

# Working Alone Policy



## Our Working Alone Policy

**Name of Church:** St Michael's, Bray with Braywood.

**Address:** High Street, Bray, Berks. SL6 2AA

As a church, we understand that we owe a duty of care to ensure the safety of those who work in, visit or use our church, hall or churchyard.

We also know that, where we are an employer or control premises in certain circumstances, we have to meet the requirements of health and safety law.

We are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all our clergy and accredited lay workers 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.

You can also use the guidance prepared by the Health and Safety Executive at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## Risk Advice Line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

[risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com)

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.



## Policy

The Diocese of Oxford is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all its clergy and accredited lay workers 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.

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 and church workers, 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 the importance of personal safety, and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances.

The Parochial Church Council (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 an assessment of risk, issues such as the place of meeting, security, the risk of violence and the nature of the task or activity should be considered alongside any other factors appropriate to the circumstances, such as the lone worker's health and fitness, age and gender. 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 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.

Parishes should ensure they have adequate insurance in place to cover all lone working activities which have been formally identified by a risk assessment. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration should be given by the parish 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 colleagues, or 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, and can also be used by churches to develop their own local procedures.

## 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, PCC's should ensure that they:

- 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 (except direct family members and with the family's knowledge). 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 Group Leader 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 the PCC is responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk management measures are in place before a home visit is undertaken, which may include ensuring that staff and volunteers work in pairs on a first visit.

- 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, i.e. either their Group Leader and/or colleague/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.
- 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.
- All home 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 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 Group Leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Representative 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 don't know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.

## Records

Clergy and church workers should keep a regular record of pastoral encounters, including details such as date, time, subject and actions to be taken. It is important to keep factual records, and separate these from any opinions expressed.

All records should be held in a secure, locked cabinet in the parish and retained in line with the guidance provided in the Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook.

## Review

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