

Lone Working

Our desire

We are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all clergy and volunteers who, in the course of their work and ministry, may have to work alone, and this policy provides a framework for managing the risks presented by lone working, as well as identifying the responsibilities each person has in this situation.

Principles

We recognised that lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy, and sometimes this is also true for volunteers too.

Ideally, all workers and volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, and work with others where possible. However, if this is not feasible, we should be aware of the importance of personal safety and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for ensuring that all lone working activities within the church are formally identified, and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken in order to identify and reduce the risks which lone working presents. In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk, issues such as the place of meeting, security, the risk of violence and the nature of the task or activity should be considered alongside any other factors appropriate to the circumstances, such as the lone worker's health and fitness, age and gender.

The perception of risk can be seen differently by each individual, and, therefore, it is important that all lone workers receive relevant information about the identified risks within their role, in order that they are equipped to recognise these, and are enabled to take responsibility for their own safety and security.

It is the PCC's responsibility to have adequate insurance in place to cover all lone working activities which have been formally identified by a risk assessment.

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration should be given by the parish to undertake other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs etc.

Procedure

It is important not to over-emphasise the risks of lone working and create an unnecessary fear amongst workers that is disproportionate to the reality of the risks faced. However, lone workers do face increased risks because they do not have the immediate support of colleagues, or others, if an incident occurs, and particularly if they are in someone's home, or are working in an isolated or rural location. The following guidance is, therefore, intended to reflect good practice in relation to the protection of lone workers, and can also be used by churches to develop their own local procedures.

Working Alone in Church or at another Building

Within this document, lone working refers to situations where individuals, in the course of their duties, work alone or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance. In this regard, PCCs should ensure that they:

- Undertake a risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church/building needs extra security.

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- Consider how lone workers will raise the alarm if necessary, and ensure they have a means of communicating with others in the event a problem arises.
- Agree a protocol for visitors to the building; and decide whether or not to allow visitors in when only one person is there.

Nobody should ever plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people. However, if they should find themselves in this situation, it is important that another adult is made aware immediately. (The worker should also assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them)

Personal Safety

Whilst the PCC has a responsibility to ensure their lone workers' health, safety and welfare, there are also a number of things individuals can do to take reasonable care of themselves:

- Lone workers should never put themselves at risk. If a situation arises that they are unfamiliar with, or in which they feel unsafe, they should withdraw and seek further advice or assistance.
- Volunteers should conduct their own risk assessment on the occasions when they are working alone, which will help them to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken to avoid danger.
- Volunteers should be aware of themselves, their behaviour and the signals they may be giving, and to think about their body language, tone of voice and the choice of words they use with others that could be taken as confrontational.
- Volunteers who work alone also need to be aware of changes in the behaviour of the person they are with, especially if they seem to become angrier or threatening.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – the worker should inform their Church Warden, Vicar, or Safeguarding Office know as soon as possible in order that the appropriate risk assessment and follow-up action can be taken.
- Volunteers should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that they do not disclose their personal details, such as address and telephone number or their social networking profile, without good reason.

Home Visits

Home visits can be potentially risky situations, and therefore the PCC is responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk management measures are in place before a home visit is undertaken, which may include ensuring that staff and volunteers work in pairs on a first visit. Lone workers should also be aware of their responsibilities in ensuring their personal safety when visiting people in their own homes.

- Volunteers should always ensure that someone else is aware of their movements. This means providing them with the address of where they will be visiting, details of the person they are visiting, telephone numbers if known and expected arrival and departure times.
- Volunteers who work in the community and undertake home visits should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times, which is in good working order.
- Lone workers should be alert to any signs of potential danger during a home visit and be prepared to leave immediately if they have any concerns. Confrontation should always be avoided, and lone workers should never assume that violence won't happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported as soon as possible.
- Volunteers who undertake home visits should ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets, they many have which may present a safety risk.

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- Where possible, home visits should be conducted in the morning or early afternoon, rather than the evening or late afternoon, in order that lone workers can avoid travelling in the dark, particularly in areas that they don't know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.

Checklist guidance notes	
Issue	Action
Who works alone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify all volunteers who work alone
What are the risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the risks that may be associated with lone working – these might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remoteness of the setting. • Whether there is a safe way in or out. • Whether they visit unfamiliar persons. • Whether there is potential for verbal or physical abuse. • The vulnerability feeling isolated, anxious or stressed. • What valuables/equipment is carried. • Whether equipment or materials can be handled safely by one person . • If they are medically fit and able to work alone. • Whether there is access to a telephone. • How they will obtain help in an emergency. • Whether or not there is adequate first aid cover. • Whether they carry out duties during unsocial hours.
Are volunteers protected from harm?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the preventative and protective measures needed to ensure our volunteers are not put at risk.
What training, guidance and support is available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that volunteers are given helpful information and training to ensure that they understand the risks of their work. • Clarify the precautions that volunteers need to make to keep themselves safe, and what they should do in an emergency.

The PCC reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

Rev Tim G J Starling
Vicar
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