



The
United
Reformed
Church

Help and Advice Group

Northern Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ (0191-232 1168)

Bulletin 9: FIRST AID

The Help & Advice Group was set up by Synod in 2009, to support local churches in being informed and effective in their life and mission. The Group is made up of four members of local churches, together with administrative support from the Trust Officer. We are willing to try to provide specific advice or organise training days on particular topics. Please get in touch if you have questions or wish to suggest a training or discussion event.

This article is part of a series giving an overview of particular subjects of interest for local churches. We also circulate general updates from time to time. Bulletins will also be posted on the members' area of the website with direct links to other websites.

Where readers are directed to web-based resources, the Synod Office is willing to respond to reasonable requests for printed out information for readers without web access, although they may find it more satisfactory to follow up their interest through their local library's web access.

The Provision of First Aid Facilities at Churches

The legal requirement to provide first aid facilities at churches and other workplaces is contained in the *Health and Safety at Work (First-Aid) Regulations 1981*.

All employers have to provide adequate equipment and facilities appropriate in the circumstances for rendering first aid to their employees if they are injured or become ill at work. Employers have to make an *assessment* of their first aid needs appropriate to their work activities.

When making an assessment it is necessary to consider the types of work activity carried on, the number of employees involved and the likely nature of accidents and injuries that might occur. Once an assessment has been made the appropriate first aid facilities must be provided.

There is no legal requirement to make provision for non-employees, members of the public or others who may use a premises but it is recommended by the Health and Safety Executive that all people using a premises are taken into account in the assessment of first aid needs.

In the case of churches, it is likely that most accidents will be caused by slips, trips and falls. However one should also take into account accidents that may occur from cleaning and kitchen activities involving the use of hot surfaces, boiling water, sharp implements and chemical cleaning materials. Routine maintenance and gardening activities may involve working at heights, the use of electrical equipment, petrol-engined lawn mowers, strimmers or hedge cutters.

It is likely that the typical injuries encountered at churches will be cuts, bruises, sprains, fractures, scalds and burns.

Keeping and reviewing an *accident record book* will help with an assessment of first aid needs.

The legal requirement to provide a *trained first aider* is where 50 or more people are employed or when there is a lesser number than this but where the nature of the work activity presents greater hazards. It is very unlikely that a church will fall into these categories. When a first aid assessment however indicates that a trained first aider should be provided they should have undertaken training and hold a valid certificate of competence issued by an approved training organisation in either:

- First aid at work (FAW) or
- Emergency first aid at work (EFAW).

FAW or EFAW certificates have to be renewed every 3 years.

When the first aid assessment indicates that a trained first aider is not necessary the minimum first aid provision is:

1. The appointment of a person to take charge of the first aid arrangements including looking after the first aid equipment and calling the emergency services when required.
2. The provision of adequate first aid equipment, suitably marked and easily accessible at all times. The requirement for most churches will be one first aid box identified by a white cross on a green background.

There is no mandatory list of items to be included in a *first aid box* but as a guide the HSE suggests in situations where work activities involve low hazards:

- A leaflet giving general guidance on first aid, ie, the HSE leaflet “Basic Guidance on First Aid at Work”
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters of various sizes
- 2 sterile eye pads
- 4 individually wrapped triangular bandages
- 6 safety pins
- 2 larger sterile individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings
- 6 medium sized individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings
- A pair of disposable gloves.

Other items could include scissors, surgical tape and individually wrapped moist wipes.

The contents of first aid boxes should be inspected frequently and restocked after use. Sufficient replacement supplies should be held in stock on the premises. Once items have reached their expiry date they should be disposed of. Tablets and other medication should not be kept in first aid boxes.

Further advice can be obtained from the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (second edition 2009) ISBN 9780 7176 62609 which can be freely downloaded at: www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/legislation.htm.

[We are grateful to Doug Fox for his assistance in preparing this article.]