

Practice Guidance for Church Workers and Volunteers with regard to Lone Working.

In order to address the problem of lone working it is important to have a clear understanding of what we mean. Lone working does not mean that the person has to be in complete isolation all the time. For example, a cleaner or caretaker may enter the building while it is very busy, but may be left alone depending on the task and time of day; a parish administrator may work in an office with another person or persons, but occasionally works in isolation. In addition there are those working in the community and those undertaking home visiting.

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy and some church workers, but it is Diocesan policy that **no one** will undertake lone working with a child/children or any young person. It is also advisable not to work alone with a vulnerable adult, especially those who are confused or suffering from mental health issues.

Please also refer to the Parish handbook and Bishop's Guidelines (both available on the Diocesan website) also see Personal Safety Plan for Church People, available at www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/personal-safety-plan

It is the responsibility of the Churchwarden and PCC to undertake a Risk Assessment and take all reasonable steps to minimise and where possible eliminate any identified risk. Some parishes may request the assistance of a health and safety professional to assist in this task. Control measures must be implemented with any identified risk such as travelling, home visiting, locking and unlocking, working outside normal hours, faults in the fabric/furnishings of the building and staffing issues. All control measures must be compliant with National/Diocesan policies and good practice guidance, as well as being approved by your parish insurance company.

Risks that require mitigation or elimination (this list is indicative and not exhaustive)

Accidents or illness on church property or while undertaking community duties on behalf of the parish

Fire

Threatening behaviour or violence

Theft

Intruders

Manual handling, working from heights, power tools

Inappropriate sexual behaviour

False allegations/accusations

Stress

Control measures

All Church premises must have an accident book, untoward incident book, fire records, relevant contact numbers and accessible guidance i.e. manual handling, personal safety, safeguarding children and vulnerable adult policy/guidance.

All workers/volunteers working alone must have means of communication i.e. a fully charged mobile phone, where appropriate a personal attack alarm and someone must be aware of their whereabouts. If there is a need to work alone the Parish must have a

policy for monitoring and letting others know the lone workers whereabouts "clocking in and out".

Strict instruction/guidance must be in place regarding manual handling and working from heights i.e. no one should be lone working when working from heights, no lone working with children and young people.

Strict instruction/guidance must be in place should anyone find themselves unwittingly alone with a child or young person and an incident report completed with full details and action taken.

Workers/volunteers should be made aware of risks or potential risks and what action to take in order to eliminate and/or avoid any risk.

There must be an agreed reporting mechanism for any risks or dangers and timely action taken to address any identified risks or dangers.

First aid equipment must be available on church premises and maintained. Assistance and emergency communication must be easily accessible to workers/volunteers.

Fire equipment must be serviced and documentation maintained. There should be a written policy on emergency evacuation and documentation of all fire drills.

When home visiting ensure your family, line manager and/or colleague knows where you are and when you are expect to return. Ensure you have emergency contact details easily accessible in your mobile phone and try to meet people in public locations. If meeting in some one's home allow the host to lead the way so that the door cannot be locked behind you. Sit as close to the door as possible should you need to escape, quickly.

When visiting/assisting people suffering with mental health issues or confusion it is advisable not to visit alone.

If a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse or violent/aggressive behaviour is to be met, do not meet with them alone and in private. Ensure that it is in a public place or in the church with several other people around.

It is important to maintain awareness for your own safety and those around you.

Where ever possible avoid working alone.

Never work alone with children or young people.

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Working alone check list

Consideration – is there any way that lone working can be eliminated or reduced.
If lone working does occur is there any way to prevent or reduce unsocial hours.

Name of worker/volunteer

Role to be assessed

Reason for lone working;-

- Home/Pastoral visiting
- Community/school working
- Travelling
- Office based
- Church working
- Counselling services
- Home based
- Others (describe)

Information given and training provided about the health and safety risks associated with the work to be undertaken and the preventative measures in place, for example:
how to lift safely

how to use equipment safely i.e. ladders, electrical equipment, power tools

how to use/store chemicals safely

what action to take if threatened or a violent incident occurs

What to do in an emergency, for example:

Accident

Illness

Fire

Intruder

Written approved protocol available for summoning assistance and staying in touch with line manager/colleague.

If you work at a fixed location and isolated from others is there a procedure for checking in and out, locking outer doors, secure glass partition, means of raising the alarm or calling for assistance

If you work on your own at home, has there been a security assessment of the property, boundaries, doors, windows, security lighting, intruder alarm, spyhole, security chain, CCTV.

Establish an emergency code/phrase with family to raise concerns.

Plan meetings with others at home, keep a record book of uninvited callers and where possible do not let them in. If you do let them in do not let them know you are alone.

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