

Lone Worker Policy

St Peter's, Colchester

Adopted by the PCC: [tbc]

Review date: [3 years]

Policy owner: The Parochial Church Council

1. Purpose

This policy explains how St Peter's seeks to protect and support those who work, serve, volunteer or carry out duties alone.

Lone working can arise in church offices, the church building, the church hall, the churchyard, the vicarage, people's homes, hospitals, care homes, community settings, off-site meetings, travel, pastoral visits, and practical tasks connected with the life of the church.

The Parochial Church Council has responsibility for the governance and oversight of St Peter's, including health and safety, safeguarding, risk management and the welfare of staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of the church.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to be faithful in all that we say and do. That includes taking reasonable care of one another, acting wisely, protecting the vulnerable, and not exposing people to unnecessary risk.

This policy is intended to help lone working be properly assessed, planned, supervised and reviewed, so that staff, clergy, volunteers and others can serve safely and responsibly.

2. Scope

This policy applies, as relevant, to:

- clergy, licensed and authorised ministers;
- employed staff;
- PCC members;
- churchwardens and other elected or appointed officers;
- ministry leaders;
- volunteers;
- pastoral visitors;
- those undertaking practical, administrative, maintenance, cleaning, finance, building, pastoral or ministry tasks on behalf of St Peter's.

It applies where a person is working, serving or carrying out duties alone, or where they cannot reasonably expect immediate assistance from another suitable person.

This may include:

- working alone in the church office;
- opening, closing or checking the church or hall alone;
- lone working in the church building, hall, churchyard, vestry, kitchen, office or storage areas;
- working alone outside normal hours;
- pastoral visiting or home visiting;
- meeting individuals alone for pastoral care, prayer, practical help or administration;
- transporting items, equipment, cash, keys or documents;
- lone practical work, maintenance, cleaning or set-up;
- travelling alone for church purposes;
- off-site church activities where a person is isolated from others.

This policy should be read alongside St Peter's Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, Volunteer Policy, Staff Handbook, Ministry Role Descriptions, risk assessments, and any relevant operational guidance.

3. Christian foundation

The church is called to care for people wisely and responsibly. Service in the church should not require unnecessary exposure to avoidable risk.

The Apostle Paul writes:

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."
– Philippians 2:4, ESV

St Peter's therefore seeks to foster a culture in which people take sensible precautions, consider the welfare of others, report concerns, and ask for support where needed.

Lone working is not wrong in itself. Much ordinary ministry, administration and pastoral care will involve some periods of lone working. However, lone working should be considered carefully where there are risks connected with safeguarding, personal safety, health, buildings, travel, confidentiality, boundaries, conflict, aggression, cash, keys or isolated locations.

4. Principles

St Peter's will seek to ensure that lone working is:

- avoided where it is unnecessary or unsuitable;
- assessed where it is foreseeable;
- planned where it carries identifiable risk;
- supported by appropriate communication and supervision;
- consistent with safeguarding requirements;
- proportionate to the role and activity;
- reviewed where circumstances change.

Those who work or serve alone should:

- act within the scope of their role;
- follow relevant policies, procedures and risk assessments;
- consider whether the task can safely be done alone;
- tell an appropriate person where they are, what they are doing and when they expect to finish, where the risk level requires it;
- use agreed check-in or check-out arrangements where appropriate;
- avoid unnecessary risks;
- leave or seek help if they feel unsafe;
- report incidents, concerns, hazards or near misses promptly.

5. Risk assessment and planning

Lone working should be considered as part of relevant risk assessments and ministry planning.

A lone-working risk assessment should consider, where relevant:

- the location;
- time of day;
- whether the person is known to St Peter's;
- whether there are safeguarding or pastoral concerns;
- whether there is a history of aggression, distress, coercion, dependency, manipulation, harassment or boundary issues;
- whether the task involves cash, keys, valuables, confidential information or personal data;
- whether the task involves manual handling, ladders, equipment, chemicals, cleaning, maintenance or isolated areas;
- whether the person has relevant training, experience and capacity;
- whether mobile phone signal, lighting, access and exits are adequate;
- whether another person should be present;
- what would happen if the lone worker became ill, injured, distressed, delayed or uncontactable.

Where the risks are significant, lone working should be avoided unless appropriate control measures are in place.

Some activities should not normally be undertaken alone, including high-risk manual handling, use of unsafe equipment, work at height, hazardous maintenance, unsupervised contact with children or young people, or meetings where there is a known risk of aggression, abuse, manipulation or safeguarding concern.

6. Check-in and check-out arrangements

Where lone working carries more than minimal risk, there should be a simple check-in/check-out arrangement.

This may include telling an appropriate person:

- where the lone worker is going;
- who they are meeting, where relevant;
- the purpose of the visit or task;
- expected start and finish time;
- when they expect to return or make contact;
- how they can be contacted;
- what should happen if they do not check in.

The level of detail should be proportionate to the risk and should respect confidentiality. Sensitive pastoral or safeguarding information should not be shared unnecessarily.

Where someone fails to check in as expected, the responsible person should attempt to contact them. If there is no response and concern remains, appropriate escalation may include contacting another staff member, the Vicar, churchwardens, family contact if appropriate, emergency services, or another suitable person.

7. Working alone in church buildings

Those working alone in the church, hall, office, vestry, churchyard or other parish premises should take reasonable precautions.

This may include:

- ensuring they have a charged phone;
- knowing how to exit the building quickly;
- keeping keys secure;
- ensuring external doors are managed safely;
- avoiding isolated areas where there is no need to be there;
- not admitting unexpected visitors if they feel unsafe;
- arranging for another person to be present where a meeting or task carries risk;
- following fire evacuation, first aid, accident reporting and health and safety procedures;
- reporting hazards, defects, damage, suspicious behaviour or security concerns promptly.

Particular care should be taken when opening or closing premises, working outside normal hours, working in poor lighting, accessing storage areas, using the kitchen, moving furniture, handling cash, or meeting someone alone.

8. Pastoral visits, home visits and meetings

Pastoral care and visiting are important parts of Christian ministry. They can also involve particular risks, including safeguarding, personal safety, emotional dependency, false allegations, boundary concerns, distress, aggression, or inappropriate expectations.

Those undertaking pastoral visits or meetings alone should:

- act within the scope of their role and training;
- follow safeguarding and pastoral care guidance;
- consider whether another person should be present;
- tell an appropriate person about higher-risk visits;
- meet in a public or visible setting where appropriate;
- keep appropriate boundaries;
- avoid creating dependency;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- be cautious about accepting gifts, money or unusual requests;
- leave if they feel unsafe;
- report safeguarding, pastoral, conduct or safety concerns promptly.

Where there is a known or foreseeable risk, visits should not normally be undertaken alone. This may include situations involving aggression, coercion, sexualised behaviour, domestic abuse, mental health crisis, substance misuse, safeguarding concerns, serious conflict, or significant vulnerability.

No one should promise absolute confidentiality where there is a safeguarding concern, risk of harm, abuse, coercion, criminal behaviour, or danger to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

9. Safeguarding

Lone working must always be consistent with St Peter's Safeguarding Policy and relevant Church of England, diocesan, parish and statutory safeguarding requirements.

Adults acting on behalf of St Peter's must not place themselves in situations that create unnecessary safeguarding risk, especially in relation to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Unsupervised one-to-one contact with children or young people should only take place where it is clearly authorised, necessary, risk-assessed, visible, accountable and consistent with safeguarding requirements.

Any safeguarding concern arising from lone working must be reported promptly through St Peter's safeguarding procedures. It must not be handled merely as an ordinary complaint, private disagreement or informal pastoral matter.

Where safeguarding concerns arise about a person, activity, location or pattern of contact, St Peter's may restrict, pause or end lone working arrangements.

10. Aggression, conflict and personal safety

Those working or serving alone should not remain in situations where they feel unsafe.

If a person becomes aggressive, threatening, sexually inappropriate, coercive, intoxicated, highly distressed, manipulative or otherwise unsafe, the lone worker should, where possible:

- stay calm;
- avoid escalating the situation;
- maintain a safe distance;
- move towards an exit;
- end the conversation or visit;
- leave the situation;
- call for help if needed;
- report the incident promptly.

In an emergency, or where there is immediate danger, the police, ambulance or fire service should be contacted using 999.

Incidents involving aggression, threats, abuse, harassment, stalking, coercion, sexualised behaviour, safeguarding concerns, injury, near miss or criminal behaviour should be recorded and reported to the appropriate person.

11. Health, wellbeing and capacity

Lone working may not be suitable where a person's health, wellbeing, fatigue, stress, disability, injury, pregnancy, mental health, medication, lack of training or personal circumstances make the task unsafe.

Staff and volunteers should tell an appropriate person if they are concerned that lone working is unsafe for them.

St Peter's will seek to consider reasonable adjustments, changes of role, additional support, revised working arrangements or alternative methods where needed and practicable.

No one should be pressured to undertake lone working where they have reasonably raised concerns about safety, safeguarding, competence or capacity.

12. Accidents, incidents and reporting

Accidents, injuries, near misses, security concerns, safeguarding concerns, aggressive incidents, serious pastoral concerns, property damage, lost keys, data breaches or other significant events arising from lone working should be reported promptly.

Accidents, incidents and near misses must be recorded using the Accident, Incident & Near Miss form. If first aid has been administered, a record must also be written in the accident book.



Depending on the matter, the report may need to be made to:

- the responsible person or Ministry Area Leader;
- the Church Administrator;
- the Vicar;
- the churchwardens;
- the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Team;
- the PCC Standing Committee;
- the diocesan safeguarding team;
- emergency services;
- insurers or statutory authorities where required.

Records should be kept in accordance with St Peter's reporting, safeguarding, data protection, health and safety and retention arrangements.

13. Responsibilities

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that St Peter's has appropriate arrangements for lone working, health and safety, safeguarding and risk management.

The Vicar, churchwardens, Church Administrator, Ministry Area Leaders and others with oversight responsibilities should seek to ensure that lone working risks are considered in the activities they oversee.

Staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of St Peter's are responsible for following this policy, using reasonable judgement, and raising concerns where lone working arrangements are unclear or unsafe.

14. Related policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside, where applicable:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;

- Code of Conduct;
- Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Volunteer Agreement;
- Ministry Role Descriptions;
- Staff Handbook and employment policies;
- Pastoral care guidance, where applicable;
- Social Media Policy;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Privacy Notice;
- Risk Assessment Procedure;
- relevant risk assessments, including the Lone Worker Risk Assessment;
- accident and incident reporting arrangements;
- Fire Evacuation Plans;
- Manual Handling Policy;
- Food Hygiene Policy where relevant.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the PCC every three years, or sooner if required by changes in law, Church of England guidance, diocesan guidance, safeguarding requirements, health and safety requirements, parish practice or risk assessment.

The Lone Worker Risk Assessment and any relevant operational arrangements may be reviewed more frequently where needed.

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that this policy remains legally responsible, pastorally wise, practically useful, and consistent with St Peter's safeguarding, health and safety, risk management and ministry practice.

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St Peter's seeks to protect and support those who work, serve, volunteer or carry out duties alone.

Lone working can happen in the church office, church building, hall, churchyard, vicarage, people's homes, care settings, off-site meetings, travel, pastoral visits and practical tasks connected with church life.

Lone working should be avoided where it is unnecessary or unsuitable, assessed where it is foreseeable, and supported by appropriate communication where there is risk.

Those working alone should act within their role, follow relevant policies and risk assessments, take reasonable precautions, use check-in/check-out arrangements where appropriate, and leave or seek help if they feel unsafe.

Pastoral visits and one-to-one meetings require particular care. Where there is a known or foreseeable risk, visits should not normally be undertaken alone.

Safeguarding concerns must always be reported through safeguarding procedures. In an emergency, or where there is immediate danger, call 999.

Accidents, incidents, concerns, near misses or safeguarding issues arising from lone working should be reported promptly.