

Lone Working Policy

Bedworth Parish

Draft A

Policy

Bedworth Parish is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of its clergy, staff, lay workers and all who serve who, in the course of their work and ministry, may have to work alone, and this policy¹ 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.

Principles

Pastoral encounters are at the heart of much of the church's ministry, undertaken by clergy and other lay church workers and volunteers every day. We therefore recognise that lone working is an essential practice, though it carries additional risks. Therefore 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 can do so safely, and are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct. Such contact is normally done face-to-face, but at times will also be by phone, email or social media. This policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the good practice guidance given in the Parish Safeguarding policies and guidance.

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

The Parish 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. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, we will consider other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs.

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.

We will have adequate insurance in place to cover all lone working activities which have been identified by a risk assessment.

¹ Adapted from the extensive Lone Working Policy of the Diocese of Portsmouth, dated Nov 2016, with additions from the Diocese of Peterborough's document on Visiting Adults.

All risks to workers identified as 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 following Procedures capture the general risks, and set out best practice in mitigating those risks.

Procedures

Personal Safety

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

- Lone workers should never put themselves at risk. They should conduct their own risk assessment for new situations 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.
- If a situation arises that they are unfamiliar with, or in which they feel unsafe, they should withdraw and seek further advice or assistance.
- Lone workers must have access to a phone to call for help, and have set up facilities that can easily be set to trigger audible or remote alarms (e.g. using the "Hollie Guard" app).
- 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 or suggestive.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – the worker should make their Ministry Leader, Leadership Team Members or Parish Safeguarding Officer 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 private social networking profile, without good reason.

Working Alone in Church or at another Building

All lone workers should:

- Undertake a risk assessment on building safety to determine that the building is secure. Checking all doors and windows.
- Lock the entrance door behind them, and feel able to refuse entry to callers.

All lone workers should not:

- 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.

Pastoral Meetings, including Home Visits

Clergy, staff, volunteers and lay workers may need to meet one-to-one with parishioners or group members. Where possible this should be done in a public place, e.g. a coffee shop. However, sometimes because of illness, infirmity, or where the parishioner is caring for children or relatives, this will need to be at their home. Many parishioners will be well known to the visitor, and where there have been no previous concerns the level of risk to the visitor or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place the visitor at risk. For example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour.

Therefore, all staff and volunteers making one-to-one meetings should:

- Give consideration to working in pairs on a first home visit.
- Ensure that someone else, i.e. either their Ministry Leader and/or colleague/family member, is aware of their movements. This means providing them with the address of where they will be meeting, details of the person they are visiting, telephone numbers if known and expected arrival and departure times². At times it may be wise to arrange to receive a phone call checking all is OK 15 minutes after the start of the visit, with a pre-arranged codeword to indicate difficulty.
- Record meetings, as clear and detailed record keeping may prevent problems in the future. (See the 'Record Keeping' section below.)
- Never undertake a visit to a child or young person in their home unless another adult is present.
- 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 or Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- Ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets they may have which may present a safety risk.
- Conduct home visits 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.
- Avoid calling unannounced – call by arrangement, if appropriate telephoning the person just before going.
- Knock on the door before entering a room or home, respecting the person's home and possessions.

Record Keeping

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. (See our Safeguarding Policy for more detail)

² This personal data will need to be destroyed afterwards.

Clergy, staff, volunteers and lay workers should keep a record of the fact of significant pastoral encounters, (whether through home visits, phone calls or correspondence), including details such as date, time, subject (e.g. baptism, bereavement, work difficulties) and actions to be taken. It is important to keep factual records, and separate these from any opinions expressed. These records should be held securely, preferably in electronically as 'key dates' or 'notes' in the Pastoral access group, and in line with our Safeguarding Policy and the Data Protection Policy.

Operation and Review

This policy will be available to all church officers, parents and participants, and should be read in conjunction with our

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Guidance for those who exercise pastoral care.

This policy will be reviewed by the Church Council every 3 years, or if legislation changes, or by specific request and feedback.

Further Information

To discuss any aspect of this, to request training, or discuss concerns, please contact a member of the Leadership Team.

Record of Agreement for Lone Working Policy

Bedworth Parish

I have read the contents of the Safeguarding Policy and agree to follow it, and raise any relevant requests for help, or concerns with the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Name

Date