



ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHORLEY
HARPERS LANE, CHORLEY, LANCASHIRE PR6 0HP

St Peter's Chorley Parish Church *in the Church of England Diocese of Blackburn*

RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY & OPERATIONS MANUAL

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace..." — 1 Corinthians 14:33.

As stewards of St Peter's Church, our primary mission is to proclaim the Gospel and welcome all into fellowship. In doing so, we hold a sacred and legal duty of care to protect our congregation, volunteers, clergy, visitors, and contractors. This manual sets out our operational framework for identifying hazards and managing risks across all church life, aligning standard legal requirements with our unique ecclesiastical context.

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1. What is a Risk Assessment?

Based on established health and safety principles laid out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and standard UK best practices, a risk assessment is not a bureaucratic exercise designed to stop church life, nor can it eliminate every hazard from our daily existence. Instead, it is a careful, structured examination of what could cause harm to people during our activities, services, or maintenance operations.

The process allows the leadership of St Peter's to weigh up whether sufficient precautions have been taken to reduce risks to an acceptable level, or whether further actions are required. The process relies on identifying two core components:

- **Hazard:** Anything with the potential to cause harm (e.g., a trailing cable, a boiling kettle, working atop a ladder, using naked flames).
- **Risk:** The likelihood (chance) that someone will be harmed by that specific hazard, combined with the severity (outcome) of the injury or illness that might result.

2. Who Needs It and Why We Need It?

Legal and Civil Foundations

Under *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*, organizations that employ individuals have a statutory duty to assess and document workplace risks. At St Peter's, even where certain roles are filled by non-salaried volunteers, we remain fully bound by **Civil Law (Common Law)**. Under civil law, the church holds an absolute **Duty of Care** to each other, parishioners, and any person entering our premises or participating in our activities.

Failure to provide a safe environment can lead to negligence claims, civil lawsuits for financial damage, extreme rises in insurance premiums, and catastrophic reputational damage to the parish.

The Three Core Motivations

1. **Moral Duty:** We have a spiritual and ethical mandate to ensure that when parishioners come to worship, volunteer, or socialise, they return home safe and well at the end of the day.
2. **Financial Duty:** If an incident is investigated by the HSE and negligence is established, the regulatory body can levy "Fee for Fault" charges exceeding £160 per hour to recover investigation costs, completely independent of court fines or legal compensation costs.
3. **Legal Duty:** While written risk assessments are statutorily mandatory for organizations with five or more employees, St Peter's implements a mandatory rule to **document every assessment in writing**. Without written evidence, it is legally impossible to prove that our duty of care was executed if an incident occurs.

3. When is a Risk Assessment Needed?

A risk assessment must be active for all operational functions of St Peter's Church. This spans across:

- **Routine/Regular Activities:** Sunday services, weekly Communion, mid-week prayer groups, tea and coffee fellowships, and routine cleaning regimes.
- **Special Liturgical Events:** Midnight Mass, Christingle services, outdoor Palm Sunday processions, weddings, funerals, and baptisms.

- **Community & Youth Outreach:** Lego Church, youth groups, Parish open days, stalls, and parent-and-toddler sessions.
- **Off-site Activities:** Parish boundary walks, youth trips to local parks, outings, and community projects.
- **Fabric and Premises Works:** High-level repair, gutter cleaning, garden maintenance, electrical testing, boiler works, and ladder usage.

4. Governance: Who Creates and Who Signs Off?

Risk assessments must be compiled via a collaborative approach. The ideal author is someone with direct, hands-on knowledge of the specific activity, the environment, and the needs of the individuals participating. However, absolute responsibility for safety rests with the church leadership.

The Hierarchy of Responsibility (Internal Church Activities First)

1. **The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and Churchwardens:** Hold overall legal and civil accountability for the fabric of St Peter's and all formally sanctioned church activities.
2. **The Incumbent (Clergy) / Group Leaders:** Responsible for ensuring specific ministry areas (e.g., Youth Leaders, Fabric Committee Chairs, Social Committee Coordinators) complete written risk assessments before execution.
3. **The Author / Creator:** The specific individual organising the activity (e.g., Youth Group Leader for a park trip) drafts the assessment using the approved parish template.
4. **The Sign-Off Authority:** No risk assessment is legally valid until it has been formally reviewed and signed off by a Churchwarden or the Incumbent (Clergy). This ensures a dual-layer check and transfers institutional backing to the event.

External and Third-Party Responsibilities (Visits and Fabric Works)

When external entities interact with St Peter's, responsibility changes depending on the nature of the engagement. We enforce a strict protocol:

- **School Visits to the Church:** The visiting school holds full responsibility for the risk assessment covering their pupils' transit, behavior, supervision ratios, and educational movement inside our building. St Peter's is solely responsible for ensuring the building itself is safe, free of immediate hazards, and providing the school with any relevant safety briefings (e.g., fire exits). The school's leader must supply a copy of their risk assessment to the parish office prior to arrival.
- **External Contractors Carrying Out Work:** Any contractor hired to execute repairs, maintenance, cleaning, or building works at St Peter's holds **primary legal responsibility** for providing their own *Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS)* and proof of Public Liability Insurance. The Church's Fabric Committee must inspect these documents before work commences to ensure the safety of contractors, parishioners, and historical building structures.
- **Third-Party Hall Hirers (e.g., independent fitness classes, private parties):** The hirer is responsible for conducting a risk assessment for their specific activity and participants. St Peter's ensures a safe venue and provides a standard health and safety building induction sheet.

5. The Five Steps to Risk Assessment

St Peter's follows the standard methodology defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure robust risk control:

- 1. Identify the Hazards:** Conduct a physical walkaround of the church, hall, or site with a fresh set of eyes. Consult volunteers, examine manufacturer guidelines for equipment, and look at past accident logs to identify what could realistically cause harm. Focus on significant, reasonably foreseeable hazards.
- 2. Identify Who Might Be Harmed and How:** Determine which groups might be impacted. Pay specific attention to vulnerable populations including elderly parishioners (mobility/slip hazards), children (vulnerability around hot drinks or stairs), expectant mothers, and lone-working clergy or cleaners. Detail the specific injury type (e.g., scalds, fractures, smoke inhalation).
- 3. Evaluate the Risks and Decide on Controls:** Rate the risk level as **High, Medium, or Low** based on the likelihood and severity before any interventions. Apply the standard **Hierarchy of Controls** to bring the risk to a reasonably practicable low level:
 - *Eliminate:* Avoid the hazard completely if possible (e.g., stop using a highly dangerous tool).
 - *Substitute:* Replace the hazard with something safer (e.g., use low-potency eco-cleaners instead of concentrated industrial bleach).
 - *Engineering Controls:* Isolate people from the hazard (e.g., fit safety guards or use pull-down pulley systems for high-level light fittings).
 - *Administrative Controls:* Change how tasks are run (e.g., formal training, volunteer rotas, strict procedures, clear signage).
 - *PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):* The absolute last line of defense protecting only the user (e.g., safety goggles, heat-resistant catering gloves, high-visibility jackets). *Note: If PPE is mandated in an assessment, it is non-negotiable; volunteers must wear it or they cannot perform the activity.*
- 4. Record Your Findings and Implement Them:** Document the assessment on the official parish form, secure formal sign-off, and actively share the controls with your team of volunteers. A risk assessment stuffed inside a drawer is useless.
- 5. Review and Update Regularly:** Review every risk assessment **annually** as a standard. Force an immediate dynamic review if an accident occurs, if new equipment is introduced, if building layouts alter, or if underlying safety legislation changes.

SECTION B: RISK ASSESSMENT REPORTS & TEMPLATES

The following pages contain specific, actionable risk assessment records customized for typical activities at St Peter's Church, Chorley.

TEMPLATE 1: MIDNIGHT MASS ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Location: Main Church Sanctuary & Nave | **Assessment Date:** 15 December 2025

Assessor / Group Leader: Ministry Team Member/ Church Warden | **Sign-Off Authority:** Incumbent Clergy

HAZARD IDENTIFIED	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED & HOW	INITIAL RISK	CONTROL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED	RESIDUAL RISK
<p>Naked Flames from Candles</p> <p>(Congregational hand-held candles and altar candles)</p>	<p>Congregation, clergy, choir.</p> <p>Risk of clothing/hair catching fire, wax burns to hands.</p>	HIGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use plastic drip guards on all congregational candles. 2. Children only allowed to hold candles under direct, continuous parental supervision. 3. Steward/ Sides-person stationed at aisle ends with damp cloths and extinguishers. 4. Explicit verbal safety briefing given from the pulpit before candles are lit. 5. Strict instruction: keep candles upright, tilt unlit candle into lit candle when passing flame. 	LOW
<p>Low Lighting Levels</p> <p>(Atmospheric lighting used traditionally)</p>	<p>All attendees, particularly elderly parishioners.</p> <p>Slips, trips, falls over steps or pew bases.</p>	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure primary emergency exit signage is illuminated. 2. Keep main aisle carpets completely clear of seasonal decorations or extension cables. 3. Position Steward/ Sides-person with small torches at structural step changes (e.g., chancel steps) to assist communicants. 4. Bring up architectural lighting to full power immediately prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. 	LOW
<p>Overcrowding & Inclement Winter Weather</p>	<p>Parishioners, visitors. Crush risks at doors; slips on wet/icy external paths.</p>	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-service salting and gritting of all walkways from Harpers Lane to the church doors. 2. External entrance lighting switched on 1 hour prior. 3. Strict enforcement of maximum building capacity limits; Steward/ Sides-person to manage flows and keep all exits clear. 	LOW

Assessor Signature: _____ **Clergy/Warden Sign-Off:** _____

Date: ____/____/2025

TEMPLATE 2: CHURCH OPEN DAY (STALLS, FOOD, CHILDREN'S CORNER)

Location: Church Grounds, Nave, and Hall | **Assessment Date:** 1 October 2025

Assessor / Group Leader: Social Committee Chair | **Sign-Off Authority:** Churchwarden

HAZARD IDENTIFIED	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED & HOW	INITIAL RISK	CONTROL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED	RESIDUAL RISK
Food Handling & Catering (Hot and cold refreshments, home bakes, stalls)	Visitors, parishioners, helpers. Food poisoning, cross-contamination, allergic reactions.	HIGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> All food handlers must wash hands thoroughly; hand sanitiser stationed at the serving hatch. Explicit signage displayed requesting full allergen labelling on all donated home-baked goods. High-risk foods (refrigerated items) kept chilled until serving. Only designated, competent volunteers permitted behind kitchen counters. 	LOW
Boiling Liquids / Hot Water Urns	Kitchen staff, visitors, children. Severe scalds or burns from spillages or contact.	HIGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Urns must be positioned at the rear of counters, away from public reach. Power cables tucked away to eliminate any tipping/snagging hazard. No children allowed inside the kitchen environment at any time. Hot drinks must be served in double-walled sturdy cups or cups with handles. 	LOW
Children's Play Corner / Stalls	Toddlers, young children, parents. Choking hazards, physical bumps, trip hazards from layout.	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all toys provided are age-appropriate with no small detachable parts (no choking risks). Play area carpeted and separated clearly from main public foot traffic corridors. Structural stalls must be weighted down securely; regular safety sweeps by wardens during the day. 	LOW

Assessor Signature: _____ **Clergy/Warden Sign-Off:** _____

_____ **Date:** ____/____/2025

TEMPLATE 3: PARISH BOUNDARY WALK (MULTI-GENERATIONAL)

Location: Public Footpaths & Roads around Chorley Parish Boundary | **Assessment Date:** 1 June 2025

Assessor / Group Leader: Walk Coordinator | **Sign-Off Authority:** Churchwarden

HAZARD IDENTIFIED	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED & HOW	INITIAL RISK	CONTROL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED	RESIDUAL RISK
Traffic and Road Crossings	All walkers (elderly, adults, children). Risk of collisions with vehicles, road traffic accidents.	HIGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk route pre-vetted to utilise designated pedestrian crossings or quiet footpaths wherever possible. 2. Designate a 'Front Leader' and a 'Rear Backmarker' equipped with high-visibility vests. 3. Children must be under direct parental custody; group must cross major roads collectively when halted by leaders. 	LOW
Uneven Ground, Mud, & Stiles	Elderly parishioners, young children. Slips, trips, twisted ankles, falls leading to fractures.	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear pre-event communications mandatory: all participants must wear sturdy footwear with proper grip. 2. Designated physical marshals positioned at every stile/gate to physically assist elderly or less-mobile walkers. 3. Alternative abbreviated flat route mapped out and offered to less-mobile parishioners. 	MED
Exposed Weather Conditions & Medical Emergencies	All participants. Dehydration, heatstroke, hypothermia, or isolated medical attacks.	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead walkers must carry a fully stocked, portable group first aid kit. 2. Mandatory mobile phone tracking among leaders; emergency vehicular contact plan established if pick-up is needed. 3. Advise all walkers to bring personal drinking water, sun protection, or waterproofs based on forecast. 	LOW

Assessor Signature: _____ **Clergy/Warden Sign-Off:** _____

_____ **Date:** ____/____/2025

TEMPLATE 4: YOUTH GROUP SESSION (CHURCH HALL AND NEARBY PARK)

Location: St Peter's Hall and Local Public Park | **Assessment Date:** 8 September 2025

Assessor / Group Leader: Youth Worker | **Sign-Off Authority:** Incumbent/ Clergy

HAZARD IDENTIFIED	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED & HOW	INITIAL RISK	CONTROL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED	RESIDUAL RISK
Active Physical Games in Church Hall	Youth members. Collisions with walls, tables, glass windows; physical impact cuts/bruises.	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear all heavy folding tables and non-essential chairs out of the hall into locked storage prior to games. 2. Prohibit high-velocity throwing games near any unshielded windows or low-hanging light fixtures. 3. Active, direct supervision by a minimum of two approved, DBS-checked youth leaders at all times. 	LOW
Transit to and Activities in the Public Park	Youth members, general public. Stranger danger, separation from group, road traffic hazards.	HIGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain strict legal adult-to-youth supervision ratios. 2. Secure explicit, written parental consent forms before any youth leaves church premises. 3. Define fixed spatial boundaries inside the public park; youth must remain visible to leaders at all times. 4. Roll call conducted prior to leaving the hall, at the park, and immediately upon return. 	LOW
Preparation of Snacks & Fizzy Drinks	Youth members. Allergic shocks, minor cuts using kitchen utensils, burn hazards.	MED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold an active, documented register of all youth members' food allergies and dietary restrictions. 2. Youth strictly banned from operating kitchen appliances, sharp knives, or hot water supplies. 3. Leaders to prepare and issue snacks; ensure immediate clean-up of any floor spills to prevent slips. 	LOW

Assessor Signature: _____ **Clergy/Warden Sign-Off:** _____

_____ **Date:** ____/____/2025

Formal Ratification & Approval

Signed: *Neil Kelley*

Name: Fr. Neil Kelley
Position: Priest in Charge / Chair of PCC
Date: 11 June 2026

Signed: *Ronnie Hunter*

Name: Ronnie Hunter
Position: Churchwarden
Date: 11 June 2026

Signed: *Eric Crompton*

Name: Eric Crompton
Position: Churchwarden
Date: 11 June 2026

Document Version Control History

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