

Parish Church Safety Plan

Below is a practical, compliant parish church safety plan aligned with the principles of Martyn's Law (Protect Duty / Terrorism (Protection of Premises) legislation) - focusing on risk awareness, proportionate measures, preparedness, and response.

Parish Church Safety Plan (Aligned with Martyn's Law)

1. Purpose and Scope

To ensure the church:

- Protects worshippers, visitors, staff, and volunteers
- Is prepared for potential terrorist or hostile incidents
- Meets its legal and moral duty for public safety

Applies to:

- Regular services
- Weddings, funerals, concerts, community events
- Open church periods (tourists / reflection)

2. Risk Assessment

Key Threats Considered

- Suspicious individuals or behaviour
- Unattended packages
- Vehicle-as-a-weapon threat (VAAW)
- Armed attack (bladed or firearms)
- Disorder or hate-related incidents

Vulnerabilities

- Open-door policy (churches are typically accessible)
- Limited staffing during events
- Multiple entry/exit points
- Elderly or vulnerable congregation members

Risk Rating Approach

Use simple categories:

- Likelihood: Low / Medium / High
- Impact: Low / Medium / High

Prioritise measures where impact is high, even if likelihood is low.

3. Preventative Measures

3.1 Governance

- Appoint a Church Safety Lead (e.g., churchwarden)
- Maintain a written safety plan accessible to volunteers
- Review annually or after any incident

3.2 Awareness and Training

All volunteers should be trained (basic level):

- Recognising suspicious behaviour:
- Loitering, photographing security features
- Unusual clothing for weather
- Agitated or confrontational behaviour
- “Run, Hide, Tell” principles
- How to raise concerns quickly

Optional:

ACT Awareness e-learning (UK police recommended)

3.3 Physical Security (Proportionate)

Keep entrances visible and welcoming—but monitored

Designate:

- Main entrance for large events
- Secondary exits clearly marked

Ensure:

- Good lighting inside and outside
- Clear, unobstructed escape routes

Consider:

- Stewards at major services/events
- Locking unused doors during large gatherings

3.4 Visitor Management

For regular worship:

- Maintain an open, welcoming approach with light vigilance

For events:

- Stewards greet attendees
- Awareness of capacity limits
- Keep aisles and exits clear

4. Incident Response Plan

4.1 Key Principles

- Preserve life first
- Communicate clearly
- Act quickly but calmly

4.2 Emergency Actions (*Run, Hide, Tell adapted*)

If an immediate threat occurs:

RUN

- Encourage people to leave safely if possible
- Direct them towards known exits
- Avoid bottlenecks

HIDE

If escape not possible:

- Lock/block doors
- Turn off lights
- Silence phones
- Stay out of sight

TELL

Call 999:

- Location (full church name + postcode)
- Nature of threat
- Description of suspect(s)

4.3 Role of Church Team

Role	Responsibility
Safety Lead	Coordinate response, liaise with emergency services
Stewards	Direct evacuation / guide to safe spaces
Clergy	Support calm communication, pastoral care
Volunteers	Assist vulnerable persons

4.4 Evacuation Plan

Identify:

- Primary assembly point (e.g., churchyard corner)
- Secondary assembly point

Ensure:

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Support for elderly / disabled

Conduct occasional evacuation drills (low-key)

4.5 Lockdown Plan (if evacuation unsafe)

- Secure internal rooms
- Barricade doors if necessary
- Maintain silence
- Await police instructions

5. Communication

Internal Communication

- Mobile phones for key personnel
- WhatsApp group for stewards (optional)
- Printed emergency contacts list

External Communication

- Emergency services (999)
- Diocese safeguarding officer
- Local police contact (non-emergency)

6. Post-Incident Actions

- Account for all individuals
- Provide first aid
- Offer pastoral support
- Record incident details
- Review and update plan

7. Proportionality for a Parish Church

Martyn's Law emphasises reasonable and proportionate measures, so:

- Avoid intrusive or security-heavy atmosphere
- Focus on awareness, preparedness, and simple controls
- Use volunteers effectively rather than costly systems

8. Simple Checklist

- ✓ Named Safety Lead
- ✓ Basic volunteer awareness training
- ✓ Clear exits and evacuation plan
- ✓ Emergency contacts available
- ✓ Stewards for large events
- ✓ Annual review completed

9. Optional Enhancements

- First aid and defibrillator availability
- Link with local community policing team
- Incident logbook
- Safeguarding integration

Summary

- A parish church can comply with Martyn's Law by focusing on:
- Awareness (spotting risk)
- Preparedness (simple planning and training)
- Response (clear, rehearsed actions)

The goal is not to turn the church into a fortress - but to ensure it remains open, welcoming, and resilient.