

Otter Vale Mission Community

Lone Worker policy and procedures

The Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) of the Otter Vale Mission Community (OVMC) are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of all its clergy and volunteers 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.

Who does this affect?

- Clergy and lay ministers when carrying out their duties in the church, at home and out in the locality
- All church cleaners
- People who undertake sacristy and vergers duties, arrange the flowers, or prepare the church for services
- Organists preparing for services and those practising the organ
- Those opening and locking the church
- Those doing maintenance in church
- Someone doing a solo pastoral visit to people's homes including home communion
- Volunteers driving parishioners to church services and events
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank

There are a number of areas where risks may be greater when working alone:

- Accidents or sudden illness when there is no-one to summon help or first aid
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Allegations of inappropriate and/or abusive behaviour
- Fire
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)
- Travelling, particularly in bad weather

Principles

Working alone is an essential practice for many in our church, either within the church buildings, in their own or other people's homes. Lone working cannot always be avoided. However, this policy recognises the risks and tries to minimise them by common sense and appropriate measures. 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.

- 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.

- 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 become angrier or threatening.

- 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.

Working Alone in Church or Church Hall

- When working alone in church or in a church hall you should observe the following precautions:
- Do not work at height
- Ensure that you have a mobile phone with you that is on, charged, has credit and carry it with you
- Ensure that someone knows where you are and when you expect to return.
- Ensure that you are sufficiently fit and well to be carrying out your tasks alone.

In addition to the general guidelines:

- Ensure that you know where to find the first aid kits and defibrillator (where present)
- Ensure that you are familiar with the procedures for dealing with fire.
- Check that the building is empty with another person if you are being left on your own after an event or activity
- Do not plan to be alone with children or young people. However, if you should find yourself in this situation, it is important that another adult is made aware immediately. You should also assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – let a Churchwarden, Incumbent and/ or Safeguarding Representative know as soon as possible in order that the appropriate risk assessment and follow-up action can be taken.

Home Visits

- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else, i.e. the Incumbent/a Churchwarden/a colleague or 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, informing them when the visit is completed safely, if needed. This may be particularly necessary for a first visit.
- 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 Incumbent, Church Warden and/or Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible.
- Do not call unannounced; call by appointment if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.
- Be clear about what support you can offer and the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care/support that is available.
- All homes 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 will not happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported to the activity leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer 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 do not know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.
- Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult's permission, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact, unless there are safeguarding concerns.
- Never offer 'over the counter' remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
- Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. 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.

Pastoral Care

Consider the best way in the parish context of recording pastoral visits.

Managing Money

Consideration should be given to managing cash e.g. at fundraising activities, taking money for banking. Large quantities of cash should not be kept in a person's home for long periods and should be held in the church safe overnight.

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