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Churches buildings are ideally open places where people can feel welcome and at ease to pray or rest without feeling watched or to enjoy the peace and beauty of the place. Concern about incidences of theft and crime should not prevent this.

We can help you prevent crime in your church

Download our guidance

- [Heritage Crime: Impact statement](#) (369.88 KB)
- [Heritage Crime: Impact statement example](#) (636.8 KB)
- [Cycle parking and security in churchyards](#) (446.56 KB)



Our top tips for prevention

Here are some simple steps that you can take to help protect your church from crime.

- **Lock your church after dark** unless there is a service or someone present
- **Keep keys safe** with an official or in a secure place away from the church. Maintain a list of keyholders
- **Protect high-value items.** Secure items to the floor or wall or replace items with cheaper alternatives when services are not taking place
- **Lock away valuables and money.** Keep money, silver, brass and pewter items in a safe or secure area such as the vestry or a church officer's home

You can also take sensible precautions to make sure that you are do not become a victim of financial crime, or are accused of it.

- **Keep and monitor all receipts for deposits.** Investigate any discrepancies immediately
- **Divide responsibility for money.** Appoint different officials for collecting, counting and banking. Make sure no one is left alone to count money

Contact your [Diocesan Advisory Committee](#) if you are planning to install security measures to the building. Find out what [permissions you'll need](#).

- CCTV cameras
- Window guards
- New locks

[Find out more from your insurance company](#)

Crime prevention at special events

The risk of crime may increase during certain times of the year (e.g. festivals, events, etc.).

If you are worried or would like advice, then the best thing is to get in touch with your nearest [local neighbourhood policing team](#). They may have a crime prevention officer who can help.

Your biggest assets however are:

- Constant public surveillance
- Pre-designed routes for the public to take
- And additional, temporary, physical security

Heritage crime

Heritage crime is any offence which harms the value of heritage assets and their settings (e.g. listed buildings, scheduled monuments, etc.)

Most of our churches are listed buildings; so much crime against them will be classed as heritage crime.

If you've been a victim of heritage crime, it's important to emphasise the loss or damage to heritage in addition to the value of whatever has been stolen (such as lead from the roof).

We can help you [prepare your impact statement](#) or [download our example statement](#).

[Find out more about heritage crime](#)

Protecting church treasures

There are many things that you can do to make your church treasures more secure so that they can be enjoyed by all:

- Get a safe
- Keep keys safe
- Install an intruder alarm
- Secure objects to the walls
- Look into getting [display cases](#)
- Keep your inventory up-to-date and take photographs
- Use forensic marking
- Encourage local vigilance
- Minimise the risk of arson

Find out more about church treasures [here](#)

Preventing metal theft

The [Scrap Metal Dealers' Act 2013](#) has helped to reduce the incidence of metal theft.

But sadly, we are still seeing regular incidents of theft from our church roofs.

So it is wise to take [preventive measures](#). Or perhaps consider using alternative [roofing materials](#) following a theft.

Cleaning graffiti

Graffiti should be removed as soon as it is discovered.

Some local authorities have a graffiti removal service. So it is worth finding out about this before an incident occurs.

Cleaning some materials is a professional job and advice of an appropriate professional should be available locally.

If you find graffiti on historic objects it would be appropriate to [contact a conservator](#) for advice over its removal.

Further advice on graffiti on historic buildings is published by [Historic England](#)

Cycle parking and security

Installing a new cycle rack at your church can be an excellent way to encourage visitors and promote environmentally friendly travel within your [church community](#).

Ideally, racks need to be well lit and in a visible location to make the most of casual surveillance by passers-by and to reduce the risk of theft.

[Find out more about cycle parking](#)

How to deal with a crime

In the unfortunate event that a crime does take place you should:

Call the police

Call 999 in an emergency:

- When a crime is in progress
- Someone suspected of a crime is nearby
- There is a danger to life or property
- There is a danger of violence being used
- You are being threatened with violence

Gather information and wait for the police to arrive.

Call 101 to report a crime or other concerns that do not require an emergency response. For example:

- Your property has been stolen or damaged and the suspect is no longer at the scene
- You need to give the police information about a crime or anti-social behaviour in your area
- You want to speak to the police about a general enquiry

Contact your archdeacon and DAC secretary

Find your DAC’s [contact details](#)

Preserve the crime scene

The police will want to identify, preserve and recover evidence that may lead to the apprehension of the offender. They will send a crime scene investigator (CSI) to examine the building.

It is vital that nobody present at the crime scene interferes with or touches potential evidence. Any object that is touch by anyone other than an appropriately trained forensic officer will not be able to be used as evidence.

What will you need to do?

- Restrict access to the crime scene. Introduce a cordon (e.g. use chairs or a rope)
- Leave everything where you found it (e.g. shoe marks, blood, tools, abandoned property, etc.)
- Do not remove portable items to protect them from the weather, this will prevent them from being admissible as evidence
- Avoid touching all points of entry and exit. The CSI will examine them for clues
- Don't assume fingerprints are not there because you can't see them

Contact your insurer

As early as possible

You may need to tell them:

- Your policy number
- The crime reference number
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The date of the crime

- The circumstances of loss

Contact your local media

The local media can be critical in helping you recover the stolen items.

They will raise awareness of your stolen treasure increasing the likelihood of it being identified and making it harder to sell.

Also of interest



Our building repair grants



Disaster prevention and management

[Protect yourself from floods and storms](#)

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