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Diocese of Bristol
Parish of Blunsdon
St Leonard's Church

Lone Working Policy and Procedure

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1. Lone Working

Introduction

There will be times when people find themselves working in church alone. It may be that their role involves working at times when others may not be around e.g. evenings and weekends, they may work away from a fixed base without colleagues, e.g. visiting people in their homes, or may work from home.

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, they may also encounter additional risks and it is important that these are fully understood and that sensible precautions and adequate arrangements are made to ensure they are safe at all times.

Potential hazards of lone working

There are several areas where risks may be greater for those working alone:

- Accidents or sudden illness when there is no one to summon help or first aid.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Fire or other threat.
- 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)
- Loss or damage to property e.g. theft of possessions from a parked vehicle

Assessing the risks of lone working

Because of people's background and experience different individuals may see the perception of risk differently. We all need to be aware of this.

Both the PCC and volunteering individuals should consider these factors and assess the particular risks when working in the church alone. Appropriate steps should be taken to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone working or when engaged in high-risk activities. Consideration should be given in particular to:

- The church environment – does it present any special risk to a lone worker?
- The need to familiarise oneself with the H & S policies and procedures of St Leonard's.
- The equipment, substances and goods used when working alone - can one person safely handle them? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
- The risk of violence or the threat of violence - is the nature of a visit or the person being visited likely to increase the risk? Will the employee be alone in a dark or remote location? Do they require training in risk assessment or in dealing with difficult people?

2. Measures to minimise the risks of lone working

There are several things that can be done to minimise risks when working alone. The following paragraphs highlight actions lone workers can take to improve the working environment, and practices and procedures, to enable them to go about their work in relative safety.

General

If you are working alone, you should:

- Be aware that it is acceptable to rely on your senses if you have a feeling something is wrong. Do not commence the task but leave and talk to a member of the PCC regarding the concern, or if appropriate a member of the Safeguarding Team.
- Have an arrangement with a churchwarden and/or other people whereby they know what your plans are when attending the church alone.
- Tell someone how you may be contacted and/or when you plan to return home. If you change your plans let your contact know immediately.
- Let other people know whom you are meeting, when and where, so that someone is looking after your welfare.
- Be satisfied that any equipment you plan to use is well maintained and fit for use.
- If possible, carry a mobile phone, which should always be kept as fully charged as possible and have it readily to hand in the case of an emergency.

Accidents and Emergencies

Everyone intending to work in church alone should be aware of the procedures for dealing with fires and other emergencies. A first aid is available in the church and is located near the main entrance. It is important when working alone in a building or part of a building that those responsible for building security know you are there, so you can be accounted for in case of fire.

Practical steps to minimise risks would be to:

- Inform a churchwarden or another PCC or family member in advance of your intention to work alone in church.
- Make sure that the key to the main door, which is the fire escape route, remains in the lock if you lock yourself in the church for personal security (see below).
- Should a fire start, leave the building immediately.
- Ensure you have access to a phone in case you need to call for help or the emergency services.
- Refrain from attempting to do any work which would normally require more than one-person e.g. heavy manual lifting unless/until other colleagues arrive to assist.
- Assess physical risks connected with the environment in which you are working and determine how best to manage those risks e.g. wearing a hard hat when necessary.

Personal Security

In the Church

Whilst working alone in the church there are several things you can do to minimise risks to personal security:

- Ensure that the main entrance door is secured to prevent unauthorised access, so that the working environment is as safe as possible, leaving the key in the lock for quick access in the case of emergency.
- Try and avoid working alone in the church on a day when the church is open for public access. If you do have to work alone on a public access day it is recommended that you lock the main entrance door whilst working alone.
- Let a colleague, friend or relative act as a contact and tell them that you are working alone in the church and the time that you are expected back. If you change your plans let your contact know immediately.
- If you plan to meet anyone at Church, make sure your contact knows of this and at what time when you plan to meet them. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust advises making a phone call after the visitor has arrived, telling someone that you will get back to them at a certain time, after their visitor, 'X' has left. This acts as both an information call and a deterrent.

- Do not open the door to any strangers, if someone is trying to enter the church ask them to confirm who they are and why they wish to enter the church.

Home visits

If you are making a visit to someone, let a colleague, friend or relative act as a contact who ensures that you have returned at the completion of that visit and who can contact you if your return is overdue. Advise the contact who to contact if a problem arises, preferably someone from the Safeguarding Team.

The level of risk posed by home visits or meeting someone new depends as much on the circumstances surrounding the visit as to the environment. Where the risk is considered to be great it may be necessary to take a colleague with you rather than go alone.

Other useful tips would be to:

- Ensure that you have as much information on the person being visited and their home environment as possible prior to the visit so that risks can be assessed
- Ensure that you carry identification and be prepared to identify yourself.
- Carry out a “10 second risk assessment” when you first arrive at the premises and the front door is opened. If you feel that there is a risk of harm you should have an excuse ready not to enter the house and arrange for an alternative appointment.
- Make sure that when you enter the home that you shut the front door behind you and make yourself familiar with the door lock in case you need to make an emergency exit.
- Wherever practical avoid being in a situation where the person being visited is between you and the exit.
- If there is a known problem with animals at a particular address or location, you should ask the occupants to remove or secure the animals before arrival.
- If you are confronted by an aggressive animal on a first visit to an address you should not put yourself at risk. If necessary you should abandon the visit and report the incident to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

3. Policy implementation and Review

This policy was approved by St Leonard's PCC on 24th July 2025.

All staff, volunteers and ministers are required to abide by this policy and associated good practice guidance.

This policy will be made available on the PCC Google Drive (for PCC use) and the St Leonard's Church website; a copy will be available in church.

This policy will be monitored via annual audit and annual report to PCC

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

Next Review Due: 23rd July 2026