



Lone worker Guidance (including Pastoral Visiting)

The Parish of St John's Southbourne with West Thorney

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Purpose

To provide guidance which is recommended as best practice, and to help staff and volunteers think how best to undertake lone working safely when working alone on behalf of the Parish. This may be at the Church centre, in the church or on church business away from the church premises.

Lone worker definition

A lone worker as defined by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as

"someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision".

Within this document, 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. This also includes people working from home.

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for the clergy, church workers including youth & children's workers, parish administrators, church wardens, cleaners and those who serve in a voluntary capacity – e.g., pastoral team & coffee connect.

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral care should be properly planned and any risks considered and recorded. It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological boundaries.

Policy Statement

The church seeks to minimise the risks of lone working to sensible and acceptable levels. General guidelines are provided below. However, it is the responsibility of the individual worker to make a reasonable assessment of any risks associated with their working alone, and to discuss those risks and appropriate risk control measures with the appropriate team leader or church wardens.

It is the responsibility of staff/team leader to ensure that lone workers under their supervision have the awareness and competency to follow these guidelines.

General Guidance

When **working alone in the church or church centre** you should observe the following precautions:

1. Do not do any work at height, including using steps.
2. Do not use any gas appliances unless you are familiar with their operation– or the kitchen unless you have the appropriate training
3. Ensure that you have a fully charged mobile phone which is turned on.
4. Ensure that someone knows where you are and when you expect to leave. Let them know that you have left
5. Ensure that you are sufficiently fit and well to be carrying out your tasks alone.

In Addition to the General Guidance

1. Ensure that all doors are locked to prevent unauthorised entry to the building.
2. The main door of the church centre must be locked. Do not let anyone through the door until you have assessed the situation and the person ringing. Only let the person in if you are sure, it is safe to do so.
3. Check with another person that the building is empty before being left alone.
4. When unlocking/locking Parish Buildings (particularly if it is dark bring someone else with you), be vigilant for any threat that could potentially endanger you or take your keys.
5. Ensure that you know where to find the first aid kits.
6. Any incidents must be recorded in the accident book that is kept in the church office.
7. Ensure that you are familiar with the procedures for dealing with fire – see Health & Safety Policy for further information.
8. Inform the Church Wardens or Vicar of any suspicious behaviour noticed, or any threats made.
9. 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.
10. Assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them.

Lone Working Outside the Church

If working alone away from the Church, you should consider if your visit might present a risk to you. Most working away from the Church including home visits are likely to be 'low risk' as most of the people being visited will be known to the Church. However, this is not always the case.

- Let the administrator know where you are going so, a note is made on Churchsuite of whom and where you are visiting, the nature of the meeting or activity and your estimated time of return.
- When plans change contact someone to let them know what is happening and that you are safe.
- Make sure that you always have a mobile phone with you.

Home Visits ¹

Visiting adults at home is a valuable aspect of pastoral care. This will often be done on an informal, neighbourly basis, often through home groups, but this **falls outside the scope** of this guidance which only applies to '**formal**' **visiting** done in the name of the parish church and arranged via the Administrator.

Care must be taken, however, both for the protection of those being visited and for the those doing the visiting. There should be accountability and transparency in the way in which people engage in visits to homes. Lone workers should also be aware of their responsibilities in ensuring their personal safety when visiting people in their own homes.

- On first visits volunteers should **always** visit in pairs. However, it is recognised that much pastoral visiting, particularly by clergy, is done alone and this guidance does not place a restriction on that if the other aspects of safer working practice in this guidance are followed.
- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else (Team leader, parish office) is aware of their movements e.g., provide an address, name of the person, telephone number if known, and expected

¹ The most relevant Guidance is [Safer Working Environment and Activities 2019](#), the [Code of Safer Working Practice](#) and the [Parish Safeguarding Handbook](#). The PCC/Chapter and those with responsibility for safer recruitment and supervision must ensure that all involved in pastoral care are aware of the importance of appropriate risk assessment and record keeping. Incumbents and others involved in leading pastoral care should have sufficient skills and training to support colleagues to undertake a risk assessment and exercise appropriate judgment

arrival and departure times of people visiting. Use the Pastoral team WhatsApp group to register movements.

- Don't call on people unannounced – call by arrangement, if appropriate telephoning the person just before you go.
- Carry some identification on the first visit and be proactive in letting the person see it. This lets them know that they have a right to see identification.
- On the first visit, or if the conversation is likely to move onto more sensitive pastoral issues, ensure that the person is aware that conversations are generally confidential unless it becomes apparent that a child or adult is at risk of harm.
- Where possible, home visits should be conducted in the morning or early afternoon, to avoid travelling in the dark.
- Staff and volunteers who undertake home visits should ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets which may present a safety risk.
- Familiarise yourself with the quickest means of exit should you need to.
- Keep the mobile phone on during the meeting so that you can use it quickly in an emergency.
- Any incidents should be reported to the Incumbent/or the Church Wardens/or Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible.
- All homes visits should be recorded, as clear and detailed records 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.
- Ask the person whether they would like repeat visits, whether and how they would like to be contacted again. Let them be in control.
- Take care in accepting any gifts other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If courtesy demands that you accept a small gift, declare it to someone at church - a church warden or the PCC Treasurer, to ensure transparency. If someone wants to donate to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.
- If you are asked to make any purchases on behalf of the person, always retain receipts and return change immediately. Keep a record of any transactions and the reason for them. This activity comes under regulated activity and requires the appropriate DBS.
- Taking people to the GP or to a hospital appointment, whether driving or accompanying, is a regulated activity which requires the appropriate DBS.

Monitor, record and review

- Records should be maintained and should be relevant to the contact but don't need to be extensive. These should be logged in secure area of Churchsuite. Minimal recording - date, time of arrival and departure, persons present, venue & nature of contact.
- Use pastoralcare@stjohnssouthbourne.com to communicate with admin
- Any significant observations or points of conversation should be recorded in more detail.
- Explain that brief records are kept.
- Always be prepared to show the notes if asked.
- Records to be reviewed initially monthly/quarterly by Safeguarding Officer to make sure there are no concerns.
- Administrator to flag any concerns immediately with Church wardens.

All notes should be stored in accordance with the data protection policy.

Control measures to increase safety

Once risks have been identified and assessed, the next step will be to decide on the preventative and protection measures for dealing with them. The approach will be to either reduce or remove the risk through ensuring the proper provision of training, information and supervision.

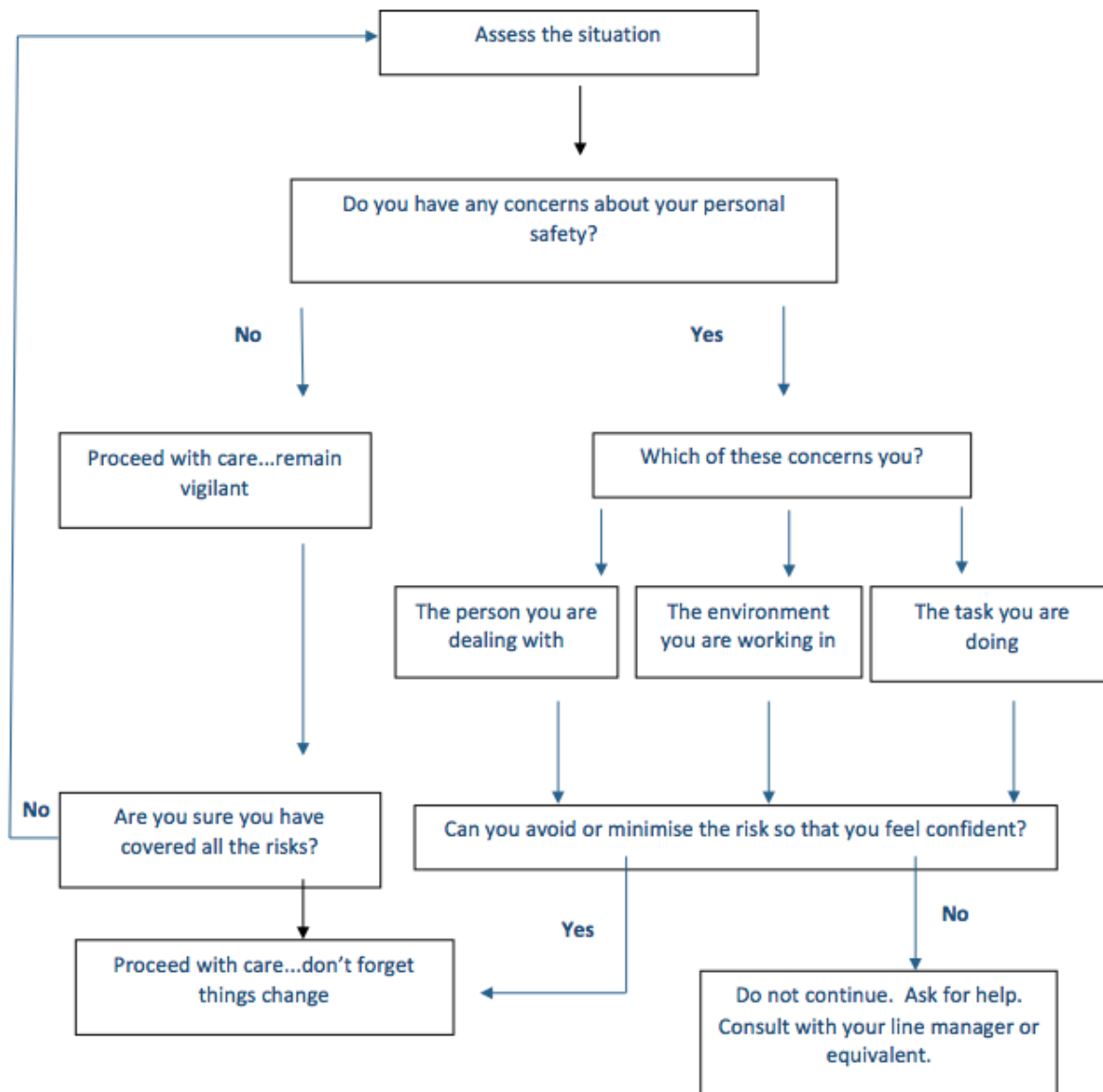
- It is recommended as best practice to encourage the person you are meeting to enter a room first and then for the lone worker to seat themselves closest to the door.
- Lone workers should be alert to any signs of potential danger during a home visit and be prepared to leave immediately if they have 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.

- Keep on file employee next of kin, contact numbers and car details.
- It may be appropriate on occasions for lone workers to be asked to contact someone once they have completed their task or have safely reached their home.
- Lone workers can raise the alarm by contacting/communicating with an agreed person in the event a problem arises or by using St John's WhatsApp group.

- Undertake a regular risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church/building needs extra security e.g., spy holes, door chains, outside lighting as these can all help to safely identify callers.
- Each lone worker should consider how the working arrangements could be more secure by not letting others pressure them into working in a way that may put their safety in danger

Personal Safety Risk Assessment ²

The following flowchart from Suzy Lamplugh Trust, Personal Safety at Work can be used to assess the environment, and the working practice as well as for an instant assessment of a situation.

**Use the 4-point system**

P - Plan to meet **first time visitors** in a busy public place, rather than your workplace or a home, if possible. Initially, go with someone else

L - Log in your visitors with a buddy and phone them after your visitor has left to let them know you are safe.

A - Avoid situations which could be difficult.

N - Never assume it won't happen to you.

² Suzy Lamplugh Trust www.suzylamplugh.org