



Benefice of Topsham and Wear Lone Working Policy

Due for review: Autumn	Approved by PCC on	Chair of PCC signature
2025		
2027		
2029		

The Diocese of Exeter, as well as the PCCs of Topsham and Countess Wear, is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all its clergy, staff and volunteers. This policy is intended to support those who work for the Benefice, or either of the constituent parishes, in a stipendiary, salaried, self-employed or voluntary capacity, and whose role involves working alone. The safety of any person working in or for the church is paramount.

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. The 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 may be physically isolated from colleagues or family, without access to immediate assistance.

Lone working in the form of home visiting for pastoral purposes has the possibility of a double risk: a risk to the host, which is covered by The Benefice's Safeguarding Policy, and a risk to the visitor. Such a visitor may occasionally be at risk of abuse, false accusation, or sexual impropriety due to the host's cognitive impairment, other mental health or personality issues. Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs, which is an ideal. This is often not practical because of pastoral

confidentiality, and the imbalance between the unmet pastoral need and the availability of workers.

Lone working also includes those who serve alone within the church building, especially when the church is open and unstaffed during the day. Our churches welcome many visitors, including the needy, and the occasional one can be unpredictable in their behaviour or expectations.

This policy and the guidelines which follow are in no way intended to cause anxiety, or to inhibit any of the activities which give our churches their important role in our communities. The intention is to raise awareness, and to offer sensible precautions which can be considered by those concerned.

General 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 arising from this are fully understood and appropriate risk management put in place in order that they can go about their daily work in relative safety.

This policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the *Church of England Code of Safer Working Practice*, which also sets out the appropriate boundaries for preventing misunderstandings and reducing risks. The Church of England Safer Environment and Activities guidance, the Diocese of Exeter Employee Handbook and the Diocese of Exeter Mission and Community Field Guide also refer to Lone Working and some, additionally, include information about undertaking risk assessments.

You will also find some risk assessment templates in the *Diocese of Exeter Parish Toolkit for Safeguarding webpage*.

The Church of England Guidelines for Children's and Youth Ministry in Personal Homes was produced in July 2024 and is subject to annual review. The guide does allow for children's work in private homes under certain circumstances, with additional mitigation in place, but makes clear that this should not be Lone Working.

1. Everyone sees the perception of risk differently, 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.
2. 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 Church of England document *The Safer Environment and Activities (2019)* section 3.2.1 provides guidance on home visiting which should be followed in such circumstances. The Parish Safeguarding Representative, or other relevant person should spend some

time looking at possible risks for lone working with a group of people e.g. home visitors. This will help raise awareness.

3. 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 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Consideration should also be given to safety measures including; personal safety apps for mobile phones such as Hollie Guard, alarms, CCTV, and buildings being assessed for potential risks e.g. secluded areas and areas with additional risks for Lone Workers such as Towers or Crypts.

Procedures:

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. This may be 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.

Personal Safety:

Whilst the PCC has a responsibility to ensure their lone workers' health, safety and welfare, there are also several 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.

- If there are any concerns or risks known before a visit is made, you are advised always to undertake a risk assessment. In these circumstances, consider whether the visit is necessary, or whether you should be accompanied by another church officer. In addition, visiting in pairs may be advisable, especially if the adult is perceived to be vulnerable.
- 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 become angrier or threatening.
- If a safeguarding incident occurs - even if it is considered a minor incident - the worker should make the activity leader and the Parish 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.

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, PCCs should ensure that they:

- Undertake a risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church/building needs extra security. For example, spy holes, camera doorbells, 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.
- No worker should ever plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people. 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 risk and vulnerability of being alone with them.
- Members of clergy should carefully consider any request for a blessing that includes touch, whilst alone with someone.

Specifically in our Benefice Lone Workers should do the following:

- If possible, inform someone else where they are going and when they expect to be back; and take a mobile phone with them if possible.
- When in church, always keep an eye out for visitors who enter the church while the lone worker is busy. In the vast majority of cases, there will be the opportunity for welcome and hospitality, or at least a simple 'hello' - this also makes the lone worker aware of who is in the building with them.

- In case someone's behaviour concerns a lone worker when visiting a home, or in church, make sure there is always a means of unimpeded exit available.
- If a lone worker's role involves going into the vestry, consider keeping both vestry doors unlocked and open in case you are followed in. Alternatively, the lone worker may prefer to lock themselves in whilst working.
- In any situation, the lone worker must not attempt to approach, confront or challenge someone whose behaviour is concerning, but make a discreet note of the concerning behaviour, and report this to the Vicar or other relevant person as soon as possible.
- If there is immediate risk of harm to a person or church property, the lone worker must leave the building immediately and ring 999 as soon as they are in a safe place to do so. If there is a major incident this should be reported to the Vicar immediately after phoning the emergency services.
- If the emergency services have been called, any users of the church rooms e.g. Little Ducklings should be informed of the situation if this can be done safely.

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. It is important to note that members of clergy should be included when considering good practice in respect of home visits.

- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else is aware of their movements e.g. the activity leader and/or colleague/family member. 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, ensuring that someone is aware that they have returned home or their next destination safely. **IS THIS CURRENT PRACTICE? WHO IS CHECKING ON WELLBEING?**
- All home visiting needs should be referred to the Vicar or Anna Chaplain Lead using the Benefice Referral Form (Appendix A). Visits will then be assigned to a priest or Anna Friend and timetabled. This is another way of ensuring the safety of the Lone Worker as dates and times of visits are logged.
- Do not call unannounced; call by appointment if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.
- Be clear about what support you can offer and the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care/support that is available.
- All staff and volunteers who work in the community and undertake home visits should ensure that they always have access to a mobile phone, which is in good working order.

- All homes visits should be recorded, as clear and detailed record keeping may prevent problems in the future - **see the visiting log document (Appendix B).**
- 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 will not happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported to the activity leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer 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 do not know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.
- Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult's permission and discussion with your line manager, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact, unless there are safeguarding concerns.
- Never offer 'over the counter' remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
- Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If someone wants to donate to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.

Meeting children or young people 1-2-1:

There may be rare occasions in youth work when it is appropriate and necessary to meet with a young person 1- 2-1. This might be in a mentoring role or if they are a volunteer and require supervision. To ensure this is undertaken in the best way possible, there are a number of measures you can take, as follows:

- It is advisable that 1-2-1 meetings with young people should be undertaken by someone who is the same gender as the young person.
- If the young person is under 18 years of age where appropriate (see below) the consent of their parents should be obtained prior to the meeting. Details of when, where and for how long you will be meeting should be provided to the parents.
- Providing transport for the young person to and from the meeting should be avoided if this means you will be alone in the car with them. Arrange to meet the young person in a public place such as a café or restaurant where there are other people around. Avoid particularly quiet times of day such as early morning or later afternoon/evening.

- If the young person wants to meet because they have sensitive information to share with you that they do not wish to share with their parents, you should arrange for someone else to accompany you to the meeting, and you should encourage the young person to also bring someone they trust along for support.
- Details of the meeting should be recorded and shared with a supervisor for accountability. If anything untoward or concerning occurs at the meeting, this should be reported to a supervisor as soon as is practicably possible. If safeguarding concerns are raised, the guidelines for reporting to the PSR or DST should be followed.
- If clergy consider it necessary to meet with a young person in private they should consider the risks carefully, they should consider how old the young person is, why the meeting needs to be in private, what can be done to mitigate risk e.g. open door, and they must ensure a record is kept of the meeting and a safeguarding officer and archdeacon is informed.

Records:

Make a note of the date when you visit people, report back about the visit to the agreed named person and say what is concerning or going well. They will report safeguarding concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and/or incumbent or directly to the DSA if they are not available.

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. These records will be held on a secure google form and not printed in line with the guidance provided by the Church of England in line with GDPR, the Data Protection Act.

Pastoral Care:

Pastoral care includes any planned visit, planned contact, or meeting with a parishioner or church member. It may take place face-to-face, by phone or through electronic contact. Pastoral care is at the heart of much of the church's ministry, undertaken by clergy and other church workers every day. However, Pastoral Care involving one to one contact with individuals must be carefully planned, risk assessed and recorded to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.

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?

It is essential that workers involved in pastoral care including clergy and others with a ministry, develop an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, and always ensure they respect professional boundaries. There is also a need to ensure that adequate records are kept and retained of **all** pastoral

encounters that occur. It is important when leading a pastoral conversation that the other person is clear that should safeguarding concerns emerge these will need to be shared with the Parish Safeguarding Representative. **Some people consider that all pastoral conversations in a church context have the same status as confession, so appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that there is a clear understanding that this is not the case.**

Recording Pastoral Encounters:

Pastoral encounters are unplanned meetings and contacts in the context of church work. A brief assessment process should always take place after such encounters to consider whether a record of the conversation should be made. 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 (Appendix B) should not take long to complete. That assessment processes will also inform the nature and extent of the record made. Brief remarks made in casual conversation or at worship or a social occasion need not routinely be recorded. There is no need to keep a record of administrative meetings such as meeting with colleagues. The following table gives some examples as a guide.

Likely to be Relevant	Unlikely to be Relevant
Discussion with prospective ordinand about sense of vocation.	Parish Team meeting
Funeral preparation visit at home with spouse of deceased when no other person present.	Brief conversation with member of congregation on way out of church.
Brief encounter with parishioner on way to shops who bursts into tears and talks for 10 minutes about diagnosis of terminal illness.	Funeral preparation visit at home with several family members present
Discussion with someone who asks you to pray with/for them.	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

However, keeping accurate records of pastoral encounters is helpful and good practice using the Visiting Log Document (Appendix B). All records remain the property of, and will be retained by, the church along with other parochial

records. The expectation is that a note is made either in hard copy or electronically of the person seen or contacted on a particular date and the nature of the contact, e.g. baptism, bereavement, funeral. These notes should be shared with the incumbent in a timely fashion.

Example Jim Trot mentions to Revd Geraldine Granger at coffee following Sunday Eucharist that he is looking forward to the baptism of his grandson. **No record needed.**

Susan Price, Pastoral Visitor, visits Brian Jones at home to talk about the loss of his wife. **Record date, name of visitor, name of person visited and purpose of visit: bereavement.**

All records, paper and electronic, containing personal information also come under the provisions of GDPR the Data Protection Act 2018. Further guidance regarding this can be in the national guidance document [Safeguarding Records - Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, 2015](#). Care needs to be taken to ensure records are factual and avoid value judgements, supposition, or opinion, as they may be made available for the individual to read if they ask to do so.

Those with a designated pastoral role should have and use standardised or church-based email accounts for privacy, accountability and data security. 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.

Responding to Safeguarding Concern:

A safeguarding concern is one where an individual, child or adult may appear to be at risk of abuse or neglect, or may present a risk to others. Such issues cannot be kept confidential. They must be raised with the Parish Safeguarding Representative who will refer them to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and they may have to be reported to statutory authorities. If a person discloses or discusses

maters on which action needs to be taken a fuller record must be made of what it was, and what action was taken. A form for this is within the appendices of the Safeguarding Policy.

Example of the type of information to record

Letitia Croyley, an elderly lady with restricted mobility tells Fr Peter Clifford on a pastoral visit that she has stopped coming to church because of the behaviour of Owen Newitt who had been giving her lifts.

Record: Date, name of visitor, name of person visited and purpose (pastoral visit). See separate file note.

File Note: *4pm visited Letitia Croyley who is becoming housebound. She has been relying on lifts from Owen Newitt but she told me she had stopped coming to church because he had been 'getting too personal'. I asked her what she meant, and it appeared he had been touching her and, on occasion, kissing her. She said: 'I don't want to get him into trouble and I'm sure he's just being friendly, but it doesn't suit me, I'm old fashioned'. I reassured her that we considered this to be inappropriate contact and said I was sorry that it had happened. I offered to find her another driver so that she could come to church, and she said she would like that. I contacted the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. See emails confirming advice given and action taken.*

Fr Peter Clifford, Vicar, St Mary the Virgin Church.

Checklist of Considerations that the PCC should be taking

Who works alone?	Identify and record all workers and volunteers who work alone either all or part of the time, including their role, the location/s they work at, their tasks and responsibilities.
What are the risks?	Identify any risks that may be associated with lone working (see below). Complete Risk Assessment documents for all such circumstances and discuss these with the worker.
Are your lone workers protected from harm?	Identify the preventative and protective measures needed to ensure your workers and volunteers are not put at risk because they work alone.
What training, guidance and support do you give to lone workers?	Check what information and training your lone workers are given to ensure they understand the risks of their work. Clarify the precautions they need to take to keep themselves safe, including what they should do in an emergency.

Is there a policy on lone working?	Ensure there are written procedures in place for lone workers in the parish, as well as ongoing support and supervision.
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What are the Risks?

The following list is not exhaustive but outlines some examples of potential risks of lone working.

- The remoteness of the setting
- Whether there is a safe way in or out for the worker/volunteer/visitor
- Whether the worker/volunteer visits unfamiliar persons
- Whether there is potential for verbal or physical abuse
- The vulnerability of the worker/volunteer feeling isolated, anxious, or stressed
- Whether workers/volunteers carry valuables or equipment i.e. money
- Whether equipment or materials can be managed safely by one person
- Whether the person is medically fit and able to work alone
- Whether there is access to a telephone or communication system
- How the worker/volunteer will obtain help in an emergency
- Whether or not there is adequate first aid cover
- Whether workers/volunteers conduct visits during unsocial hours

Once the risks have been identified you will need to consider whether the lone worker can safely do the work. This means considering the likelihood of harm that could be caused to the lone worker as well as the impact the risk event could have upon them or others if something happens. A suggested way of assessing the risk is given below:

Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact
Low May only occur in exceptional circumstances.	Low The impact is small and easily managed.
Medium Expected to occur in some circumstances.	Medium The risk event could have a meaningful effect upon the individual/parish in terms of cost, health and reputation, etc.
High Expected to occur in many/most circumstances.	High The risk event could have a devastating effect upon the individual or parish in terms of cost, health, reputation, etc.

The next step is to decide on the preventative and protection measures for dealing with the risks that you have identified. The approach taken should be to either reduce or remove the risk through ensuring the proper provision of training, information, supervision, and/or protective equipment. You need to clearly identify who will complete the actions and by when. Then there needs to be a process to ensure everything is in place for the visit. An example of how to complete the Benefice Risk Assessment Form (see appendix C) is below.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Physical/Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour during a meeting/home visit.	Lone Worker	On site, install security equipment/means of raising alarm or summoning assistance. First home visits to be done in pairs. Workers must carry mobile phone and provide details to another of home visit. Incidents of concern must be recorded. Lone worker procedures included in induction and training. Report any incidents of violence or aggressive behaviour.	Check room layout to limit the risk of being trapped by potentially violent person.	Lone worker	As soon as arrive in house	
Allegation of abuse or harm against workers.		Safer Recruitment process followed for all pastoral/home visitors. Lone worker procedures included in induction and training.	Good practice guidance provided and followed in relation to touch, gifts, confidentiality, etc.	Louise Grace	Added to Induction process	
Accident/Falls			On site, means of raising the alarm or summoning assistance. Provision of first aid equipment. Provision of proper equipment i.e. ladders, protective clothing, and training.	PCC in liaison with LG	Before visits can commence	

Contact details

Revd Louise Grace: 07779585908 vicartopshamwear@gmail.com

Elizabeth Reed (Rough Sleepers): - homelessoutreachtoshamwear@gmail.com

Katie Gray (safeguarding): safeguardingtopshamwear@gmail.com

**Appendix A
Anna Chaplaincy Referral Form**



Anna Chaplaincy Referral Form

Name of person to be visited	
Contact details of person to be visited	Address:
	Phone number:
	Email address:
Referrer's name	
Referrer's address	
Referrer's phone number	
Referrer's email address	
Emergency contact details for person to be visited	
Summary of need and requirements	
The following sections are for admin purposes	
Name of Anna Chaplain / Friend who will visit	
Regularity of visits	
Date when visitor's safeguarding checks were last completed	

