



# St Peter's Church, Henleaze

## Lone Worker Policy

### *Introduction*

There will be times when people find themselves working alone – either in church, the hall, or out and about, for example, visiting as a member of the pastoral team. There are some risks attached to lone working 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 a number of 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 laptop from 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. Consideration should be given in particular to:

- The workplace environment – does it present any special risk to a lone worker?
- The need to familiarise oneself with the Health & Safety policies and procedures of the work setting in which the individual is working/visiting
- Equipment, substances and goods used by the lone worker - 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?

### *Measures to minimise the risks of lone working*

There are a number of things that can be done to minimise risks to those working alone. The following paragraphs highlight actions lone workers can take to improve the working environment, and practices and procedures.

### *General*

If you are working alone you should:

- Be aware that it is acceptable to rely on your senses/professional judgement if you have a feeling something is wrong. Do not commence the task, but report back to your group

coordinator to seek clarification or advice. (i.e. don't ignore gut instinct; if it feels wrong - back off)

- Have an arrangement with someone whereby they know what your plans are for the day
- Tell people how you may be contacted and/or when you plan to make contact. 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 you welfare
- Ensure that transport is in good working order
- Be satisfied that equipment is well maintained and fit for use
- 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. A mobile phone should never be relied on as the only means of communication however as signal strength may be poor in some areas.
- Avoid putting yourself at risk by being alone with a child or vulnerable adult, for example when clearing up after an activity.

### *Accidents and Emergencies*

Familiarise yourself with the safety guidances for the **church** and the **hall**

### *Personal Security*

Whilst working alone there are a number of things you can do to minimise risks to personal security:

- Ensure that all windows and doors are secured to prevent unauthorised access
- Let a colleague, friend or relative know your whereabouts and the time that you are expected back. If you change your plans let your contact know immediately.
- If you plan to meet anyone you don't know make sure your contact knows of this and at what time when you plan to meet them.
- Do not open the doors to any strangers.
- Park as close to the building as possible in a well lit area.

### *Making a Visit*

The level of risk posed by home visits 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, or a potential for accident (e.g. restricted access due to cluttering) 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 your group coordinator

### ***In Conclusion***

Establishing safe working practices for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other volunteers, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. Group coordinators must ensure that they have not only introduced measures to reduce any risk but must also ensure that they have communicated their expectations to lone workers and trained them appropriately. All workers, including those working alone, are responsible for following safe systems of work and everyone can take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with their normal working life.