

• Lone Worker Policy for St Etheldreda's and St Luke's, Hatfield

March 2023

Summary

Working alone is an essential practice for many in our church, either within the church buildings, in their own homes or other people's homes. Lone working cannot always be avoided. This policy recognises the risks and tries to minimise them by common sense and appropriate measures. It should be read in conjunction with the Diocese of St Albans **Guidelines for Lone Working and Personal Safety**.

Authorisation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Health and Safety Officer and Church Wardens and will be adopted by the PCC. It forms one part of our wider Church Health and Safety at Work Policy which is available from the Parish Office and Safeguarding Officer, along with our current insurance policies and risk assessments.

Who does this affect?

- ● The Rector and other clergy
- ● The Church Administrator
- ● The Cleaner
- ● The Church Hall manager
- ● Volunteers who work in the Office
- ● Other volunteers who come into church to sort out sacristy, the flowers, clean the brass or prepare the church for special services
- ● Those locking the church
- ● Those doing maintenance in church
- ● Someone doing a solo pastoral visit to people's homes
- ● Volunteers taking cash to the bank
- ● The Rector working at home
- ● Members of the leadership teams
- ● Organist

The Policy

The purpose of this lone worker policy is to ensure that all church members are aware of the specific risk in working alone and to set out the respective responsibilities of the PCC and each individual to minimise such risks. The PCC commit to carrying out their responsibilities in a thorough and disciplined way. It is expected that all church members will abide by this policy.

The Risks

This list is not exhaustive but identifies some of the risks faced.

- ● Physical accident (from injury, fire, etc such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help if necessary)
- ● Sudden illness, again when there is no one to raise the alarm
- ● Physical violence or threat of abuse in any form from a visitor
- ● Sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- ● Stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive calls or digital media
- ● Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses

Responsibilities

The PCC / Church Wardens – should show that “reasonably foreseeable risks” have been identified and updated regularly with appropriate action taken to minimise them. This can be done in conjunction with the Health and Safety officer.

They should also:

Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for all lone working, with standard practices adhered to. For example the accident books are in place and properly monitored.

Equip vulnerable staff with appropriate communications tools so they can summon help when needed. For example personal alarms for staff in the office alone, or visiting homes.

Ensure that every member of the church feels that the PCC has taken all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. For paid staff this should happen during their reviews.

Insist that everyone follow the guidelines laid down on safe solo working.

Individuals (staff and volunteers) – also need to ensure that they don’t put themselves in unnecessary danger. If possible do visits in pairs (please read this in conjunction with the Policy on Pastoral Visiting). Do not agree to meet anyone in an isolated place. Consider carrying a personal alarm and a torch.

Be alert to possible dangers and minimise them – for example keep lights on until a building is completely vacated; try to leave the building with another person if possible; using safety guards on power tools – and not using them when in the building alone.

Inform the Wardens or Rector of any suspicious behaviour noted or any threats made to them.

Advice

• When working in the church alone (or visiting someone in their home – please see Policy on Pastoral Visiting) make sure someone else knows where you are, and what time you are due home. Get them to check on you if you are not home when expected and if they can’t contact you, to raise the alarm.

- • Carry a charged mobile phone with you, to use in case of emergency.
- • Be aware of possible exits
- • Do not work at heights when alone; do not use power tools when alone.
- • For Pastoral Visits it is best not to visit people in their homes alone
- • If working in church, and particularly after dark or late in the evening, lock the doors if you feel this would protect you.
- • Choose different routes to the bank, when taking cash.