

St Mary the Virgin, Amersham with All Saints' Coleshill

Lone Working Policy 2025

Introduction

Clergy and others may find themselves working alone. The work of clergy and others in the Church community may carry additional risks such as visiting people in their own homes. It is important that these risks are fully understood, that sensible precautions are taken and arrangements made to ensure that they are as safe as possible.

People may be working alone in the Churches, the Parish Office or the Church Rooms. This may be for meetings, office tasks, cleaning, organ practice, flower arranging, and maintenance (e.g. changing bulbs and cleaning candles) or locking up. Similar precautions and arrangements must be taken by all those undertaking these tasks.

In addition, the Church as an institution often provides support for, and attracts, people who are very vulnerable and/or needy, and is very tolerant of behaviour that other parts of society might not be. The clergy and other members of the Church community may contact and interact with people who may be inclined to ignore boundaries.

Purpose

This policy is designed to alert all concerned, including the PCC, to the risks presented by working alone; to identify the responsibilities that each individual has in this situation; and to suggest procedures to minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give people a framework for managing potentially risky situations and to keep themselves safe.

Potential hazards of lone working

There are various situations where risks may be greater when working alone:

- Accidents or sudden illness when there is no one else available to summon help or give first aid;
- Violence or the perceived threat of violence, either physical or verbal;
- Allegations of inappropriate and / or abusive behaviour;
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone (for example, heavy lifting, working at heights, using specialised tools or equipment for the work being done);
- Fire or other hazard;
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building (including any risk of being locked in, accidentally or otherwise);
- Loss or damage to property (for example, theft of laptop from parked vehicle).
- Inadvertent development of an attention seeking relationship;

- Not consulting, informing or reporting concerns arising from lone working with members of the clergy team, or not doing so early enough.

Assessing the risks of lone working

The perception of what is a risk and the actual risk itself may be seen differently by individuals. Consideration should be given to the environment in which you are working, taking into account any previous problems that have arisen. Each person should consider the risk in the task that is to be carried out, and feel comfortable that they have taken all reasonable precautions for their personal safety: there are two documents available on the parish website to help you do this. If necessary, guidance should be sought from other members of the Church community.

Consider: what, why, who, when, where, how.

What is the nature of the contact?

1. Pastoral, supportive, mentoring?
2. Make the purpose of the meeting clear at the outset and the time available for the discussion

Why is one-to-one necessary?

1. Confidentiality should not be confused with secrecy or privacy.
2. It is possible to hold this confidential conversation in a public area, but where there is some privacy?

Who is involved?

1. Provider, Receiver, others with knowledge of arrangements

When will the contact take place?

1. The timing of contact and meeting is important to ensure actions are not misinterpreted. Whenever possible make prior arrangements to meet rather than meet 'on demand'

Where will the contact take place?

1. Can a public venue that affords privacy be used, or if a private venue is used there is a need to ensure it is not secretive?
2. N.B. Openness with others in awareness of the contact arrangements supports all involved. Deviation from this principle should be exception and justified by **compelling circumstances which must be recorded in a risk assessment.**

How else might the aim of this work be accomplished?

1. What alternatives, possibilities or choices exist? Why is none suitable?

If you don't feel safe, don't continue with the task or visit

1. **leave at once and seek advice** from the Parish safeguarding Officer or the Diocesan safeguarding team

Precautions and arrangements when carrying out lone working

- Carry out a formal Risk Assessment if the initial assessment (as above) suggests one is necessary; Risk assessment flow chart and form Appendix 1 and 1a.
- Make sure someone else knows where you are;
- Whenever possible have direct access to a landline or mobile telephone, with contact numbers to call in an emergency.
- Make sure the mobile phone has an adequate charge;

- If a telephone is not available, advise another person of the task that you are about to undertake and when you expect it to be finished. Confirm to them when it is completed;
- When working alone in the Churches, Church Rooms or Parish Office, you should consider the need to lock the doors, balancing this with the potential need for access by emergency services;
- Ensure that you have a safe and clear exit route in an emergency;
- Under no circumstances should people working alone in the Churches, Church Rooms or Parish Office work at heights using a stepladder;
- Under no circumstances should people work alone in the tower bell chamber;
- Clergy or others making visits to people's homes should assess the risks and if necessary, should be accompanied
- When visiting someone at home: try not enter a room first, sit so that there is as little obstruction as possible between you and the door, and avoid unnecessary or inappropriate touching;
- Concerns or incidents should be reported to one of the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Clare Samuels, as with usual safeguarding good practice.

Persistent attention seeking (Stalking)

Stalking is broadly defined as behaviour that is repeated, obsessive, and unwanted by the victim, causing the victim alarm or distress. It could be emailing, phoning, visits that are excessive or at odd times, sitting for hours outside the victim's house, or spreading rumours about the victim. Social media might well be used.

Stalking is illegal. Its effects are cumulative and it might be allowed to continue too long from mistaken motives of supporting the person involved. Evidence shows that the longer such behaviour goes on, the greater the harm created for both stalker and victim.

How can the law help?

If you are being stalked, you can complain to the police either at your local police station, or by calling the non-emergency number (101) and make an appointment. Write down what has happened to you and take that with you as well as any questions you have so that you don't forget anything you want to include. If you are ever in immediate danger phone the police on 999.

Evidence

It's important to try and gather evidence and document what is happening. Evidence can include phone records, copies of text messages and emails, screenshots of web pages or conversations, letters or gifts. It's also very helpful to keep a diary of all incidents connected to the stalking.

Advice

1. Do not engage with your stalker in any way
2. Talk to neighbours, colleagues or your manager about the harassment if you feel comfortable doing so. They may be able to help by collecting further evidence on your behalf or by putting protective measures in place
3. If the stalking has taken place in or through a Church context, advise a member of the clergy team
4. Be aware of how much of your personal information is in the public domain and take steps to protect your data

5. Complete the Stalking Risk Checklist at www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/FAQs, and take it with you if you go to the police
6. **Above everything, trust your instincts.** (Source: National Stalking Helpline)

Sources of support and guidance:

The National Stalking Helpline is run by Suzy Lamplugh Trust: 0808 802 0300
Network for Surviving Stalking: www.scaredofsomeone.org
Protection Against Stalking www.protectionagainststalking.org
Paladin (assists high risk victims) paladinservice.co.uk; 020 3866 4107
Action Against Stalking www.actionagainststalking.org

Parish Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Clare Samuels	07966 425206	clarenoinclare.co.uk
Melissa Jackson	07388026976	mgiddings@rocketmail.com

Training

Training and advice will be given as necessary, including how to undertake a Risk Assessment.

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