

Lone Working Policy

1 Policy Statement

Working alone is an essential practice for many in St Mary's, Almondsbury. This can be within the church, their own homes or visiting people in their homes. Lone working cannot always be avoided.

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, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff and volunteers a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

This policy should be read in conjunction with St Mary's Health and Safety, and Safeguarding Policies.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

Definition

'Lone Working' refers to situations where staff and volunteers in the course of their roles within the church work alone or are physically isolated from others and without access to immediate assistance.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of people who work alone:

- Parish Administrator (in the Vestry and at home)
- Staff or volunteers working within and around the church
 - Cleaners (includes brass cleaners)
 - Flower Arrangers
 - Verger and volunteers who open and lock up the church
 - Organist
 - Volunteers preparing the Marriage Certificates
 - Grave Maintenance
- Anyone working on maintenance or in the grounds of the church
- Pastoral Assistants going to people's homes or in their own home
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank
- Staff and volunteers who work from home alone (e.g. Incumbent, Parish Administrator, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Treasurer)
- Staff and volunteers travelling by car or public transport in the course of their work for the church.

The aim of this policy is to:

- increase staff and volunteers awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far is reasonably practicable
- ensure that appropriate support and training is available to all staff and volunteers that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone
- encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working
- reduce the number of incidents and injuries to staff and volunteers related to lone working.

3 PCC Responsibilities as Trustees

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 a risk assessment, issues such as the place of meeting, security, the risk of violence and the nature of the task and activity should be considered alongside other factors appropriate to the circumstances such as the lone worker's health and fitness, age and gender.

The following is a list of responsibilities:

- To ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for all lone working with standard practices thereof adhered to
- To install all reasonable security equipment and systems
- To ensure that each member of staff and volunteers feels that the PCC has taken all reasonable steps to ensure their safety
- To offer appropriate training in personal safety, and in all other issues of health and safety. This is to include what to do in the case of suspicion of intruders, fire, how to exit the building quickly and safely, and where to find the first aid kit
- To insist that staff and volunteers follow the guidelines laid down on safe solo working
- To ensure that all contact details for the staff and volunteers, and their next of kin are kept on file, in accordance to GDPR 2018 (General Data Protection Regulation) Rules
- To assess reasonable foreseeable risks – identifying, evaluating and managing risks associated with lone working
- To ensure that staff and volunteers have a means of summoning help if necessary

- To keep a record of any health issues that might affect someone's ability to work alone safely
- To provide resources for putting the policy into practice
- To ensure that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the policy
- To identify situations where people work alone and consider alternative arrangements, where appropriate
- To manage the effectiveness of preventive measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents
- To ensure that appropriate support is given to staff and volunteers involved in any incident
- To provide a mobile phone, and other personal safety equipment, where this is felt to be desirable.

4 The responsibilities of staff and volunteers

It should be understood that the PCC can only do so much. The behaviour and actions of staff and volunteers can make a significant difference to their level of safety too,

The following is a list of responsibilities:

- To avoid placing themselves in unnecessarily dangerous situations
- To be alert to possible dangers and to minimise risks by their own behaviour and report any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect to working alone
- To inform others of their movements of visits being made, and informing others of time expected back for potentially difficult visits with an agreed action plan should the staff or volunteer not communicate on time.
- To inform the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer of any suspicious behaviour noted or threats made to them
- To drive responsibly and to keep their vehicle properly insured, tested and maintained, with current breakdown insurance, always with adequate petrol in the tank and to park in well-lit roads.
- To take reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions
- To follow guidance and procedures designed for safe working
- To report all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others, and asking for guidance as appropriate
- To take part in training designed to meet the requirements of this policy provided by the Church and/or Diocese.

5 Assessments of Risks

In drawing up and recording a risk assessment the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- the environment – location, security, access
- the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- the individuals concerned – incidents of potential or actual risks
- history – any previous incidents in similar situations
- any other special circumstances – e.g. Pastoral Assistants and Home Communion Visitors – where are you visiting at home or a nursing home.

All available information should be taken in account and checked or updated as necessary. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending in a second person or making other arrangements to complete the task.

5.1 Personal Safety

This is not about raising anxiety levels but recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risks, for yourself and those around you.

Some guidelines on personal safety follow:

- **Staff and volunteers should avoid working alone if not necessary;**
- Staff and volunteers must not assume that having a mobile phone and a backup plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk;
- Staff and volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety;
- Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden or PCC;
- Staff and volunteers must inform an identified person (whether a church or family member) when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed;
- If any staff or volunteer does not report in as expected an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate using emergency contact information if necessary;
- Arrangements for contacts and response should be arranged by the individual taking into account their needs. Issues to be taken into account include:
 - the identified risks
 - measures in place to reduce those risks
 - availability of contacts
- Where staff (in particular the Parish Administrator) work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, the Associate Vicar must make provision

for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation;

- Staff and volunteers working away from the office/home should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times – and make sure that it is in good working order;
- Know what measures are in place – check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid kit;
- Make sure that electrical and other mechanical equipment is certified safe to use, if in church. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported/dealt with appropriately.

5.2 Driving your car

People tend to feel safer when driving and harassment or actual attacks are rare, a few sensible precautions will help you to minimise the risks, and to feel more confident. Remember that some drivers become more unnaturally aggressive behind the wheel.

The following is advised:

- Make sure that your car is regularly serviced and has breakdown cover;
- Plan your route in advance, have a handy up-to-date map, or use the Sat Nav;
- Keep valuables out of sight in the boot while driving and when locked;
- After dark, park in a well-lit place as close to the destination as possible.

6 Procedures

It is important not to over emphasise the risks of lone working and create unnecessary fear amongst staff and volunteers that is disproportionate to the reality of the risks faced. However, lone workers do face increased vulnerability in the absence of the immediate support of others, if an incident occurs. This is particularly so if they are in someone's home, or are working in an isolated location.

Staff and volunteers should be fully aware and briefed in relation to risks as well as the task itself.

The following guidelines are, therefore, intended to reflect good practice in relation to the protection of lone workers.

6.1 Working alone in the Vestry

The PCC, and staff and volunteers must ensure that;

- All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building and that emergency exits are accessible;

1. The entrance door by the vestry should have the mortice lock closed so that it can be opened easily from the inside but not from the outside (the key would be required from the outside) and the other lock should be unlocked. This will allow for an easy exit route;
 2. The kitchen door from the Choir Vestry should remain locked while working in the Vestry alone;
 3. The Vestry door into the Chancel should be unlocked with the upper bolt secured which will allow a quick exit if required ;
- Alarm systems are tested regularly – fire, intruder and panic button – if fitted;
 - When working alone staff and volunteers are familiar with the exits and alarms
 - There is access to a telephone (landline and/or mobile) and first aid kit (currently in the kitchen pod at the back of the church);
 - If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, staff and volunteers call for assistance before entering.

6.2 Working alone in Church

The PCC, and staff and volunteers must:

- Ensure that emergency exits are available
- Consider how lone workers will raise the alarm if necessary, and ensure that staff and volunteers have a means of communicating with others in the event of a problem arising
- Staff and volunteers should be advised as follows:
 - to take an operational and fully charged mobile phone with them
 - to ensure that someone is aware of where they are, let them know when they arrive and when they leave
 - to have a procedure if the staff or volunteer has not made contact
 - to consider other suggestions on Personal Safety see Section 5.1
- To ensure no staff or volunteer plans to be alone in church with children or young people (unless their own children). However, if they should find themselves in this situation, it is important that another adult (preferably the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer) is made aware immediately. The staff or volunteer should also assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them
- Refrain from attempting to do any work which would normally require more than one person – e.g. heavy manual lifting
- Take due care when working at height – see Section 6.3.1 “Working at height” for more information especially in conjunction with working with ladders

6.3 Working alone in the Bell Tower

The PCC and the Bell Tower post holders must ensure that all appropriate risk assessments are undertaken before any work is done in the bell tower.

6.3.1 Working at Height

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 came into effect on 6 April 2005. The regulations apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. A place is 'at height' if a person could be injured falling from it but excludes staircases (The belfry stairs should be covered by a general risk assessment). This will therefore include working on the bell frames, belfry access routes such as ladders and walkways, and could include the ringing room.

As part of the Regulations, duty holders must ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- those involved in work at height are competent;
- the risks from work at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used;
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled

6.3.2 General Precautions

The following precautions should apply:

- There should always be an indication at ground level (e.g. at the entrance to the tower stairs) and in the ringing room to show when any person is in the tower at higher levels. The blackboard in the ringing chamber could facilitate this
- The entrance to the ringing room, bell chamber, and any intermediate chambers should be kept locked against unauthorised entry whilst work is in progress. However, another trusted key holder should be notified when the person is in the tower in case access is required in an emergency;
- Entry to the bells and bell frame is not permitted when the bells are set mouth upwards unless there are safe means of locking the bells in the up position;
- Safe access should be available to every part of the bell equipment that needs to be maintained, including for the application of muffles;
- Whenever any maintenance or other activity has taken place in the bell chamber, or intermediate chambers, this should be recorded in the log book, located in the Ringing Chamber;
- Ensure that someone knows if you are working on the bells or, even better, have someone with you;

- Establish a time with someone when you expect to complete any work so that they know when to expect you or raise the alarm if you are late;
- The precautions detailed in 5.2 apply in equal measure here.

6.4 Working alone at home

Staff and volunteers working from home include the Incumbent, other clergy, Parish Administrator, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Treasurer.

The following guidelines apply:

- Staff and volunteers working from their own home should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone numbers remain confidential;
- Staff working from home should be in regular contact with the Associate Vicar if working alone for extended periods;
- The Associate Vicar, Churchwarden and PCC should be particularly aware of arrangements agreed within the parish, for staff and volunteers who live alone
- Staff and volunteers working from home should be aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on Caller Display and can be retrieved on 1471. To prevent the person you call accessing your number dial 141 before the number, or check the instructions for your mobile phone;
- Ensure that all doors and windows are secured to prevent unauthorised access, so that the house is as safe as possible;
- Be careful not to tell anyone that you are alone. This applies to people who telephone or email you, as well as to visitors;
- Think carefully before inviting any caller inside especially if you are alone;
- If you do have people visiting your home, use rooms that are as professional looking as possible;
- The Suzy Lamplugh Trust advises making a phone call after the visitor has arrived, telling someone that you will get back to them at a certain time, after their visitor <name of visitor> has left. This act as both an information call and a deterrent.

6.5 Home Visits

6.5.1 Guidance

The following guidelines apply:

- Before visiting ensure that someone (church or family member) knows the name, address and phone number of the person you are visiting, and provide an estimated time of leaving and returning. Ensure, if possible, that you take a working, fully charged mobile phone with you;

- Carry out a '10 second risk assessment' when you first arrive. If the staff or volunteer are anxious on arriving and believe that their safety could be jeopardised, they should not take the risk of proceeding further. They should either telephone the person they are visiting (if they have not approached the property) or make an excuse (if they are at the front door). Alternative arrangements should be made either on the phone or say will contact later;
- All pastoral visitors and Home Communion Visitors should record visited name, time, date, location and reason for the visit and any Safeguarding concerns – which should be reported to the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer. See Appendix 1 for the Pastoral Assistant Visiting Record Template.
(Note: you will not need to record a brief conversation at Sunday worship or the High Street unless there is anything of real concern raised);
- Public transport is a poor option for home visits since a great deal of personal control is taken away. A thorough risk assessment should be carried out before using public transport;
- Confrontation should always be avoided. At the first sign of potential danger the staff or volunteer should make a speedy exit. Never assume that violence will not happen, personal safety is paramount. Any incident should be reported to the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer immediately;
- Note when visiting residential and care homes to be aware of the procedures of signing in and to acquaint yourself with the staff.
- Ensure that all government rules and regulations are adhered to in relation to wearing of face masks, social distancing and where you can meet. (

6.5.2 Protocol

The following guidelines apply:

- show respect for the families, as equals;
- make appointments in advance and offer a choice of times;
- accept the right of not wanting a home visit;
- be aware of social and cultural differences;
- demonstrate common courtesy – wait to be invited into the home;
- be prepared to identify yourself – use photographic identification such as driving licence, passport, work's pass;
- be mindful of the fact that you are entering someone else's property - your presence therefore may be unwanted and/or pose a threat

6.5.3 Health and Safety

The following guidelines apply:

- if a visit takes longer than anticipated, the staff or volunteer should ring the designated person to say that the visit has overrun and give an expected finishing time;
- if the staff or volunteer does not ring at the expected time, the designated person should ring to make sure the visit has finished and that they are safe;
- if there appears to be any cause of concern, it is suggested that there is a code word which could be used, and then the staff or volunteer should respond accordingly to the questions being asked by the designated person;
- if there is no answer the designated person should try to make contact again after 5 minutes;
- if there is still no answer, the designated person should ring the contact details of the person being visited to ensure that the staff or volunteer has left and at what time. The designated person should then attempt to make contact with the staff or volunteer at their own home by telephone or their mobile phone, and refer to the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden or Parish Safeguarding Officer for further action
(Note: Not answering the mobile phone may indicate that the staff or volunteer is driving.);
- where there are deemed to be potential risks arrange the meeting in a public place or arrange for a second person to attend with you;
- use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels threatening, leave giving a plausible excuse;
- park as close to the visiting house or nursing home as possible in a well-lit area;
- be aware of your surroundings and potential hazards. Always be aware of your exits and if possible try to sit facing the exit. Wherever practical avoid being in a situation whether the person being visited is between you and the exit;
- make sure that when you enter the home that you shut the front door behind you and make yourself familiar with the door lock in case you need to make an emergency exit;
- if there is a known problem with animals at the home, you should ask the occupant to remove or secure the animals before you arrive. The same applies if you are not comfortable with animals or have allergies associated with animals.

6.5.4 Be aware of yourself and others

The following guidelines apply:

- think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- think about your tone of voice or choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising;

- think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potential risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity for an assailant?
- be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset;
- take note of their non-verbal signals;
- be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet and for what reasons?
- listen to them, and show them you are listening.

7. Records

Pastoral Assistants and Home Communion Visitors should keep a regular record of pastoral encounters, including details such as date, time, subject and any Safeguarding concerns. It is important to keep factual records, and separate these from any opinions expressed.

Once the Pastoral Assistant Visiting Record Template has been filled, it should be held in a secure, locked cabinet in the Parish Office, and retained in line with the guidance in the Data Protection Policy.

8. Monitoring and Review

Any staff or volunteer should discuss any concerns regarding lone working issues with either the Associate Vicar, Churchwarden or Parish Safeguarding Officer.

This Lone Working policy should be reviewed and revised annually in response to any new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.

Adopted by the PCC on 23rd July 2019

Updated and reviewed by the PCC September 2022

