



# 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.**

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Some of these are required for the church to comply with national legislation. The obvious examples include a safeguarding policy for both children and adults at risk 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 (listed 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. See also the very helpful [The Church Office](#) website for a range of pro-formas.*

## 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) / expenses, pay and pensions / financial controls / complaints / conflicts of interest / investments / risk management / serious incident reporting / volunteers' management / bullying and harassment) *(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 - *see TN141*
- 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 [Trust Advice](#), [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, A47, 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](#), [Trust Advice](#), [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
- Serious incident reporting\*
- 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: [Trust Advice](#), [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

### **Adults at risk 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 /global mission giving – *see TN116*
- Reporting – *see A18*
- Corporate credit card
- Anti-money laundering

**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](#), [Trust Advice](#), [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** – *see TN122*

**Fair Trade policy**

**General confidentiality policy** – *see TN110*  
*Staff confidentiality is listed under Staffing*

**Disability policy**  
 Access statement – *see TN135*

**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** – *see TN48*

**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	TN37	To pay or not to pay
A8	Worker agreements	TN42	A review of global mission strategy
A11	Become a better emailer	TN46	A beginner's guide to IT security
A14	Create a quality website	TN50	Should the staff lead the church?
A16	Funding a capital project	TN61	Mapping out a meeting
A17	Staff selection step-by-step	TN65	Sharp interview questions
A18	Administering church funds	TN74	Understanding values
A20	Annual meetings <i>can</i> be different	TN78	The role of a church leader
A28	Rooms to let	TN80	Staff salary schemes
A32	Be creative as a line manager	TN85	Preparing a Lone Worker Policy
A33/34	Roles for a church office	TN86	Customer care for churches?
A36	Sorting out the study part 1	TN89	Hold the front page!
A39	A plan for your communications	TN92	How genuine are your GORs?
A43	Every member on active service	TN95	Exit interviews for everyone
A47	15 principles of volunteering	TN97	How to minute a meeting
A48	Organising your small groups	TN98	An outline Church Financial Policy
TN5	Responsibilities of mission boards	TN99	Social media+ guidelines
TN17	Suggested questions for annual review	TN105	Recording a voicemail message
TN18	A leadership team checklist	TN107	A church policy on hospitality
TN20	Line management in a church staff team	TN110	It's confidential: but it still leaks out
TN25	The radical values Jesus taught	TN116	Global mission giving
TN27	Saying good-bye to church members	TN122	Your eco-church check-up
TN31	Affirming volunteers	TN135	How to conduct a disability audit
TN33	Danger at church!	TN141	A church council Code of Conduct

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

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN111 under Structures (with a link to Administration).

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