

Lone Worker Policy

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The purpose of this Lone Worker Policy is to ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the specific risks in working alone and to set out the respective responsibilities of those involved to minimise such risks. The PCC are very aware that there are possible dangers for those who work alone in church and is mindful of its responsibility to care for and protect all its clergy, authorised ministers, employees, and volunteers. On this basis, this policy offers guidance to all those who find themselves working alone in the church, church hall and offices, or visiting adults, who may be vulnerable on behalf of the church.

The Church of England defines a church officer as ' anyone appointed by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid'.

The following are some examples of lone working:

- The parish administrator working in a church office when no-one else is in the building (or even in that part of the building)
- Any other staff or volunteers, including cleaners, caterers, members of the flower team working alone within a church building
- Anyone working on maintenance or in the grounds of a church on their own
- A solo pastoral visitor going to people's homes
- A volunteer taking cash to the bank
- Members of staff (including Ministers) who work from home or visit parishioners alone

In these cases danger may be increased when staff or volunteers work outside normal working hours or when it is dark or when these two cases are combined (a church officer or a Minister locking up a church building)

Clearly there is overlap with other Health & Safety issues such as the use of mechanical or specialised equipment, danger from fire and safeguarding issues.

The list demonstrates that lone working is simply part of the essential practice for many church workers and may take place on church property, in their own home or in others' homes. Such situations cannot be avoided, but this policy indicates that the PCC have recognised the risks and has sought to minimise them by adopting common sense and appropriate measures.

It also demonstrates that church workers have been given clear advice how they might minimise dangers to themselves because in these instances they have also have responsibilities.

THE RISKS

- Physical Accident – from injury, fire etc such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no-one to fetch help if necessary
- Sudden illness – again when there is no-one to raise the alarm
- Physical violence or the threat of abuse in any form from a visitor
- Sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- Accusations by a visitor or member of the congregation of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses
- Stress caused by working in isolation

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PCC

1. To show that 'reasonably foreseeable risks' have been identified and updated regularly with appropriate action taken to minimise them (*for example adequate lighting in dark areas*).
2. To ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for all lone working with standard practices adhered to.

3. To install reasonable security equipment and systems after professional advice has been taken (*for example CCTV if necessary, entry phone system with locked doors when anyone is working alone, adequate locking devices on doors and windows*).
4. To equip staff in vulnerable positions with communication tools to ensure they can summon help if needed (*for example emergency alarm button in the church office, personal alarms for all staff visiting homes, mobile phones and chargers, lists of emergency telephone numbers (including church staff or members living nearby)*).
5. To ensure the maintenance and safety of all equipment and premises.
6. To ensure that each of the church officers feels that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure their safety.
7. To insist that all church officers are aware of their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding issues and that their safeguarding qualifications remain updated at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

1. Avoid placing themselves in unnecessarily dangerous situations; *for example, by undertaking visits in pairs, by not agreeing to meet anyone in isolated places, by carrying a personal alarm and / or mobile phone.*
2. To be alert to possible dangers and to minimise risk by their own behaviour; *for example keeping lights on until a building is completely vacated, locking doors when working alone, placing safety guards in position when using power tools.*
3. To inform others of their movements with an agreed action plan should the worker fail to communicate at the agreed time or be in contact with a revised time.
4. To inform the relevant people of any suspicious behaviour noted or any threats made to them.
5. To keep themselves updated with safeguarding training and qualifications and to make the Safeguarding Officer aware of any relevant issues at the earliest opportunity.

Working alone in church

- Lone workers should ensure they know where all exits are situated
- Lone workers must ensure that someone knows where they are, what they are doing and for how long they are expected to be there
- Lone workers must ensure that they have a charged mobile phone with them at all times
- Lone workers planning to work for an extended period should arrange to make calls at intervals
- Whilst working alone in the building all external doors must be kept locked for security and safety reasons
- Lone working should not take place when it is dark outside
- Exiting and locking up the church and / or hall after an event should always be done by two people

Visiting adults alone in their homes

Visiting adults who may be vulnerable is an essential element of many church officers' roles. Many parishioners will be well known to the church officer and where there have been no previous concerns the level of risk to the church officer or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place a church officer at risk; for example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour. Unfortunately, case histories also show that a parishioner may be at risk from a church officer. For these reasons it is very important to ensure that church officers and parishioners are as safe as they can be, and that there is accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in visiting people in their homes.

- Ideally, all visits to vulnerable parishioners should be undertaken by two people
- A risk assessment should always be undertaken for a first visit, whether the person to be visited is known or not
- If there are any concerns or risks known, a risk assessment should be undertaken prior to each visit. Careful consideration should be given as to whether the visit is absolutely necessary, or whether it should be undertaken by two people
- A charged mobile phone should always be carried on a home visit

- The church officer should tell someone where they are going and when they are expected to return
- Wherever possible, the church officer should avoid calling unannounced but should make prior arrangements
- If the church officer is not known to the person they are visiting they should carry identification, photographic if possible, and a note of introduction from the church
- If appropriate and necessary, the church officer might leave information about how and where they can be contacted (by telephone or email) and a central contact point for the church (Parish Office). Unless absolutely necessary they should not give out their home address
- The church officer should always endeavour to be clear about what behaviour is acceptable as well as about the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care / support that they are able to offer
- The church officer must never offer 'over the counter' remedies to people or administer prescribed medicines even if asked to do so
- The church officers should not accept any gifts from adults to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, it should be put in an envelope, marked on the outside as a donation and a receipt obtained from the church
- Where the church officer considers it necessary to refer the person to another agency, they should talk this through with the vulnerable adult, seeking their permission before passing on personal information. If the church officer is concerned about a person and they do not wish to be referred, they should consult with the Clergy and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer
- If the church officer is uncertain about what action to take they should seek advice from the Parish Safeguarding Officer without delay, except in an emergency when they should contact the relevant statutory authorities.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies including the Health & Safety Policy, the Church Safeguarding Policy and the Safeguarding & Vulnerability policy & procedures.

Prepared: January 2024

Adopted by the PCC.....