

Parochial Church Council of Potters Bar

Lone Working Policy

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. However, this policy recognises the risks, and tries to minimise them by common sense and appropriate measures.

Authorisation

This policy was last updated and authorised by the PCC on 26th January 2023 and will be reviewed annually by the Health and Safety Officer and Churchwardens. It forms one part of our wider Church Health and Safety Policy which is available from the church website.

Whom does this affect?

- The Vicar and other ordained and lay ministers
- The Churchwardens
- The Organist and Assistant Organist
- The Director of Music
- The Sacristan
- The Hall Lettings Secretary
- The Church and Hall Cleaner
- All church key holders
- Other volunteers who come into church to deal with sacristy duties, arrange or water flowers, clean or prepare the church or hall for special services or events, do photocopying etc.
- Those locking the church or hall
- Those doing maintenance in church, in the hall or church ground
- Someone doing a solo pastoral visit to people's homes
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank
- The Vicar working at home

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 commits to carrying out its 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
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses
- Stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive calls or digital media

Responsibilities

The PCC / Churchwardens 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, accident books should be in place and properly monitored.

To equip vulnerable staff with appropriate communications tools so they can summon help when needed. For example, personal alarms might be considered for those working in the church or hall alone, or visiting homes.

To ensure that every member of the church feels that the PCC has taken all reasonable steps to ensure their safety.

To insist that everyone follow the guidelines laid down on safe lone working.

Individuals need to ensure that they don't put themselves in unnecessary danger. If possible do visits in pairs. Do not agree to meet anyone in an isolated place. Consider carrying a personal alarm.

Be alert to possible dangers and minimise them – for example: keeping lights on until a building is completely vacated; using safety guards on power tools – and not using them when in the building alone.

Inform the Vicar or Churchwardens of any suspicious behaviour observed or any threats made to them.

Advice

- When working in the church alone (or visiting someone in their home) 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.
- Do not work at heights when alone; do not use power tools when alone.
- If working in church after dark, lock the doors.
- Choose different routes to the bank, when taking cash.