

Lone Working in the Diocese of Guildford

Assessment Process and Record Keeping Guidance

It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological boundaries. Everyone undertaking pastoral work in the Diocese should see themselves as part of a team both within the individual parish or setting and as part of Guildford Diocese. You should feel free to seek advice from your incumbent, pastoral team leader other immediate colleague, Area Dean, Archdeacon or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

It is important in all pastoral care to:

Consider:

- **What** is the purpose of the meeting?
- **Why** is it one to one?
- **Who** is involved?
- **When** will it take place?
- **Where** will the contact take place?
- **How** will the needs and vulnerabilities of all involved be addressed?

What is Lone working?

Lone working does not just mean one-to-one contact. This protocol applies to all undertaking pastoral work in parish or Cathedral ministry e.g. clergy, pastoral workers, Youth and Children and Families Workers and anyone whose role involves lone working. The aim is to encourage best practice in managing risk and record keeping.

What is “safeguarding” in this context?

Safeguarding includes promoting a culture of care in pastoral ministry and has due regard for the needs and wellbeing of each individual, including the person offering pastoral support. If a safeguarding concern is identified this must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team within 24 hours. If you believe someone is at immediate risk of serious harm this must be reported to the relevant statutory agency without delay using the contact details on the [diocesan website](#).

What meetings are relevant?

The assessment process applies to all pastoral encounters and will have regard to the suitability of the location, time, date and those present. In most cases this will be a quick thought process and the form should not take long to complete. That assessment process will also inform the nature and extent of the record made. There is no need to keep a record of administrative meetings such as meeting with colleagues.

As a guide:

Likely to be Relevant

Discussion with prospective ordinand about sense of vocation.

Funeral preparation visit at home with spouse of deceased when no other person present.

Brief encounter with parishioner on way to shops who bursts into tears and talks for 10 minutes about diagnosis of terminal illness.

Discussion with someone who asks you to pray with/for them.

Meeting in which you offer spiritual direction

Unlikely to be Relevant

Parish Team meeting

Brief conversation with member of congregation on way out of church.

Funeral preparation visit at home with several family members present.

Two-minute encounter with parishioner on way to shops in which you ask after spouse who has just had an operation.

Meeting your own spiritual director.

Is the guidance mandatory?

All pastoral visits must be conducted in line with Church of England Guidance.

The most relevant Guidance is [Safer Working Environment and Activities 2019](#), the [Code of Safer Working Practice](#) and the [Parish Safeguarding Handbook](#). The PCC/Chapter and those with responsibility for safer recruitment and supervision must ensure that all involved in pastoral care are aware of the importance of appropriate risk assessment and record keeping. Incumbents and others involved in leading pastoral care should have sufficient skills and training to support colleagues to undertake a risk assessment and exercise appropriate judgment.

This protocol provides advice and support on how to implement the mandatory guidance.

Lone Working Templates

Two lone working templates are provided:

- (a) a CONTACT RECORD SHEET to record lone working encounter.
- (b) a VULNERABILITY IDENTIFIED SHEET to be used when it is deemed necessary to record further details because a person or type of meeting identifies a particular vulnerability.

N.B If a safeguarding concern is identified this must be reported to the Safeguarding Team within 24 hours.

Examples of completed templates are attached to help you. You can make notes of a meeting in any helpful place such as your diary or computer. We recognise that all settings are different and no one size fits all. We would recommend you include all the information in the relevant template. Above all you should work in cooperation with your colleagues under the direction and supervision of the person responsible for pastoral care. The template is supplied to assist in identifying the minimum amount of information that it is appropriate to retain to ensure that the meeting and its content can be recalled if requested at any time in the future. The information might be necessary to support someone making a complaint or respond to a complaint in the future.

When do I use the VULNERABILITY IDENTIFIED form?

This should be used only where you have specific concern about a meeting or individual for example where they may be a risk either to yourself or to one of your colleagues, or the other person involved or the proposed visit is at an unusual time or place or with a particularly vulnerable person.

When should I make fuller notes of a meeting?

Some pastoral meetings may require note taking if only as an aide-memoire for further meetings. In these cases it is good practice to consult the individual about the nature and purpose of the notes and for how long they will be kept. Note-taking may be more appropriate where there is a series of meetings. Examples may include meetings with prospective ordinands, funeral preparation (with one or more people), and pastoral situations where longer term support is needed.

What are the consequences of not following the guidance?

Any member of the clergy, including those in retirement, can face a complaint for alleged misconduct, although these remain rare in practice and most do not result in disciplinary action. Defending a complaint under the Clergy Disciplinary Measure 2016 may require the respondent to provide a formal written defence which may be used in tribunal proceedings. Failure to keep appropriate records may in itself be relevant to the outcome of such proceedings. Cases have been successfully brought under the Measure against incumbents for failing to ensure that adequate safeguarding controls were omitted or ignored.

Lay people involved in pastoral care are not liable to proceedings under the measure but may face a complaint or criminal allegations as the result of a police investigation. Records will also be relevant where an individual discloses information that later becomes relevant in a complaint or criminal investigation.

Where and for how long should records be kept?

All records should be stored securely with the knowledge of the relevant colleagues. These records should be kept indefinitely, even after retirement. Electronic records should be password protected and should also be downloaded and printed occasionally or backed up on another confidential database. The records must be kept indefinitely. Hard copies should be stored securely, ideally in the parish office and always with restricted access. Those with a designated pastoral role should have and use standardised or church-based email accounts for privacy, accountability and data security.

Should records be kept on paper or electronically?

This will depend on the resources available to those undertaking pastoral care. Some records, such as emails will be stored electronically. Every parish/ Cathedral ministry team should set out ground rules for the management of pastoral records, bearing in mind:

Please note that this data is sensitive and must be recorded and stored in line with Data Protection legislation. Two main considerations apply: first the right of individuals to what private and biographical information is recorded about them and secondly their right to see that information. The best approach in most pastoral contexts is transparency:

- ❖ Be prepared to explain the need for simple record keeping
- ❖ Do not record anything you would not wish those whom you are writing about to read.
- ❖ Never assume. Narrative risk assessments stick to the facts and avoid personal opinion, supposition or value judgments.
- ❖ A distinction needs to be drawn between simple records of the date, time and purpose of a meeting and those rarer situations where extensive confidential records are to be kept and where the principle of, “informed consent should apply.”
- ❖ The simplest test of what is fair and reasonable is, “How would I feel if someone was doing this to me?”

Further advice is available from the Information Commissioner’s Information Line on 0303 123 1113.

Further Reading:

- ❖ Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy (June 2015) (Church House Publishing 2015 www.churchofengland.org
- ❖ [S 7.7 Parish Safeguarding Handbook](#)
- ❖ Guide to Data Protection Law for Churches <https://www.stewardship.org.uk>