

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

GENERAL TRUSTEES

Manse Handbook

Section 1

Policy and Guidelines

INDEX

Section	Item	Page(s)
1A	Introduction	3
1B	Regulations for Manses	3
1C	Background to the Manse Condition Schedule	5
1D	Carrying out Manse Inspections	5
1E	Manse Requirements	6
1F	Manse Standards	6
1G	Housing Act Tolerable Standards Checklist	11
1H	Condition	12
1I	Other Essential Health & Safety Requirements	13
1J	Undertaking Works to Manses	13
1K	Planned and Preventative Maintenance Programme	14

1A INTRODUCTION

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2007 introducing the Manse Condition Schedule. It is the principal record of the condition and record of maintenance on manses.

In 2025, the Manse Condition Schedule has been updated to provide a comprehensive guide to manses and included in a new **Manse Handbook**. It has been split into the following sections

Section 1 – Policy and guidance relating to the provision of manses

Section 2 – Schedule for completion by Congregations on annual basis

Section 3 – Memorandum of Understanding

Section 4 – Guidance on the buying, selling and letting of manses

Any queries relating to this document should be directed by email to gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk stating the Congregation name and the address of the manse.

The Manse Handbook should be read in conjunction with the Minister's Handbook.

1B REGULATIONS FOR MANSES

The Basic Position is outlined below:

1. A Minister's remuneration comprises both a stipend and a manse. Accordingly, before a Minister is inducted to a vacant Charge, the Presbytery must be satisfied that there is a suitable manse within the Parish (or within suitable proximity) and that all work needed to make it so has been carried out.
2. A Minister has the right to live in the manse and a corresponding duty to occupy it.
3. Every Congregation has a duty through its Charity Trustees to provide a wind and watertight manse which is habitable and to keep it in a good state of repair and decoration during its occupation by the Minister and family. The Minister should not have to spend their own stipend to achieve this.
4. It is important that the manses provided by the Congregations for the Ministers and their families are also safe, free from harm and conform to the legal minimum repairing standard and tolerable standards in line with the statutory obligations which are deemed a suitable and reasonable benchmark for what is a habitable property.
5. The legal obligations for the Health and Safety of the manse building and any associated lands remain the responsibility of the Charity Trustees. And as such any ad-hoc Health and Safety concerns raised by the Minister or their families to the associated Charity Trustees must be fully investigated and remedied or temporarily controlled by the Fabric Committee until professional repairs can be arranged and carried out.
6. A Minister and their families should equally treat the manse building, including fittings and fixtures with reasonable care and consideration and, where these are provided by the local Congregation, must leave them in the manse as the property of the Congregation's charity Trustees.

7. The Minister should immediately report any building defects or health and safety concerns about the interior or exterior fabric and condition of the property, this includes the safety and use of any fitted or supplied electrical or gas appliances and any other items supplied by the charity trustees and allow for mutually agreed access to the manse for investigation and repairs to be carried out.
8. Presbyteries must ensure that manses are inspected at least once a year by the Congregational Fabric Committee, that the Manse Condition Schedule is annually reviewed and that both necessary repairs and agreed annual maintenance and decoration have been undertaken.
9. To facilitate this process which aims to ensure a continuation of the manse condition, the Minister should allow suitable access arrangements to be made for this annual scheduled inspection, maintenance and decoration to be carried out.
10. The Board must recognise its responsibility to have in place a rota for the systematic internal and external decoration of the manse. (A recommended schedule is shown as part of the Manse Guidelines).
11. Congregations are reminded that Presbyteries may not consider the call of a Minister to a charge where the manse is not of a suitable standard and where the Manse Condition Schedule shows unacceptable defects in the condition of the manse. In such cases, the vacancy process will be paused.
12. Congregations should also note that, at times when the Manse Condition Schedule is being updated, Presbytery will have the authority to instruct the Congregation as a matter of priority to undertake essential repairs for upgrading.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is essential that the Congregation shall:

- Take responsibility for the completion of a Manse Condition Schedule annually, at the onset of a vacancy and at the completion of major works/repairs.
- Be responsible for the upkeep of the grounds where these extend beyond the bounds of a reasonable garden surrounding the property. Otherwise, the Minister shall be responsible, where the garden is of normal domestic proportions, for maintaining the garden and grounds in a neat and tidy condition. (The parameters for this will be set out in the Manse Condition Schedule).
- Budget to meet the costs of the agreed schedule of repair including cyclical internal and external redecoration.

1C BACKGROUND TO THE MANSE CONDITION SCHEDULE

The creation of a Manse Condition Schedule, was originally introduced in order to:

- assist Congregations in keeping up to date with the maintenance and repair of manses;
- help bring about a consistency of standard across the Congregations of the Church;
- protect the value of the manse as one of the most significant material assets of the Church;
- ensure that the manse provides an environment which is conducive to being a place of work and residence;
- take account of introducing as many energy efficiencies as possible to the manse

On completion of the Schedule, the Congregation will have in its hands a record of work completed and a schedule of work due to be carried out. It is hoped that this document will alleviate any tensions that may arise relating to manse upkeep.

Finally, when the Schedule is completed, it should be signed, as detailed, on the final page and retained as a tool for the Annual Review by the Charity Trustees of the repair and maintenance of the manse.

1D CARRYING OUT MANSE INSPECTIONS

Church representatives carrying out manse inspections, whether on behalf of the Charity Trustees of the Congregation or on behalf of the Presbytery, should:

1. Ensure that the visit is arranged at a time which is convenient to the Minister and their family
2. Ensure that sufficient time is allocated in order to both complete the inspection and to discuss any matters which must be recorded in the Schedule:
3. Remember that, as well as looking after the interests of the property which belongs to the Congregation, they are, first and foremost, guests in the Minister's home and should treat this Minister and their family with utmost respect and undertake the visit with good manners and friendliness.
4. Your safety and the safety of the occupants is the top priority. If in any doubt, contact the Presbytery Building Officer to see their assistance.
5. Particular care should be taken within roof spaces. The ladder should be checked to ensure it is safe to use. Use a torch if there is no lighting and check for obstructions or other hazards (such as animal infestation) before entering the roof space. Do not enter the roof space unless there is floor boarding to facilitate safe access. If any loose or friable materials are present that may contain asbestos, exit the roof space immediately and arrange for a specialist inspection and testing. If it is deemed not safe to enter the roof space, carry out a visual inspection from the ladder only.
6. When inspecting flat roofs, do not attempt to walk on the roof. Carry out a visual inspection from a window or from a ladder if the roof is less than 3 meters high.
7. Do not attempt to use a ladder above a height of 3 meters. Instead use binoculars or arrange for an inspection using a drone. The Presbytery Building Officer can assist with a drone inspection.

8.

1E MANSE REQUIREMENTS

The manse standards have been updated in consultation with Faith Action. The updated standards aim to

- Provide additional flexibility in the type and layout of a property that is suitable as a manse
- Reflect the current trends for open plan layouts of new build residential property whilst ensuring suitable space for the Minister's activities and private space for the family.
- Address concerns raised by Ministers
- Provide clarity to Congregations
- As each Congregation is considered to be a private landlord, updating requirements to ensure that as a minimum they address the statutory requirements for private landlords.

1F MANSE STANDARDS

The standards are fully outlined in section 2, the template for the condition schedule. Each standard is provided with a status; there are three levels outlined below

- **Essential** – the manse must comply with these requirements (unless specifically agreed otherwise with the Presbytery)
- **Recommended** – Congregations are encouraged to comply with these requirements as they are of benefit to the Minister, their family or visitors to the manse. Congregations are requested to upgrade the manse to comply with these standards.
- **Suggested** – these are requirements that Ministers have indicated would be of benefit and ideal in the long term.

Further guidance and explanation is provided below on specific points.

2B MANSE REQUIREMENTS – LOCATION

To be considered when purchasing a new manse or when carrying out an appraisal of existing manses to assess suitability.

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Is the manse within the bounds of the United Parish?	Recommended	Can be outwith the United Parish if agreed with Presbytery
Is the manse accessible using public transport?	Recommended	To encourage green travel and assist visitors who do not have access to private vehicles
Is there access to car parking for visitors?	Essential	For disabled visitors, this could be on street parking (paid or unpaid) or parking at the church if meeting space can be used at the church as an alternative.
Is there off-street parking for the Minister?	Recommended	This could be a private driveway or designated parking space.

2C MANSE REQUIREMENTS – LAYOUT/SIZE

To be considered when purchasing a new manse or when carrying out an appraisal of existing manses to assess suitability.

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Is there step free/level access to the public entrance?	Recommended	To enable disabled access for visitors. Many houses have steps to the main entrance. Where possible a ramp should be provided.
Is there a study for the Minister?	Essential	Ideally the study will be on the ground floor and a minimum size of 3m x 3m to accommodate a desk, storage and two people comfortably.
Is there a public room for small meetings?	Recommended	Alternatively, the Minister may choose to use facilities at the church or hall.
Is there private living space for the family?	Essential	The family need to be able to live in the manse with privacy from visitors
Is there a kitchen of adequate size?	Essential	The kitchen should accommodate facilities for a family home. Further detailed standards are later in the schedule. There should be space for a dining table either within the kitchen or in an adjacent dining room.
Is there a ground floor WC for use by visitors?	Essential	This should be accessible without passing through private family space.
Is there a separate family bathroom with shower?	Essential	This should be separate to the WC used by visitors
Is there a ground floor shower room	Suggested	This is useful in case the Minister or their family has a disability or is injured and unable to use the staircase.
Are there at least 3 bedrooms (in addition to the study)?	Essential	The size of families varies. The manse should accommodate the changing needs of Ministers and their families.
Is there a bath/shower room for every 2 bedrooms?	Recommended	To provide the family with suitable access to sanitary facilities.
Is there sufficient storage space?	Recommended	For household items such as hoovers, ironing boards, etc.

2D MANSE REQUIREMENTS – FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Is there a fridge provided by the Congregation?	Essential	White goods should have a good energy rating and be in good working order.
Is there a freezer provided by the Congregation?	Essential	White goods should have a good energy rating and be in good working order.
Is there a washer provided by the Congregation?	Essential	White goods should have a good energy rating and be in good working order.
Is there a tumble drier provided by the Congregation?	Recommended	White goods should have a good energy rating and be in good working order.

Is there a dishwasher provided by the Congregation?	Essential	White goods should have a good energy rating and be in good working order.
Is there a fitted kitchen with cooking facilities and sufficient workspace?	Essential	To accommodate a family.
Is there a fire extinguisher and fire blanket in the kitchen?	Essential	
Are blinds and curtains provided by the Congregation to the study and public areas?	Essential	These should be of good quality and regularly replaced.
Are blinds and curtains provided by the Congregation to private family rooms and bedrooms?	Recommended	These should be of good quality and regularly replaced.
Are carpets and floor coverings provided by the Congregation?	Essential	These should be of good quality and regularly replaced to address wear and tear.
Are the internal decorations in good condition?	Essential	Cyclical redecoration is required; a 5-year rolling programme of redecoration is recommended.

**2E MANSE REQUIREMENTS – MECHANICAL SERVICES
(INCLUDING ESSENTIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TESTING REQUIREMENTS)**

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Are there efficient heating and hot water systems in good working order?	Essential	Without doubt, one of the biggest concerns of Ministers.
Is there Mains or LPG Gas supplies to the manse? If so, has it been certified by a qualified engineer within the last 12 months?	Essential (if gas provided)	Statutory requirement Landlord Gas Safety Responsibilities
Is a maintenance contract in place to deal with urgent repairs required to heating and hot water systems?	Recommended	A maintenance contract is recommended to ensure that faults are dealt with quickly (lack of heating or hot water should be addressed within 24 hours)
Are there carbon monoxide alarms located at all gas fired appliances?	Essential (if gas provided)	Statutory requirement Fire detection in private rented properties: guidance - gov.scot
Is there an oil-fired boiler or stove? Has it been serviced within the last 12 months?	Essential (if oil provided)	Oil fired boilers and storage tanks should be serviced, maintained and tested on an annual basis oftec.org/consumers

Is there mechanical ventilation in the kitchen and any separate utility rooms?	Essential	Condensation can be a major issue in manses. Mechanical ventilation helps to eliminate condensation by removing warm moist air created by cooking.
Is there mechanical ventilation in all bathrooms and WCs	Essential	Condensation can be a major issue in manses. Mechanical ventilation helps to eliminate condensation by removing warm moist air created by showering and bathing.
Is there a septic tank serving the manse?	Essential (only when there is no connection to public foul sewer)	Septic tanks and sewage treatment plants: what you need to do: Overview - GOV.UK

**2F MANSE REQUIREMENTS – ELECTRICAL SERVICES
(INCLUDING ESSENTIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TESTING REQUIREMENTS)**

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Is there a modern electrical system? When was the last Electrical Inspection Condition Report (EICR) completed?	Essential	EICR required at least every five years
Are there interlinked smoke alarms on all floors – and an interlinked heat detector in the kitchen area?	Essential	Statutory requirement Fire detection in private rented properties: guidance - gov.scot
Has Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) been undertaken within the last 5 years? Is a record available?	Essential	For electrical appliances supplied by the Congregation
Is suitable external lighting provided to footpaths and entrance doors?	Essential	For security and to avoid slips, trips and falls.
Are there security systems (such as intruder alarm, cctv and panic alarm)? Do these meet the requirements of the Minister and their family?	Recommended	The requirements for security systems will vary depending on the location of the manse. Congregations are encouraged to discuss requirements with the Minister and undertake a risk assessment.
Does the manse have access to broadband services?	Essential	Essential requirement for ministry
Are there sufficient electrical sockets for habitable rooms?	Essential	Living spaces and bedrooms should have adequate numbers of sockets to avoid overloading of circuits (4 double to each room)

2G MANSE REQUIREMENTS – ENERGY PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Does the manse have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above? What is the rating? Have the recommendations been implemented?	Essential	Energy Performance Certificates - mygov.scot It is a General Assembly deliverance that manses should have an EPC of C or above. EPCs are valid for 10 years.
Does the manse have double glazing or secondary glazing?	Essential	Energy efficient windows and doors - Energy Saving Trust
Does the manse have sufficient insulation to roof spaces?	Essential	270mm is currently recommended for loft spaces. Roof and loft insulation guide - Energy Saving Trust
Does the manse have low energy light fittings?	Essential	
Is there a SMART meter for gas and electric?	Recommended	Get a smart meter - Find your supplier Smart Energy GB Saving energy and money with smart meters Home Energy Scotland
Is draft proofing provided to windows and external doors?	Essential	A helpful guide to draught-proofing - Energy Saving Trust
Is the heating and hot water controlled by a smart controls?	Recommended	Heating controls - Energy Saving Trust
Are heating and hot water pipework and cylinders insulated?	Essential	Insulating tanks, pipes and radiators - Energy Saving Trust
Is there insulation to any timber suspended floors?	Recommended	Floor insulation information and advice - Energy Saving Trust
Are there any renewable sources of energy such as solar panels or heat pumps?	Suggested	Renewable energy generation - Energy Saving Trust
Is an electric vehicle charging point provided?	Suggested	

2H MANSE REQUIREMENTS – GARDEN AND EXTERNAL AREAS

REQUIREMENT	STATUS	GUIDANCE
Is there a garage?	Recommended	
Are there storage facilities in the garden?	Essential	
Is there bicycle storage?	Recommended	
Is there dedicated space for bin and recycling storage?	Essential	
Is there an area and facilities for the drying of clothes?	Essential	

1G HOUSING ACT TOLERABLE STANDARDS CHECKLIST

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1969 introduced the tolerable standard which is a basic minimum standard of habitability and applies to all housing in Scotland, regardless of tenure.

Further information can be found here [Carrying out repairs as a landlord - mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot/government/landlords/repairing-property)

Habitation

As guidance for the Congregation a manse is not deemed habitable to live in if it:

- has problems with rising or penetrating damp
- is not structurally stable (for example, it might be subsiding)
- does not have enough ventilation, natural and artificial light or heating
- is not insulated well enough insulation in the loft space is measured at below the 100mm requirement (it should be 270mm) as a suitable guideline
- does not have an acceptable fresh water supply, or a sink with hot and cold water
- does not have an indoor toilet, a fixed bath or shower, and a wash basin with hot and cold water
- does not have a good drainage and sewerage system
- does not have an electrical that meets safety regulations
- does not have a proper entrance for access and egress
- has no cooking facilities and a suitable kitchen area for the safe preparation and storage of food.

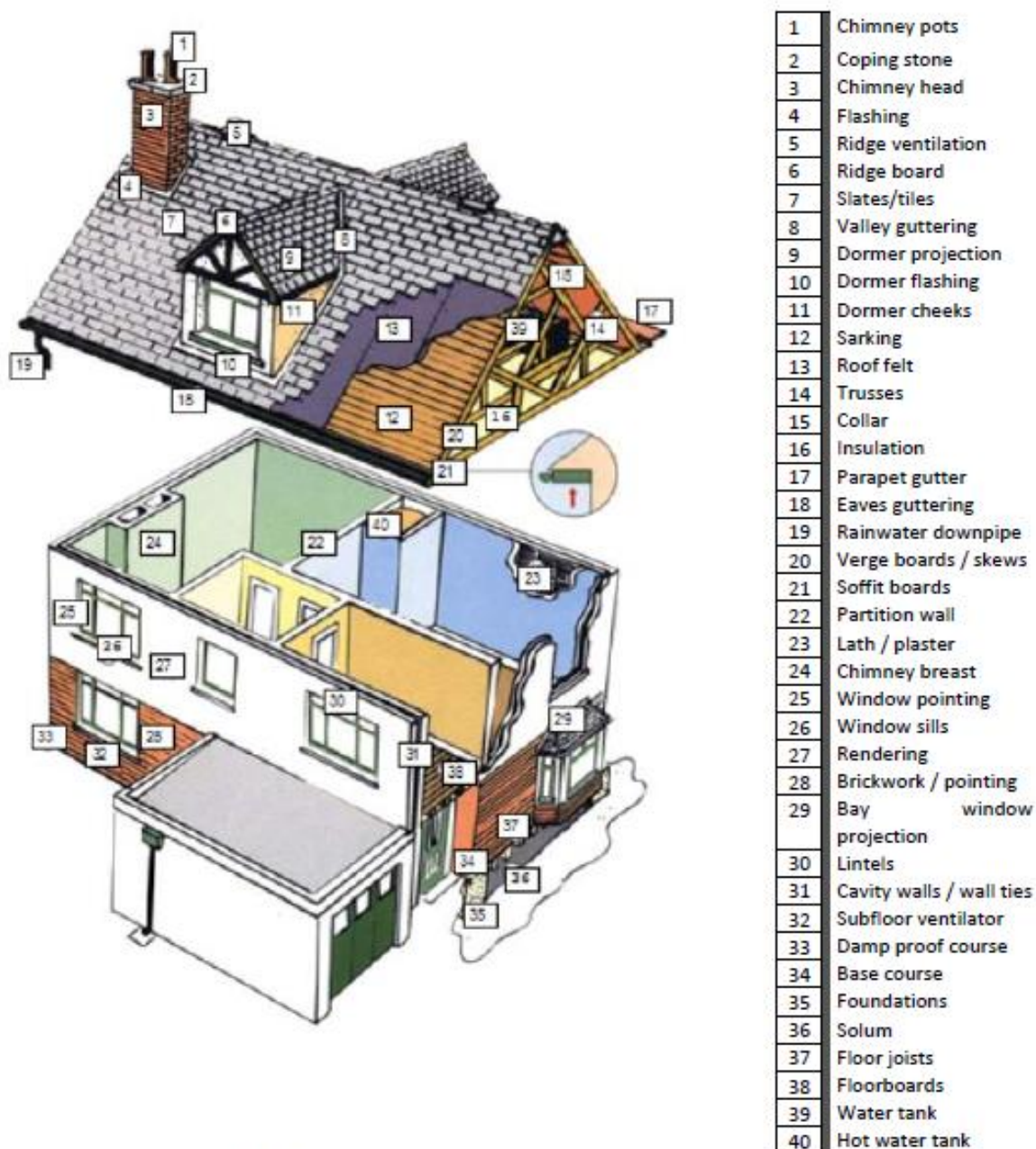
1H CONDITION

The manse condition schedule includes a basic survey of the manse to assess the condition of the various building elements and aims to identify any repairs required. Repairs are categorised between 1 to 3. The categorisation is as used in Home Reports provided when a residential property is sold.

Category	Description
3	Urgent repairs or replacement needed now. Failure to deal with them may cause problems to other parts of the manse or cause a safety hazard.
2	Repairs or replacement required within the next 12 months
1	No immediate action or repair is needed.

The diagram below is provided to assist with the identification of building elements

Sectional Diagram showing elements of a typical house



1I OTHER ESSENTIAL HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Asbestos (If Applicable)

An asbestos register detailing the location, condition and schedule of monitoring every 12 months if the asbestos is considered to be located in a safe and stable location of the manse e.g. Roof and attic spaces or below flooring. Any asbestos or suspected ACM in areas considered likely to create a risk of exposure to the Minister and their family or private tenants should be referred to a professional asbestos contractor for advice on encapsulation or removal recommendations.

Legionella

The risk of Legionella in manses is low and largely depends on how water is supplied and stored in the building and distributed to the taps, toilets, showers and baths. The Congregation should ensure before any occupancy of the manse that the water storage tanks usually found in the attic spaces are suitably covered and do not contain any sludge, animal waste or bacterial remains.

During prolonged periods of vacancy, it is recommended that 3 basic control measures are taken during the routine inspection of the manse to minimise stagnation and any build-up of bacteria within the water system even if the perceived risk of legionella is considered low.

- All taps and showers should be run for two continuous minutes at least once a week
- Hot water should reach a temperature of at least 60 C in storage (Boiler)
- Cold water should be below 20C
- A record of any water checks should be recorded and kept as part of the water management plan for your vacant manse to demonstrate adequate mitigations and control for legionella hazards.

1J UNDERTAKING WORKS TO MANSES**Approval of Works by Presbytery and the General Trustees**

Approval is required for building works to manses – see separate guidance. This follows the same procedure as works to other church buildings.

Local Authority Building Control Consent

Repairs do not require a Building Warrant or Planning Consent. A 'repair' might be defined as the restoration of existing building fabric. In the majority of cases involving **alterations** to the fabric of a building, a **BUILDING WARRANT** is required. There are exceptions; if in doubt, contact the local authority. [Getting a building warrant - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/building-warrant)

Planning and Listed Building Consent

Alterations to the EXTERIOR of a building will in many instances require Planning Consent and if the building is listed, Listed Building Consent also. However, some works will fall under what is known as Permitted Development, so if in doubt, contact the local planning authority.

[Getting planning permission - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/planning-permission)

Acceptance of Quotations from Contractors and Suppliers

There have been instances where disputes over payment have arisen on church property and the local church officer has personally been targeted by the aggrieved party. In order to avoid this, always accept **on behalf of** your Kirk Session, Congregational Board or whoever. The qualification will prevent the accepting party from being personally liable for the non-payment of any accounts, for whatever reason.

Fire Risk Assessment

This is not required for single private dwellings. Further information can be found online [Fire Safety Act 2021 factsheet: Information on commencement of sections 1 and 3 of the Fire Safety Act - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-act-2021-factsheet),

Work at Heights Regulations

The Health & Safety Executive has, over recent years, raised fines against instructing parties where **Work at Height** has been undertaken, off ladders or scaffold, and where there has been injury resulting from falls. Office Bearers and other instructing parties are advised to obtain from the

contractor both a **Method Statement** and a **Risk Assessment** relating to the works **prior** to the work being started.

Funding of Works to Manses

Congregations are further reminded of the responsibility to plan and budget for carrying out work as identified in the Schedule and, in cases where local funds are not readily available, they may approach the General Trustees for assistance to bring the property up to standard.

Information on allowances are also available from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) on:

- New Ministers Furnishing Loans
- Removal and Disturbance Allowances

PLANNED AND PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

In order to assist Kirk Sessions with financial planning, an indicative planned and preventative maintenance schedule has been provided. This will vary depending on each individual manse and the location of the manse. Preventative maintenance can save money in the long term and planning for upgrades can help to ensure good quality accommodation for the Minister and their family.

It is recommended that internal redecoration is undertaken every five years (or as and when required).

