk of accident or injury until permanent repairs can be carried out.

Regular inspection, testing and maintenance of equipment and machinery

A list should be kept of any equipment or machinery with date and outcome of last inspection. Regular inspection, testing and maintenance of any equipment or machinery (e.g. ladders, scaffolding towers, mowers & other garden equipment, electrical equipment and sockets, heating and cooking appliances, children's play equipment, etc). Prompt action should be taken to address any defects.

The Inspection, testing and maintenance regime should specifically include:

- an annual check of any gas boiler and any other gas equipment is maintained and checked annually by a competent contractor who is registered with the Gas Safe Register.
- an annual test of any portable electrical equipment (PAT test) by a competent person
- a five-yearly inspection and test of the fixed electrical system by a competent contractor (who is NICEIC, ECA or NAPIT certified).

Any necessary work required for safety will be implemented immediately.

Storage and use of hazardous substances

- Where possible, the storage and use of hazardous substances will be avoided.
- A list of all hazardous substances used on the church premises will be kept, including all substances marked as 'harmful, irritant, corrosive, toxic, very toxic, flammable, highly flammable, extremely flammable, explosive, oxidising or dangerous for the environment'.
- For each hazardous substance the following will be recorded: name of substance, hazard type, safe method of storage, protective clothing required, and procedure in the event of an accident. (n.b. Data sheets or product information provided by the manufacturers are used to determine the correct method of use, protective clothing needed, method of storage, and action to take in the event of an accident.)
- Chemicals should not be stored in unmarked containers and should not be mixed.

For more details, see www.coshh-essentials.org.uk

6. Food hygiene regulations governing the preparation and storage of foodstuffs will be followed.

Name of responsible person(s): *Individual user groups*
Registration

The church will register with the local authority if required. This is only likely for a church where a regular activity involves supplying hot food once a month or more frequently. (For more details, see <http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/hall-provision.pdf>)

Training

We will ensure some food handlers have received adequate instruction and some hold e.g. the Basic Food Hygiene Certificates, level 1 or 2 and are aware of good practice in food preparation, handling, storage, and disposal of waste.

Risk assessment

We will ensure that the appropriate assessment of risks is carried out for the foods to be prepared and stored including storage at the correct temperatures. Extra care will be taken when preparing and serving food for under fives, expectant mums, people with serious medical conditions and the elderly.

Hygiene

Workers will follow good personal hygiene (e.g. hand-washing and hair-tying) and all surfaces coming into contact with food during preparation will be clean before use.

Outside organisations

We will ensure that all hirers who wish to provide foodstuffs are advised of the facilities and procedures.

7. Basic first-aid provision will be available during church events activities whenever this is reasonably possible

Name of responsible person(s):,
Elder with responsibility Secretary (Jane Simmons)

Designated first-aiders

It is the responsibility of each hiring group to manage their own first aid requirements.

First aid kits

First-aid kits will be kept on the premises in easily accessible and well-signed locations:

[Vestry and kitchen.]

Use of first-aid equipment will be reported to the responsible person after use and contents replenished as soon as possible to keep it fully stocked.

Reporting accidents

Church staff and volunteers, and leaders of other organisations using the church premises, will be instructed to report accidents so that they may be recorded in the accident book / accident record sheets on an accident form and record of accidents will be regularly reviewed. The accident record sheets are located: *[notice board in main hall and vestibule]*

See Appendix 1 for accident form

8. Serious accidents and ill health at work are reported under RIDDOR regulations

Name of responsible person(s): *Secretary (Jane Simmons)*

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations will be followed. Fatal accidents, major injuries and injuries which involve the injured person being absent from work for more than seven days must be reported to the enforcing authorities. So must diseases and certain dangerous occurrences, as defined by the regulations. These can be reported online at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor and records kept by the church.

There are three requirements for reporting, as follows:

- serious injuries or dangerous occurrences (as defined by the regulations) must be reported immediately. This must be followed by a report in writing within ten days on official form F2508.
- accidents involving the injured person losing more than seven consecutive days work (excluding the day of the accident but including any days which would not have been working days) but which do not fall into the above category, must be reported in writing within fifteen days on form F2508.
- reportable diseases must be reported in writing on form F2508A. (This will be required only if the employer receives a written diagnosis of the disease made by a doctor and the person concerned is involved with a work activity as specified in the regulations. (Reportable diseases are defined by regulations but include certain poisonings, infections such as legionellosis and hepatitis, and other conditions such as certain musculo-skeletal disorders.)

See www.hse.gov.uk/riddor for further details about these regulations including detailed definitions of what must be reported.

9. Health and safety law poster is displayed

Name of responsible person(s): *Treasurer (Gill Brooke)*

[Vestibule]

10. Review and monitoring of this policy

Name of responsible person(s): *Elder with responsible for health and safety (Jane Simmons)*

This policy will be reviewed, monitored and revised every 12 months at the time of the AGM (or sooner if church activities change significantly) and will be approved by the Elders Meeting and adopted by the Church Meeting annually.

Signed: *Jane Simmons*

Date: 26th April 2026

(Church health & safety officer)