

GUIDANCE on SAFE PRACTICE FOR LONE WORKING

Lone working is an everyday practice for clergy and some church workers (for instance pastoral visitors) and working from home, being alone in the church building, office and attending remote locations (for example carrying out a home visit) could all constitute lone working. The aim of this guidance is to help everyone think about how to undertake lone working safely.

Pastoral care / visits

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral care should be properly planned, its risks considered and recorded effectively. It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. In our preparatory prayers, let us remember to ask for God's guidance and protection in this encounter.

Planning lone working at church or at home: considerations for risk assessment

- Is lone working necessary? Confidentiality can be assured with other people within reach.
- If there are casual callers while you are visiting someone, take precautions before opening the door. E.g. use of a door chain.
- If made to feel vulnerable in any way, then exit the building as quickly as possible and call the police in an emergency or another person for advice. Watch the building from a distance if appropriate and record any descriptions and times as accurately as you can. DO NOT challenge anyone, ensure you protect yourself first and foremost.
- Who will be involved? Please ensure that at least one other person knows where you will be going and what time you should be due to return.
- When and where will it take place? Avoid making arrangements which could be misinterpreted. If it's possible to meet in a public place then make that the preferred venue.
- Is there a risk of violence? A good working definition of violence is: "any behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or mentally, on people".
- Are there any increased risks to the particular worker?
- Are there any known medical or other factors which could make either party more vulnerable? Some medical conditions can lead to disinhibition or false accusations. Take the appropriate action with perhaps two people visiting a person's home.

Some simple tips about visiting

N.B. Visiting on behalf of the Church should not be done without consultation with the Vicar or Group Co-ordinator.

- When appropriate, make prior arrangements.
- Consider whether it may be advisable to have someone else in the next room or nearby.
- Make it clear at the outset the time available, and the purpose of the visit. Share this information with at least one other person before the visit.
- Don't take any unnecessary risks – if you feel uncomfortable at all, end the meeting and report your concerns to your Supervisor / Clergy/ Safeguarding Officer.
- Respect personal space and never do or say anything that could be misinterpreted.
- It is advisable to carry a mobile phone. When appropriate it may be wise to let someone know where you are and what time you expect to return, and when you return.
- If there is any known risk, complete a risk assessment to ensure you remain safe (see the personal risk assessment above).
- Supervisors of pastoral visitors should occasionally visit, accompany or observe lone workers to ensure safe practice
- Automatic warning alarms are available in the drawer in the sidesperson's vestry for use if needed.
- With reference to a pastoral encounter (face-to-face, emails, texts, telephone calls), it may be useful to make an anonymised informal written note as an aide memoire. It is suggested that a church diary would be suitable.

Using your own home for activities

Where activities are formally organised by the parish, the following guidance should be noted. Activities for vulnerable groups will normally take place on church premises, however if meetings are to be held in a leader's own home the following points need to be considered:

- Ensure you have the consent of your vicar for the activity to take place and that there is adequate insurance cover
- Ensure that a risk assessment of the room(s) to be used has been carried out
- Ensure that two unrelated adults are present at all times (arriving before the first group member and not leaving until after the last group member has left)
- Never use inappropriate rooms i.e. bedrooms
- Ensure that the Diocesan and parish policies for vulnerable groups are followed.

Responding to safeguarding issues arising during a pastoral encounter

A safeguarding issue is one where an individual, child or adult, may appear to be at risk of abuse, or may *appear to* present a risk to others. Such issues cannot be kept confidential and you should not promise confidentiality to anyone who appears to be at risk. They must be raised with your Safeguarding Officer and may have to be reported to statutory authorities.

If the person discloses or discusses matters on which the visitor needs to take action, a fuller note must be made of what it was and what action was taken. Taking action refers to raising or referring the matter to *anyone* else for discussion and possible action.

If the matter is urgent, contact should be made with the police or another statutory agency. Action can always be taken and information shared if the person reasonably believes that this will help safeguard another person or prevent a crime.

Remember: **RECOGNISE RESPOND RECORD REPORT REFER**

Further advice / information

It's good to talk! Although confidentiality is of utmost importance, our pastoral visitors must have their needs supported throughout. Please ensure that we support one another and that any concerns are shared and information recorded as necessary.

All members of the church community are invited to take the Basic Awareness Safeguarding Training offered by the Church of England.

Should you have any questions or requests for additional information to be added to this, please ask the vicar or safeguarding officer.

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