

# Lone Working Policy

All Saints, Wick

The parish of All Saints, Wick is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of clergy, staff and volunteers. Although policies such as this can initially seem to be 'over the top' it is simply an attempt to ensure that all pastoral aspects of church life are undertaken with due care and preparation.

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.

## **Principles**

It is recognised that lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy, church workers and volunteers, 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 their personal safety, and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in other circumstances.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for ensuring that all lone working activities within the church are identified, and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken in order to identify and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

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 (paid) 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.

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration should be given to undertake other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs.

## **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 others if an incident occurs, and particularly if they are in someone's home, or are working in an isolated or rural location. The following guidance is, therefore, intended to reflect good practice in relation to the protection of lone workers.

## **Working Alone in Church or at another Building**

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. In this regard, our PCCs endeavour to:

- Undertake a risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church/building needs extra security. For example, spy holes, door chains or outside lighting can all help to safely identify callers.
- 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.
- 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.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – the worker should make their PCC 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.

## **Home Visits**

Home visits can be potentially risky situations, and therefore lone workers should also be aware of their responsibilities in ensuring their personal safety when visiting people in their own homes.

- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else is aware of their visit and knows the details of where and when they are visiting.

- 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. 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 Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- Staff and volunteers who undertake home visits should check whether there are pets if they have any issues with animals, e.g. allergies.
- 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.

## **Records**

Clergy and church workers should keep a record of who they visit and how often.

## **Review**

This Lone Working Policy will be reviewed and revised in response to new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.

# **Guidance Notes: Checklist**

## **Who works alone?**

Identify and record all workers and volunteers who work alone either all or part of the time, including their role, the location/s they work at, their tasks and responsibilities.

## **What are the risks?**

Identify any risks that may be associated with lone working (see below).

## **Are your lone workers protected from harm?**

Identify the preventative and protective measures needed to ensure your workers and volunteers are not put at risk because they work alone.

## **What training, guidance and support do you give to lone workers?**

Check what information and training your lone workers are given to ensure they understand the risks of their work. Clarify the precautions they need to take to keep themselves safe, including what they should do in an emergency

## **Is there a policy on lone working?**

Ensure there are written procedures in place for lone workers in the parish, as well as ongoing support and supervision.

# What are the Risks?

The following list is not exhaustive, but outlines some examples of potential risks of lone working.

- The remoteness of the setting
- Whether there is a safe way in or out for the worker/volunteer
- Whether the worker/volunteer visits unfamiliar persons
- Whether there is potential for verbal or physical abuse
- The vulnerability of the worker/volunteer feeling isolated, anxious or stressed
- Whether workers/volunteers carry valuables or equipment i.e. money
- Whether equipment or materials can be handled safely by one person
- Whether the person is medically fit and able to work alone
- Whether there is access to a telephone or communication system
- How the worker/volunteer will obtain help in an emergency
- Whether or not there is adequate first aid cover
- Whether workers/volunteers carry out visits during unsocial hours

Once the risks have been identified you will need to consider whether the work can be done safely by the lone worker. This means taking into account the likelihood of harm that could be caused to the lone worker as well as the impact the risk event could have upon them or others if something happens.

## Control Measures

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

Reviewed and agreed by the PCC of All Saints Wick, 15th May 2024