



ST JOHN THE APOSTLE & EVANGELIST, WATFORD

LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy Statement

The Parochial Church Council ('PCC') of the parish of St John the Apostle & Evangelist, Watford, is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all its clergy and accredited lay workers, 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.

This policy relates to all church personnel who work out in the community and/or in other people's homes, or who work alone in churches or other establishments and are physically isolated from colleagues or family, without access to immediate assistance.

Objective of this policy

It is recognised that lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy and church workers, and it is therefore important that the additional risks that arise from this are fully understood, in order that they can go about their daily work in relative safety.

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, they 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 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.

All risks identified to workers arising from lone working must be recorded, in accordance with requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

The PCC are committed to ensure that there is 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 PCC to undertake other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs.



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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 location.

Working alone in church or at another building

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 the regard, the PCC commits to ensure that they undertake:

- a risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church and its related buildings need extra security, e.g. spy holes; door chains; or outside lighting;
- to 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;
- to agree a protocol for visitors to the building; and decide whether or not to allow visitors in when only one person is there.

No worker 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.
- Staff and 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.
- Lone workers 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.
- Staff and 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 more angry or threatening.



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- If an incident occurs - even if it is considered a minor incident - the worker should make their Group Leader and/or Safeguarding Representative know as soon as possible in order that the appropriate risk assessment and follow-up action can be taken.
- Staff and 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.

Pastoral encounters

Pastoral encounters are at the heart of much of the church's ministry, undertaken by clergy and other church workers every day. However, one to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral support must be properly planned, risk assessed and recorded in order to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.

It is essential that workers involved in pastoral care develop an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, and always ensure they respect professional boundaries. There is also a need to ensure that adequate records are kept and retained of pastoral encounters that occur.

For this purpose, a pastoral encounter includes any planned visit or contact with a parishioner or church member occurring at the person's home, at the church, the vicarage, and/or in a public place, such as a hospital or cafe. It may take place face-to-face, by phone or through electronic contact.

Keeping accurate records of pastoral encounters is helpful and good practice. All records remain the property of, and be retained by, the church along with other parochial records. The expectation is that a note is made either in hard copy or electronically of the person seen or contacted on a particular date and the nature of the contact. e.g. baptism,; bereavement; funeral. Brief remarks made in casual conversation or at worship or a social occasions need not routinely be recorded.

Everything is confidential in pastoral ministry unless it is agreed it can be shared with the informed consent of the individual. However, if the individual's behaviour or situation threatens the wellbeing of themselves or others, disclosure to a relevant authority may be a necessity, and in some cases a legal requirement, particularly with regard to the safety of vulnerable groups.

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.



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- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else, i.e. either their Group Leader and/or colleague/family member, 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.
- All staff and 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.
- All home visits should be recorded, as clear and detailed record keeping may prevent problems in the future.
- No staff or volunteers should ever undertake a visit to a child or young person in their home unless another adult is present.
- 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 to the Group Leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible.
- Staff and volunteers who undertake home visits should ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets they may have which may present a safety risk.
- 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.

Records

Clergy and church workers should keep a regular record of pastoral encounters, including details such as date, time, subject and actions to be taken. It is important to keep factual records, and separate these from any opinions expressed.

All records should be held in a secure, locked cabinet in the parish office.

Review

The PCC's Lone Working Policy will be reviewed triennially, or sooner in response to new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.