

Lone working

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy and church workers including youth workers, children's workers and parish visitors. Home working, working alone in an office, work travel and working at remote locations, such as home visits, could all constitute lone working. The aim of this policy is to help everyone think how to undertake lone working safely.

Advice specifically for parochial clergy working from home is given in the Clergy Handbook and there is more detail from National Churchwatch at: <http://www.nationalchurchwatch.com/>.

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral care should be properly planned, its risks considered and recorded effectively (see *Recording Pastoral Encounters*). It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection are to be avoided.

Planning lone working: considerations for risk assessment

- Is lone working necessary? Confidentiality can be assured with other people within reach.
- If there are casual callers take precautions before opening the door; see the guidance from National Churchwatch above.
- Who will be involved? And who else should know about it?
- When and where will it take place? Avoid making arrangements that could be misinterpreted.
- Is there a risk of violence? A good working definition of violence is: *Any behaviour that produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or mentally, on people.*
- Are there any increased risks to the particular worker?
- Are there any known medical or other factors that could make either party more vulnerable? Some medical conditions can lead to dis-inhibition.

Control measures

- The proposed lone working should be planned in advance and noted in an appropriate diary or other record. Where possible it should be notified to an appropriate person. (This is not necessary when work is done at home and does not involve face-to-face contact with other people.)
- Some of the people the lone worker is at risk of meeting are those who, through medical reasons or substance abuse, are liable to mood swings leading to physical violence. It is recommended good practice to encourage the person you are meeting to enter a room first and for the lone worker to seat themselves closest to the door. Should the situation lead to risk of violence, the lone worker then has a higher chance of withdrawing safely.
- The lone worker must have access to a landline phone or carry a mobile phone and be accustomed to use it.
- Supervisors of parish visitors should occasionally visit, accompany or observe lone workers.
- Automatic warning devices can be obtained for use in risky places or activities.
- It may be appropriate for lone workers to be asked to check in once they have completed their task or have safely reached their home following it.

Assessing Risks

The law states that when an organisation employs more than five people, a simple risk assessment should be recorded and control measures identified for their work. Thus parishes or benefices running pastoral visiting schemes working regularly with five or more employees or volunteers working alone should undertake such an assessment. Training should be given. There is a model *Risk Assessment Form* in the Forms pack on the safeguarding pages on the website but it is not obligatory to use this format.

Some of this guidance has been adapted from material issued by Ecclesiastical Insurance and the Health and Safety Executive