

## **Lone Working Policy**

The Lone Working Policy outlines the actions being taken by the PCC in relation to our staff, volunteers and visitors who may at any time work alone on church activity, together with the actions we expect such workers to take themselves to minimise risks.

The purpose of this Lone Working Policy is to ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the specific risks in working alone and to set out the respective responsibilities of the PCC and staff/volunteers to minimise such risks. The PCC commit to carrying out their responsibilities in a thorough and disciplined way.

'Lone working' is defined by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as follows:

"A lone worker is 'someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision'.

### **Lone Working**

All staff / volunteers on church business should consider whether the activities they undertake might involve lone working, especially where it might place them at risk, for example (not exhaustive):

- where there is no-one else within earshot if you were to call for help;
- where you are on your own with a child or vulnerable adult;
- where you are on your own with someone whose demeanour or behaviour raises questions about your safety;
- where there is no means of raising the alarm if something untoward were to happen;
- where the nature of the environment itself might be a risk (e.g. poorly lit, poorly maintained, not secure, frequented by people whom you think might pose a risk to you).

### **People who work alone in our church:-**

- Church Administrator working on the church premises when no one else is in the buildings;
- Other staff or volunteers working alone within the church buildings including:- clergy, staff, sacristans, vergers, cleaners, flower arrangers, people practising on the organ, tower captain/steeple keeper, etc.
- Anyone working on maintenance or in the grounds of the church on their own; (e.g. Churchwardens)
- A solo pastoral visitor going to people's homes;
- One volunteer taking cash to the bank;
- Members of staff (including Minister/Volunteers) who work from home, alone;
- Members of staff travelling by car or public transport on their own in the course of their work.

## **The risks**

Risks include the following:

- Physical accident (from injury, such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help if necessary);
- Fire;
- Sudden illness, when there is no one to raise the alarm;
- Physical violence or threat of abuse in any form from a visitor;
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff/volunteers when there are no witnesses; sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening;
- Stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive phone calls or digital media or fear that they may not be safe.
- Emotional impact of visiting individuals with significant pastoral needs.

## **The responsibilities of the PCC**

1. To show that 'reasonably foreseeable risks' have been identified (by a risk assessment) and updated regularly with appropriate action taken to minimise them.
2. To ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for all lone working.
3. To install and maintain reasonable security systems and equipment including a door entry system, outside lighting, secure doors and windows, offices and rooms with clear glass.
4. To equip staff in vulnerable positions with communication tools to ensure they can summon help when needed, including checking that staff has access to a mobile phone; that signal reception is adequate; that staff know emergency contact numbers.
5. To ensure that each member of staff feels that the PCC has taken all reasonable steps to ensure their safety.
6. To offer appropriate training in personal safety to, and inspection of, those who work alone.
7. To ensure good pastoral support and oversight to those working alone.
8. To issue guidelines and insist that staff follow those guidelines laid down on safe solo working and if they are at all unsure, to err on the side of caution and not put themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation.

## **The responsibilities of staff and volunteers**

There needs to be an understanding that the PCC can only do so much. The behaviour and actions of the employees and volunteers can make a significant difference to the level of their own safety.

1. To avoid placing themselves in unnecessarily dangerous situations.
2. To be alert to possible dangers and to minimise risk by their own behaviour.
3. To inform others of their movements especially if the visit may be potentially difficult.
4. To ensure that they have a charged mobile phone on them at all times.
5. To drop the latch on the porch doors when alone in church, so that a lone worker is secure from intruders, but is not "locked in" and has a means of easy escape without using a key.
6. When working alone in the Church Centre, to lock the door and have a mobile phone and key on their person for easy means of escape.
7. Lifting heavy objects, climbing ladders, or accessing loft spaces when alone should be avoided.
8. To inform clergy, a Churchwarden and other staff of any suspicious behaviour noted or

any threats made to them.

9. To avail themselves of all training opportunities provided by the church, which might include fire safety; personal safety; first aid; lone-working best practice.

10. To drive responsibly and to keep their vehicle properly insured [including insurance for business use], tested and maintained.

11. In the event of a disclosure of an allegation of abuse, to record this and report it to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

12. For pastoral visitors to keep records of their visits e.g. date, time and a brief description of visit.

### **Particular factors to be taken into account**

All of these will affect the level of risk to lone workers:

1. The health of the worker, physically, mentally and emotionally;
2. The location and remoteness of the workplace;
3. The maintenance and safety of all equipment and premises;
4. The need to lift heavy objects (including boxes of stationery), climb ladders, access lofts;
5. The provision of first aid cover and help that can be summoned easily and quickly.

### **Home Visits and Care Home Visits**

Home Visits can also present risks to lone workers and all lone workers who are conducting home visits should make sure they have carried out the relevant risk assessments and precautions first.

- It is recognised that much pastoral visiting, particularly by clergy, is done alone and this guidance does not place a restriction on that, as long as the other aspects of safer working practice in this guidance are followed. (Church of England Safer Environments & Activities Document). Clergy and other pastoral visitors should always consider the risks of visiting a vulnerable adult and be aware of the circumstances when such a visit would be not be safe.

- Lone workers should ensure their own personal safety whilst visiting people in their homes. If circumstances allow, consideration should be given as to whether two members of staff/volunteers are able to carry out the home visit.

- Lone workers should always ensure that their manager or a colleague is aware of their whereabouts at all times. This includes giving the address they're visiting, details of the person they're visiting, telephone numbers if known as well as an approximate arrival and departure time.

- Lone workers out in the community should have their mobile phones on them at all times, charged and in good working order.

- Lone workers under no circumstances should conduct a home visit with a child or a person under the age of 18 in their home unless the child's parent or guardian is present.

- Lone workers should always be aware of their safety in someone else's home. Lone workers should consider their escape route if it becomes necessary to quickly and easily exit the room. Confrontation should be avoided and if the lone worker has any concerns for their own health and safety they must leave immediately.

- If a lone worker is asked for assistance by a client in a practical matter, such as moving heavy furniture, they should assess any risks involved before agreeing to help.
- Where possible, home visits should be conducted during the morning or early afternoon to prevent the lone worker travelling in the dark through areas that they may not know or feel comfortable in. If this is not possible, working in pairs should be considered.
- Lone workers should ensure that their cars are well-maintained with suitable fuel, MOT and insurance up-to-date and park in well-lit areas.

## **Reporting Incidents**

In the case of an incident (whether it be minor or major) whilst lone working on the church premises, during a home visit or whilst working at home; a lone worker must contact a member of the clergy or a Churchwarden. In the case of emergencies always contact 999. The incident should also be reported in person to your line manager.

This policy was last updated and authorised by PCC on **23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025** and will be reviewed every 3 years by the PCC.

**Source:** *The Church Office Lone Working Policy*

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