



A church policies checklist

TN111 Training Notes series: Structures

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Churches, like other organisations, now need to demonstrate that they hold and maintain a range of policies and procedures – and the list is growing.

Some of these are required for the church to comply with national legislation. The obvious examples include a safeguarding policy for both children and vulnerable adults and, for some, a health and safety policy.

Other policies are required for the effective management of business. For example meetings can only function if there are known 'rules' for who attends and how business is to be conducted. Independent churches will need some form of constitution which includes these regulations. Most mainline denominations will set these rules centrally.

Still other policies will be set by the church in question. One example would be the letting of rooms on the church site. A policy here may tackle issues such as whether the church will not let to certain activities and whether alcohol is permitted. Such restraints will differ from church to church.

Policies and procedures

These Training Notes set out a checklist of possible policies and procedures, with some idea as to which are essential and which are simply prudent, together with a listing of where churches can find help to prepare suitable wording. If you see omissions or necessary corrections of any kind, please advise me as I will regularly update this listing.

This list does not seek to distinguish in detail between 'policies' and 'procedures' as these tend to overlap.

A **policy** is a statement that provides information on authority required, boundaries set and responsibilities delegated. It states what the church believes and how it acts with reasons and any conditions. It lays down requirements (sometimes guidelines) for what is to be done.

A **procedure** explains how the policy is put into effect in practice. It may include a step-by-step list of actions that ensures the policy is followed. It enables action.

These notes do not provide pro-forma policies but do suggest where churches can look for help. They cover the categories of governance, staffing, health and safety, safeguarding, finance, communication and 'other'. Some policies (in bold) show a contents listing – with the idea that it is neater to have one overall policy in sections rather than many independent policies.

But this listing is long and therefore daunting. Policies are best built up over time rather than produced in one rush. So the first section shows the 'essential' policies to work at first of all, if you do not have them already. The remainder of the list seeks to include everything possible though few churches will have anything like everything shown. Treat this as a helpful guide, rather than as a demanding task-master.

Note that just because a policy is not listed as essential does not mean that the church does not have to comply with the law on the issue (eg. copyright legislation).

References to A and TN numbers are to items on this website for A-Articles and TN-Training Notes. The reference does not necessarily mean that there is a sample policy, but there will be content to help you develop a policy. Members of the UK Church Administrators Network (UCAN) can access further guidance and sample policies in the Resources section of their website.

1 Essentials

If you are starting from scratch, here are the basic policies you need, in most cases to be legally compliant. Once you have these in place you can select from the detailed lists that follow, but these are the ones to focus on first. They are set out here in a reasonable order of urgency. All items in this section are then asterisked when they appear in the detailed sections that follow.

Independent churches will need their constitution (with its normal contents including meetings regulations) because this defines everything. But then you need:

First priority list *(items marked * in sections that follow)*

- 1 Safeguarding *(all s5 below)*
- 2 Data protection policy *(see s7)*
- 3 Health and safety and fire safety policies *(if 5+ employees, see s4)*
- 4 Equal opportunities and staff employment *(if you employ staff, see s3)*
- 5 Finance and accounting policies *(see s6)*
- 6 Charity Commission reporting requests (safeguarding (as above) / pay and pensions / complaints / conflicts of interest / investments / risk management / volunteers' management) *(see various sections)*

Second priority list *(items marked ** in sections that follow)*

- 7 Trustee responsibilities *(see s2)*
- 8 Rooms hire *(see s8)*
- 9 IT and social media policies *(see s7)*
- 10 Other employment policies / staff handbook *(if you employ staff, see s3)*
- 11 Lone working *(see s3)*

2 Governance

Foundational documents are needed by independent churches that do not have denominational, standard statements. The same applies to several of the other ideas shown in this section (eg. conduct of meetings which will normally be included in a constitution). Other issues specific to the one church are helpful if in writing rather than just assumed. Items marked # will not be required by churches in mainline denominations where these items are set centrally. That is, unless the church wishes to highlight certain features (such as a doctrinal statement).

Foundational documents

- Constitution, trust deed or equivalent
- Doctrinal statement *(may be part of a constitution)*
- Ethos statement
- Church/organisational rules *(may be part of a constitution)*

General governance *(some may be included in the Constitution)*

- Trustee responsibilities* * - *see TN5*
- Church values - *see TN25, TN74*
- Governance structure/powers #
- Minister's role and authority # - *see TN78*
- Trustees' code of conduct #
- Office holders and powers #
- Requirements for 'membership' (inc termination)* - *see TN27, TN95*
- Conflicts of interest*
- Complaints policy* *(see also under Other below) - see TN86*
- Leadership teams and structures - *see TN18, TN50*
- Baptism and Communion policies
- Weddings/blessings policy
- Ecumenical relationships
- Dealings with other faiths
- Partnerships with other bodies

Conduct of meetings # *(usually included in the Constitution)*

- Pattern of meetings
- Annual meetings - *see A20*
- Notice period and means
- Agendas - *see TN61*
- Attendance, quorum, etc.
- Conduct of business *(may be detailed)*
- Voting methods
- Powers
- Minutes or other records - *see TN97*

Policy of policies

- Listings of all policies, procedures and risk assessments
- Responsibility for oversight
- Procedures for updating

Help and advice available from: [AFVS](#), [Charity Commission](#), [Churches Together](#), [Evangelical Alliance](#), [Parish Resources](#), [Stewardship](#), denominational offices, ecclesiastical lawyers, etc.

3 Staffing

Employment policies are essential for all churches that employ staff. A volunteers' policy is highly recommended for all churches and is requested by the Charity Commission. These items will often be grouped together in a staff handbook and possibly a separate volunteers' handbook.

Equal opportunities policy*

- Recruitment and immigration compliance
- Staff selection procedures – *see A17, TN65*
- Fair recruitment of ex-offenders
- Bullying and harassment
- Whistle-blowing
- Contracts of employment pro forma

Staff employment policy

- Disciplinary (inc definitions, procedures, authority, appeals)*
- Complaints and grievances*
- Capability and performance management*
- Organisational rules*
- Redundancy and redeployment**
- Probation periods**
- Staff management and appraisal** – *see A32, TN17, TN20*
- Retirement, leave, sick leave and overtime*
- Maternity, paternity, adoption, bereavement leave*
- Development and training**
- Study leave and sabbaticals**
- Induction training* and exit interviews** – *see TN95*
- Pay / stipends / remuneration* – *see A3, TN80*
- Pensions*
- Claiming of expenses** (*see also Finance below*)
- Occupational Requirements (OR)* – *see TN92*
- Display screen equipment regulations and eye tests** – *see A36*
- Dress code, punctuality and code of conduct**
- Home working and flexible working**
- Career breaks**
- Staff loans**
- Use of equipment**
- Security** (*see also under Communications below*)

Volunteer management policy

- Use of volunteers* – *see A43, TN37*
- Code of conduct*
- Service outside the church
- Volunteer contracts/expectations/agreements* – *see A8*
- Church support for volunteers* – *see TN31*

Lone worker policy – *see TN85***

Help and advice available from: [ACAS](#), [AFVS](#), [Baptist Union](#), [Directory of Social Change](#), [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#), [Parish Resources](#), [Stewardship](#), denominational HR staff, local crime prevention team, etc.

4 Health and safety

A health and safety policy is essential for all churches that have 5+ employees, even if the amount of detail and ground covered will vary considerably.

Health and safety policy* – see TN33

- Organisation and responsibilities
- Accidents and first aid
- Electrical safety
- Gas equipment safety
- Asbestos and hazardous substances/buildings
- Plant, machinery, equipment
- Slips, trips and falls
- Lighting
- Working at heights
- Manual handling
- Contractors on site *(including control of)*
- Bouncy castles and play equipment
- Church grounds / graveyards
- Church bells
- Defibrillator
- Pest control
- Waste management
- Legionella control
- (+ issues listed below)*

Fire safety*

- Fire drill
- Evacuation procedure / fire exits
- Staff/marshals
- Fire call and extinguisher points

Food hygiene policy

- Food hygiene and preparation
- Food allergies
- Cleaning routines
- Use of kitchen equipment
- Certification required for kitchen access

Risk assessments

- Attitude to risk* *(see also under Finance below)*
- Listing of assessments
- Cleaning
- Church events
- Travelling on church business
- Terrorist attack
- Car parking
- Security
- Falling masonry
- Graveyards *(+ all other issues under Health and Safety above)*

Risk assessment has traditionally been seen as a Health and Safety issue but is now part of the charity SORP and so is shown under a Finance heading too.

Help and advice available from: [AFVS](#), [Ecclesiastical](#), [HSE](#), local Environmental Officer, church architects, other insurance companies, etc.

5 Safeguarding

A safeguarding policy is essential for all churches.

General safeguarding policy*

- General guidance / code of behaviour
- DBS requirements
- Risk assessments
- Recognising signs of abuse
- Safer recruitment
- Management of workers
- Management of offenders
- Allegations against workers
- Pastoral care
- Working in partnerships
- Domestic abuse
- Transport use
- Handling of disclosure information

Child protection policy*

- Physical contact
- Written contact
- Online issues
- Discipline
- Children with special needs
- Inappropriate behaviour by children
- Procedures to follow
- Registration forms

Vulnerable adults policy*

- Definitions
- Worker integrity
- Procedures to follow
- Confidentiality

Help and advice from: [DBS website](#), [Thirtyone:eight](#) (was known as CCPAS), denominational safeguarding staff, etc.

6 Finance

Most of these are required under the terms of the relevant SORP for charities. Accounting policies are normally printed as notes to the annual accounts.

Financial policies *(see TN98 for a complete list of possible contents)*

- Budgets and budget holders
- Controls*
- Earmarked gifts
- Fund raising methods – *see A16*
- Fraud prevention*
- Ethical investment*
- Insurance
- Expenditure / bank cards
- Cash handling and transit

Claiming of expenses* * *(see also under Staffing above)*
 Capital equipment replacement
 Suppliers and contractors
 Grant making
 Reporting – *see A18*

Accounting policies*

Risk assessment and attitude to risk *(see also under Health and Safety above)*
 Trustees' responsibilities
 Basis of preparation
 Income, expenditure and VAT
 Valuation of assets and depreciation
 Stock, debtors, creditors, financial instruments
 Accumulated funds
 Reserves
 Legacies

Help and advice available from: [ACAT](#), [AFVS](#), [Parish Resources](#), [Stewardship](#), denominational offices, the church's Independent Examiner / Auditor, etc.

7 Communications

Policies under this heading should be considered. A privacy policy is essential under GDPR.

Data protection policy*

GDPR requirements – *see TN46*
 Privacy policy
 Website cookies policy
 Security of data *(see also under Staffing above)*
 Data breaches procedure
 Subject access requests procedure
 Right to erasure requests procedure

Communications policy – *see A39 for a complete idea of possible contents*

Means of communication used
 Data held
 IT security* * – *see TN46*
 Photographs and images used
 Photography during services
 CCTV
 Website – *see A14*
 Email and internet* * – *see A11*
 Social media and texting* * – *see TN99*
 Record retention
 Confidentiality *(see also under Other below)* – *see TN110*
 Contact with the media – *see TN89*
 Copyright and CCLI licences

Help and advice available from: [CCLI](#), [Information Commissioner's office](#), [Parish Resources](#), denominational offices, etc.

8 Other policies

These are, on the whole, optional policies you may wish to select from, prepare and update. This list is not intended to be exhaustive in any way and much will depend on particular circumstances in each church.

Environmental / green / eco policy

Fair Trade policy

General confidentiality policy – see TN110
Staff confidentiality was listed under Staffing

Disability policy

Access statement

Rooms hire policy** – see A28

Terms and conditions

Alcohol on church premises

Customer care policy – see TN86

Complaints policy* (*see also under Governance above*)

Hospitality policy – see TN107

Global mission policy – see TN42

Small groups policy

Church office policy – see A33/34. TN105

Pre-school policies (for churches with pre-school groups)

(This may need to be quite detailed depending on the activities and OFSTED needs)

Café/bookshop/business policies (as appropriate)

(again, these may need to be quite detailed depending on the trading activities – see also food hygiene under Health and Safety above)

On this website see, referenced above:

A3	Salary differentials for Christian staff	TN33	Danger at church!
A8	Worker agreements	TN37	To pay or not to pay
A11	Become a better emailer	TN42	A review of global mission strategy
A14	Create a quality website	TN46	A beginner's guide to IT security
A16	Funding a capital project	TN50	Should the staff lead the church?
A17	Staff selection step-by-step	TN61	Mapping out a meeting
A18	Administering church funds	TN65	Sharp interview questions
A20	Annual meetings <i>can</i> be different	TN74	Understanding values
A28	Rooms to let	TN78	The role of a church leader
A32	Be creative as a line manager	TN80	Staff salary schemes
A33/34	Roles for a church office	TN85	Preparing a Lone Worker Policy
A36	Sorting out the study part 1	TN86	Customer care for churches?
A39	A plan for your communications	TN89	Hold the front page!
A43	Every member on active service	TN92	How genuine are your GORs?
TN5	Responsibilities of mission boards	TN95	Exit interviews for everyone
TN17	Suggested questions for annual review	TN97	How to minute a meeting
TN18	A leadership team checklist	TN98	An outline Church Financial Policy
TN20	Line management in a church staff team	TN99	Social media+ guidelines
TN25	The radical values Jesus taught	TN105	Recording a voicemail message
TN27	Saying good-bye to church members	TN107	A church policy on hospitality
TN31	Affirming volunteers	TN110	It's confidential: but it still leaks out

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes> then TN111. See also the items references above. Sincere thanks to a number of church operational staff who provided ideas and gave comments on an early draft.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about consultancy on issues related to church policies.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN111 under Structures (with a link to Administration).

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