

Manual Handling Policy

St Peter's, Colchester

Adopted by the PCC: [tbc]

Review date: [3 years]

Policy owner: The Parochial Church Council

1. Purpose

This policy explains how St Peter's seeks to reduce the risk of injury from manual handling.

Manual handling means transporting or supporting a load by hand or bodily force. It includes lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, moving, carrying or supporting a load.

The Parochial Church Council has responsibility for the governance and oversight of St Peter's, including health and safety, risk management, staff, volunteers, church premises and church activities.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to be faithful in all that we say and do. That includes taking reasonable care of one another, protecting people from avoidable harm, and ensuring that practical service in the life of the church is carried out wisely and safely.

This policy is intended to help staff and volunteers avoid unnecessary manual handling, assess manual handling risks, use safer methods where possible, and report concerns promptly.

2. Scope

This policy applies to manual handling carried out on behalf of St Peter's, including by:

- employed staff;
- volunteers;
- Ministry Area Leaders;
- churchwardens;
- PCC members;
- those helping with worship, events, hospitality, children's and youth work, practical tasks, maintenance, cleaning, storage or set-up.

It applies to manual handling in:

- the church building;
- the church hall;
- the churchyard;
- kitchens;

- offices;
- vestry and storage areas;
- external areas;
- off-site activities carried out on behalf of St Peter's.

Manual handling may include moving:

- chairs, tables, staging, music equipment or furniture;
- boxes, books, paper, files or office supplies;
- food, kitchen equipment or refreshments;
- children's and youth ministry equipment;
- cleaning materials;
- tools, ladders or maintenance items;
- donated goods, parcels or deliveries;
- church equipment for events, worship or outreach.

3. Christian foundation

Practical service is an important part of church life. However, serving Christ and his church should not require people to take unnecessary risks or injure themselves.

The Apostle Paul writes:

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."
– Philippians 2:4, ESV

Manual handling should therefore be planned with care, shared where appropriate, and undertaken in a way that protects both the person carrying out the task and those around them.

4. General principles

St Peter's policy is to eliminate the need for manual handling as far as is reasonably practicable.

Where manual handling cannot be avoided, St Peter's will seek to reduce the risk of injury by:

- planning the task;
- assessing the load;
- using mechanical aids where available;
- sharing heavy or awkward loads;
- reducing carrying distances;
- avoiding unnecessary lifting from floor level or above shoulder height;
- keeping routes clear;
- ensuring people are not asked to lift beyond their capacity;
- providing guidance or training where needed;
- reviewing arrangements where concerns are identified.

Manual handling should normally only be undertaken where it is safe to do so. Higher-risk manual handling should not normally be carried out by someone working alone.

5. Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers involved in manual handling are expected to take reasonable care of themselves and others.

They should:

- follow agreed systems of work and safety instructions;
- use equipment provided for health and safety properly;
- co-operate with St Peter's on health and safety matters;
- inform the Church Administrator, Ministry Area Leader, Health and Safety Officer, Vicar or churchwardens if circumstances change or if hazardous manual handling activities are identified;
- avoid putting others at risk through unsafe lifting, carrying, storage or movement of items;
- ask for help where needed;
- not attempt a manual handling task if they are unsure it can be done safely.

Ministry Area Leaders, event organisers and activity leaders should consider manual handling risks when planning activities and should ensure that volunteers are not put under unreasonable pressure to move heavy or awkward items.

The Church Administrator, Health and Safety Officer, churchwardens and relevant governance groups should support safe arrangements for storage, equipment, access and reporting.

6. Before manual handling begins

Before starting a manual handling task, those involved should consider:

- whether the task needs to be done at all;
- whether the item can be left where it is;
- whether the task can be avoided by changing the arrangement;
- whether a mechanical aid can be used;
- whether the load can be split into smaller parts;
- whether more than one person is needed;
- whether the route is clear;
- whether doors, steps, slopes, uneven surfaces or tight spaces create risk;
- whether the destination is ready;
- whether the load is heavy, unstable, sharp, hot, awkward or difficult to grip;
- whether the person carrying out the task is fit and able to do so safely;
- whether children, visitors or other people may be affected.

Operations involving heavy or awkward loads, repetitive lifting, regular set-up, deliveries, storage areas, stairs, furniture movement or large events should be identified and planned in advance wherever possible.

7. Avoiding or reducing manual handling

Where possible, manual handling should be avoided or reduced by:

- leaving items in their normal storage place;
- ordering materials in smaller, easier-to-handle quantities;
- storing heavy items at waist height where practicable;
- avoiding storage of heavy items at floor level or above shoulder height;
- reducing the distance items need to be carried;
- using trolleys, sack trucks or other aids where available;
- arranging deliveries as close as possible to the place where items are needed;
- keeping storage areas tidy and accessible;
- reducing clutter;
- disposing of unused or unnecessary items;
- planning room layouts to avoid repeated unnecessary movement.

Where possible, materials should be ordered or arranged in amounts that are small and easy to handle.

8. Safe handling practice

When manual handling is necessary, those involved should:

- assess the load before lifting;
- get help if the item is heavy, awkward or unstable;
- use a trolley or other aid where available;
- ensure the route is clear;
- place feet securely;
- keep the load close to the body;
- avoid twisting while lifting or carrying;
- avoid sudden movements;
- avoid carrying too much at once;
- take breaks where needed;
- set the load down safely;
- report any difficulty, injury, near miss or unsafe arrangement.

Heavy loads that must be lifted by hand should be shared.

Loads should be positioned and planned to reduce the height from which they need to be lifted and the distance over which they need to be carried.

No one is immune from injury. A person should not be expected to undertake a lift simply because they appear strong or are willing to help.

9. Weight limits and team lifting

Staff and volunteers should not normally lift items weighing more than 20kg on their own.

This does not mean that every item under 20kg is safe for one person to lift. A lighter item may still be unsafe if it is awkward, unstable, bulky, difficult to grip, carried over a long distance, moved on stairs, lifted repeatedly, or handled by someone with health or mobility limitations.

Items over 20kg should normally be:

- split into smaller loads;
- moved using appropriate equipment;
- moved by two or more suitable people;
- left in place until proper arrangements can be made;
- handled by contractors or others with appropriate competence where necessary.

Team lifting should be planned. Those involved should agree:

- who is leading the lift;
- where the load is going;
- when to lift and lower;
- how to communicate;
- what route will be used;
- what to do if someone needs to stop.

10. Training and instruction

Staff and volunteers who are required to undertake manual handling as part of their role should receive appropriate instruction, guidance or training.

This may include:

- safe lifting technique;
- use of trolleys or other aids;
- planning and route checking;
- identifying unsafe loads;
- knowing when to ask for help;
- reporting hazards, injuries and near misses;
- storage and set-up arrangements.

Training should be proportionate to the activity. Occasional low-risk tasks may require simple instruction, while regular, heavy, repetitive or higher-risk manual handling may require more formal training.

11. Storage and housekeeping

Storage arrangements should reduce manual handling risk.

St Peter's should seek to ensure that:

- storage areas are kept tidy;
- heavy items are not stored unnecessarily high or low;
- frequently used items are easy to access;

- routes are kept clear;
- items are not left where they create trip hazards;
- chairs, tables and equipment are stacked safely;
- unstable or damaged items are removed from use;
- unnecessary items are disposed of or relocated.

Concerns about storage, clutter, unsafe stacking, blocked access or difficult-to-move items should be reported promptly.

12. Injuries, incidents and concerns

Any injury, accident, near miss or concern arising from manual handling should be reported promptly.

Depending on the matter, this may be reported to:

- the Church Administrator;
- the Health and Safety Officer;
- the relevant Ministry Area Leader;
- the Vicar;
- the churchwardens;
- the person responsible for the event or activity.

Accidents and injuries should be recorded in accordance with St Peter's Health and Safety Policy and accident reporting arrangements.

Repeated concerns about the same task, item, storage area or activity should lead to review of the relevant risk assessment and working arrangements.

13. Manual handling and risk assessments

Manual handling should be considered in relevant risk assessments, including for:

- regular church activities;
- event set-up and clear-up;
- children's and youth ministry;
- food and hospitality;
- building and maintenance tasks;
- deliveries;
- storage areas;
- office moves;
- fundraising or community events;
- off-site activities;
- any activity involving heavy, awkward or repeated lifting.

Where manual handling creates significant risk, it should be recorded in the risk assessment, together with control measures and any actions needed.

14. Related policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside, where applicable:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Risk Assessment Procedure;
- Governance and Risk Management Policy;
- Risk Register;
- Lone Worker Policy;
- Food Hygiene Policy;
- Fire Risk Assessment;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Volunteer Agreement;
- Ministry Role Descriptions;
- Staff Handbook and employment policies;
- Accident and incident reporting arrangements;
- relevant risk assessments;
- relevant statutory, insurer or professional guidance.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the PCC every three years, or sooner if required by changes in law, guidance, insurance requirements, incidents, parish practice, building use, staffing, governance need or risk assessment.

Manual handling arrangements should be reviewed sooner where there has been an accident, injury, near miss, repeated concern, significant change in activity, new equipment, new storage arrangement or change in building use.

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that this policy remains practical, proportionate and consistent with St Peter's wider health and safety and risk management arrangements.

Short public-facing summary

Manual Handling Policy

Manual handling means lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, moving, carrying or supporting a load by hand or bodily force.

St Peter's seeks to avoid unnecessary manual handling and reduce the risk of injury to staff, volunteers and others.

Before moving something, staff and volunteers should consider whether the task can be avoided, whether help is needed, whether the route is clear, whether the load is awkward or heavy, and whether equipment such as a trolley should be used.

Staff and volunteers should not normally lift items weighing more than 20kg on their own. Heavy or awkward loads should be split, shared, moved with equipment, or left until proper arrangements can be made.

Concerns, injuries, accidents or near misses connected with manual handling should be reported promptly.