

# Guidance on Security for Churches

Churches are places of worship and sanctuary, and it is important that they remain open and accessible to all. However, a range of security measures can be put in place to protect against the risks of criminal activity and terrorism. The particular measures which can be put in place for your church will depend on its size, location, usage and also the funds available. This guidance is intended to help you to review the security arrangements you have in place and to consider whether you need to take any further steps to protect your church, clergy and parishioners.

## Building Security

It is good practice to review your church's security measures regularly. If you already have security equipment such as an intruder alarm or CCTV, you should ensure it is working effectively. If you do not have such equipment but consider the church would benefit from it, or if you feel the church needs additional security measures, you may be eligible for the **Places of Worship: Security Funding Scheme**, under which bids may be made for the capital cost of security equipment.

## Security Equipment



Are your alarms and/or CCTV cameras regularly serviced and maintained?

Is the CCTV footage reviewed? Otherwise suspicious activity may go unnoticed.

Are the CCTV cameras placed in the most effective positions? Usually covering entrances/exits.

Is the date and time correct on the CCTV system? This will enable police to establish a timeline.

Is the lighting suitable for daytime and darkness hours? If not, night vision cameras may be helpful.

## Access and Inspections



Are all your doors and opening windows in good repair and do they have functioning locks, which meet current security standards? These are simple measures that can be taken to improve security.

Have you considered installing external lighting or security doors? For increased security. Have you considered the use of barriers/bollards, perimeter fencing or access control gates? These measures can make it more difficult for unauthorised vehicles to enter the church site.

Is there clear separation between the public and private areas of the church? It is important that intruders cannot access private areas, and that you are alerted if they do. Is there a designated and secure internal part of the church where people could gather in the event of an external threat? People may need to take refuge in the church.

Would you or your parishioners notice if a suspicious vehicle was parked in the parish car park?

Does the parish have waste bins or sheds in close proximity to a church building? This poses a significant fire risk and could also be used to hide devices.

Are walkways and exit routes regularly inspected? It is important that all routes are kept clear so that people can evacuate quickly and safely if necessary.

Do you check the church for suspicious items? It is good practice to check under pews and in other concealed areas of the church for suspicious items.

## Effective Communication



Do you involve the Diocese, Police and/or security companies in arrangements for the church? They may all be able to help you address any concerns or difficulties you may have.

Are volunteers/parishioners encouraged to be vigilant about security and to raise any concerns? Some parishioners may have experience in security and be able to provide valuable assistance.

Do volunteers/parishioners know what to do if they see any suspicious behaviour?

Do you speak to neighbours and other local churches/religious communities about security issues that could affect you all? In emergency situations everyone will need to work together.

Have you considered positioning volunteers at the doors of the church? They can welcome people to the church, but also look out for anyone acting suspiciously and possibly lock the doors if a threat is identified. If stationed close to an exit during Mass, they may also be able to leave undetected and raise the alarm if necessary.

Is there an evacuation plan in place and are volunteers and parishioners aware of it? It is good practice to have an evacuation plan and to hold practice evacuations from time to time to help ensure everyone can leave the church safely.

Do you plan carefully for large or special events (e.g. big weddings or funerals of high profile individuals)? Large events can attract criminals or terrorists seeking to take advantage when you are busy and/or distracted. Such events should be carefully planned, with assistance from the Diocese and Police as necessary.

## Personal Security

Priests and others may often be in the church alone. Risk assessments should be undertaken for anyone who may be 'working' alone in the church or parish. For assistance in undertaking risk assessments, please contact our health and safety consultants, Ellis Whittam at [diocese@elliswhittam.com](mailto:diocese@elliswhittam.com) or on 0845 226 8393 (ask for *Dioceses' Health and Safety*).

A number of parishes have expressed interest in purchasing personal security or panic alarms, or in setting up 'buddy' systems, which can provide some reassurance for those who may be working alone. Another effective measure may be installing an audio or video door entry system for the presbytery or parish office, which allows visitors to be seen or heard before permitting access.

## Further Advice and Assistance

Places of Worship: Security Funding Scheme

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance>

Metropolitan Police

<http://content.met.police.uk/Site/terrorism>

**If you have any concerns about terrorism or want to report any suspicious behaviour contact the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321**