



## Lone Working Guidance

### ***'How I make what I do safer.'***

#### **Introduction**

*(This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Diocese of Rochester Practice Guidance for Church Workers and Volunteers with regard to Lone Working - <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/guidance-for-church-workers-and-volunteers-with-regard-to-lone-working-.docx> and the Ecclesiastical.com guidance <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf>)*

In writing this guidance the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in consultation with others have considered The House of Bishops Safeguarding Policies & Guidance. Guideline for the professional conduct of the clergy and the Bishops Guidelines (Rochester Diocese) . This guidance applies to **all church officers (Anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid)** Failure to follow Diocesan guidance that is derived from Church of England Policy and Practice Guidance may result in your insurance becoming void.

It is acknowledged that there will be occasions where church officers will be working alone. Lone working may include formal mentoring as well as offering ongoing support and advice in a pastoral sense. The purpose of this guidance is to reduce the risk to both the church officer and those they meet when working alone in regard to safeguarding and Health and Safety good practice.

This guidance focuses on guidance for those working with children and young persons (under 18s), adults who are at risk of abuse and those that may pose a risk to the church officer.

#### **Background**

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for some clergy, staff and volunteers. Home working, working alone in a building, work travel and working at remote locations, such as home visits, all constitute lone working.

“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labour. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

The House of Bishops Policy Statement Promoting a Safer Church sets out the expectations of how we should operate –

*All Church Officers will respect all children, young persons and vulnerable adults and promote their well-being. The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young persons, and vulnerable adults. It will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments. This will be done by training, support, communication, learning, governance, and quality assurance processes. The Church will strive to support all Church Officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power. It will ensure that processes are in place that listen to and advocate on behalf of children, young persons and vulnerable adults within the knowledge that they will be cared for.*

#### Guidance

It is House of Bishops and Diocesan guidance that **no-one** will plan to undertake lone working with a child, young person, vulnerable adult, or person with mental ill health, especially where the adult is known for violent or abusive or challenging behaviour.

When working with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult, one to one working is not permitted and should not be routine and any contact of this kind would need the specific permission of the PCC/Incumbent. The Safer Environment and Activities Practice guidance and its accompanying Code of Practice sets out ratios for working with children and young persons and states *Those working with children and young persons must always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.*

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/18856>

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19_0.pdf)

#### **Activity Approval & Pre-Planned Risk Assessment**

It is the responsibility of the PCC, Incumbent and churchwarden to approve any church run activity and to ensure that a risk assessment is completed. All reasonable steps must be taken to minimise, and where possible eliminate, any identified risk. Before any work is undertaken by a church officer the risk assessment should be completed to highlight any potential risks involved with the activity. Other church officers involved in the activity should be made aware of the risk assessment and what action they should take to eliminate and/or avoid any risk.

#### **Dynamic Risk**

A dynamic risk assessment involves assessing risk in developing and changing situations. You might not always be able to know the exact level of risk ahead of time. With a dynamic risk assessment, you can continually assess to allow for unknown risks and handling uncertainty. Dynamic risk assessments are a special type of risk assessment. This allows church officers to quickly identify new risks and remove them.

Examples of when a Dynamic risk assessment should be carried out by church officers.

- When entering people's homes or new locations; for example, when conducting home visits. A dynamic risk assessment may include a consideration of the property, whether it is safe to

enter, whether the people they are with are potentially aggressive, and whether there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect themselves in the event of an incident.

- Good practice is to have two church officers locking up premises at the end of a group so no one church officer is left on their own. The process has been followed and the two church officers have locked up after a youth group. One officer has just driven out of the carpark and the other church officer is getting in their car when a young person who attends the group returns alone and approaches them to talk. The church officer should walk with the young person to an area where they can be seen by others, for example most buildings used may have security camera's so walking to an area that can be viewed on CCTV is advised. Contact another church officer as soon as possible and report the situation, if contacting the other church officer leading the group, ask them to return to the location. If no other officer can attend to support end the lone contact explaining the reasons why and then record and report the situation to a line manager as soon as possible.

Parish Safeguarding Handbook – Model Activity Risk Assessment Template:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/3.%20Model%20Activity%20Risk%20Assessment%20Template.docx>

### **Consent**

It is essential that before any activity on behalf of the church commences, consent is sought from the individual and if working with a child or young person that consent is sought from the parent/carer and the young person themselves. If any lone work; including private music lessons is undertaken with a child or young person permission **must** be sought from the incumbent/church warden. If the incumbent is lone working with a child or young person, then permission needs to be given by the Archdeacon.

### **Recording Information**

Should a person find themselves lone working due to unforeseen circumstances. If the contact is significant the person should complete a detailed record. These should be concise, factual, and include the circumstances why the lone working took place and an account of what happened. There must be an agreed reporting mechanism for any risks or dangers and timely action taken to address them.

An example of this would be an unplanned meeting, encounter in the street or after service that leads to a disclosure or advice being given.

If the encounter does not involve more than exchanging pleasantries, then it would be good practice to note this in a diary.

### **Confidentiality**

A level of confidentiality is necessary when individuals share personal information, they will need to know that the church officer is not going to share that information with others in the church – particularly as the church officer may be friends of another family member. Church officers must understand that if they believe that a person they are talking to, or another person is at risk of harm then they have a responsibility to pass that information on.

Church officers need to have adequate knowledge of where to refer on, if necessary. It is their responsibility to know what to do with the information given to them and when to involve other agencies. For further advice contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

## **Boundaries**

Church officers need to maintain a healthy self-awareness when working on their own and recognise when a person is showing signs of a risky dependence on their professional communication.

## **Supervision & Support**

Supervision and support must take place between the church officer and their line manager as it will allow the line manager to monitor the frequency of appointments as well as the content of meetings, ensuring that a person is not becoming too dependent on the church officer.

## **Home Visits & Lone Working**

Home visits can be potentially risky situations and church officers need to record details of each visit they make.

If anyone is known to be violent or abusive do not meet with them alone or in private. Ensure that you meet in a public place or in the Church with other people around.

All incidents should be reported to the line manager. In addition, safeguarding matters should be reported to the PSO as soon as possible via a phone call and a written report of any incident occurring.

If you are on a home visit where there is a parent/carer present and the adult wants to leave the room, explain to them that it goes against Diocesan guidance for church officers to lone work with a child/young person. Offer to arrange another meeting with the child/young person when you can have a colleague with you. Make a written record of the meeting, why it was stopped, and report it to your line manager as soon as possible.

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

There are a number of things which can be done to minimise risks when working alone. Reducing the risks is the best form of protection. Consider the following:

- Know as much about as possible about any potentially risky situation.
- Avoid, as far as possible, situations with significant risk of vulnerability.
- Consider beforehand a strategy for a swift exit if a situation changes.
- Consider who else might be available to be working in church (also applies at one's home) if a one-to-one meeting is requested.
- Be familiar with strategies for dealing with difficult situations.
- Be aware of effective communication skills.
- Ensure you have a mobile phone with you.
- Let someone else know where you are going and when you will be back.
- Explore a simple system for reporting safe return e.g. short text or phone call.
- Ensure that someone else has a record of car and mobile phone details.
- Park safely and as close to the destination as possible.

## **Lone Working specifically with a child or young person vulnerable adult**

If a church officer conducts one to one work **with** the permission of the incumbent/church warden. Church officers should avoid situations where they are on their own with a child or young person and ensure that they find an appropriate place to meet.

A quieter area or in a room where a door can be left open, or if there is glass where they can be viewed, and the second adult remains within close proximity but allowing for confidentiality. Under no circumstances should a youth worker invite a child or young person to their home alone nor go to the child or young person's home if they are there alone.

Meeting in public places including coffee shops is not ideal, as they must ensure they can be seen and avoid isolated places. This in turn reduces the confidentiality and may risk their conversation being overheard.

These scenarios require a separate bespoke risk assessment.

### **Unplanned Occasions when a worker is alone with Child, Young Persons, and/or Vulnerable Adults**

There may be occasion where despite careful planning, a church officer finds themselves in a situation where they are in sole charge of a child/young person or vulnerable adult in the context of a church activity. In this situation the church officer should:

- Move immediately to an area of the building that is covered by CCTV
- Assess the risks involved in sending the child/young person/vulnerable adult home against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them.
- Wherever possible, immediately phone another appropriate person to report the situation. Church Officers should know who to call in such a situation. It could be the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
- The Church Officer must make a written report of the situation immediately afterwards and inform their line manager and provide a copy to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

### **Insurance**

In the event of lone working with a child, young person or vulnerable adult is sanctioned by the PCC/Churchwarden/Incumbent then it is advisable that a check is made with the insurers that the activity is covered

### **Online Lone Working**

This guidance applies the same to online activities as it would with face-to-face activities.

<https://www.rochester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/online-communication-with-young-people.pdf>

**The links below will provide more detailed information that should be read in conjunction with this guidance:**

Parish Safeguarding Handbook:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

Safer Environment and Activities:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19_0.pdf)

Diocese Safeguarding website:

<https://www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding>

### Frequently asked questions ?

- **“If I receive an urgent email/text/phone call from a young person that I am mentoring, requesting that we meet because they are in crisis, is it okay for me to arrange to meet them alone?”**

*To put it simply NO, it is not acceptable to meet with the young person alone. Good practice is to arrange for another church officer to meet with you and the young person. If the situation is such that you think the young person is in danger you will need to call the police or ambulance , record all information and pass on to your PSO/Incumbent/DSA*

- **“I am working with a quite a needy young person/vulnerable adult who contacts me very regularly outside of arranged activities and they have told me they only feel comfortable talking to me, should I be concerned?”**

*Yes, you should be recording any contact with this young person/vulnerable adult and notifying your line manager of any concerns. The young person/vulnerable adult should be reminded that contact must only be made through approved activity which would require two church officers to be present unless specific permission has been given from the incumbent/church warden for lone working. Encouraging continued unmonitored contact with young persons/vulnerable adults outside of approved activities is unhealthy practice.*

- **“If I am mentoring a young person and they make a visit to my address that we had not arranged, is it okay for me to let them come in as I have other family members at home?”**

*No, it would not be appropriate to let them come into your home and talk, even if you have another adult family member present. All youth meetings should be agreed by the PCC, risk assessed and arranged with young persons as professional appointments. If unarranged meetings are allowed/encouraged, it may confuse the young person as to what is deemed appropriate contact and allow professional boundaries to become blurred.*

- **“During a youth group a parent calls and says that they are stuck in traffic and that they won’t be home in time to collect their child or young person. It’s pouring hard with rain and they have given me permission to drop their child/young person home after the group. Is this okay?”**

*No, it would not be appropriate to take this child/young person home on your own. You should ask the parent to make alternative collection arrangements if they can. If this is not possible and there is risk in letting the child/young person walk home you must be able to arrange for another church officer to come with you, but this should not be made to be common practice. The child/young person must be asked to sit in the back of the car and the incumbent/line manager informed as soon as possible.*