

ST BRANDON'S, BRANCEPETH



LONE WORKING POLICY

Last updated: February 2023. Approved by PCC: March 2023

Lone working cannot always be avoided and working alone is an essential practice for many in our church, either within the church building or during home visits. This policy recognises the risks and tries to minimise them by common sense and appropriate measures.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that all church members are aware of the specific risks in working alone and set out the respective responsibilities of the PCC and each individual to minimise such risks. The PCC commits to carrying out its responsibilities in a thorough and disciplined way.

Who does this affect?

- The priest-in-charge and other clergy
- The cleaners - professional and voluntary
- Volunteers who come into church as sacristans, flower arrangers, cleaners, or to prepare the church for special services and events
- Those locking and unlocking the church
- Those doing maintenance in the church and churchyard
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank
- Someone doing a lone home pastoral visit
- The priest-in charge working at home

The Risks

This list is not exhaustive but identifies some of the risks faced.

- Physical accident (from injury as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help if necessary)
- Sudden illness, again when there is no one to raise the alarm
- Physical threat of abuse in any form from a visitor
- Sexual behaviour or advances from a visitor deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff/volunteers when there are no witnesses
- Contraction of a virus from contaminated physical surfaces or from visitors

Responsibilities

The PCC/churchwardens should show that 'reasonably foreseeable risks' have been identified and updated regularly with appropriate action taken to minimise them. This includes wipe-down and other precautions to prevent the spread of a virus.

They should ensure that the accident book is in place and properly monitored.

Individuals (staff and volunteers) also need to ensure that they do not put themselves in unnecessary danger. If possible carry out tasks and visits in pairs. Do not agree to meet anyone in an isolated place. Always carry a fully charged mobile phone with loaded appropriate numbers to contact in case of an emergency.

Be alert to possible dangers and minimise them - for example, by keeping lights on until a building is completely vacated; using safeguards on power tools and not using them when in the building alone; complying with precautions to prevent the spread of a virus. Inform the wardens or incumbent immediately of any suspicious behaviour noted or any threats made to them.

Advice

If there is no other option than working alone, then volunteers and staff should be alert to the possible dangers and try to minimise them by:

1. Telling someone where you are working (or visiting someone in their home) and when you expect to return home. Ask them to check you have returned home as expected and to raise the alarm if they cannot contact you.
2. Always carry a charged mobile phone. When working in church, check that you have an adequate mobile phone signal. If not, ensure you know how to access the vestry where there is a landline telephone. (Note that this telephone does not receive incoming calls).
3. Comply with precautions to prevent the spread of a virus.
4. If working alone in church after dark and it is appropriate, lock the doors.
5. When working in church make yourself aware of the three exits points from the church building i.e. via the North and South Porch and the vestry. Also, make yourself aware of where the first aid kit is located in the kitchen.
6. Report any defects to the building i.e. trip hazards etc. to the churchwardens.
7. Report any incidents to the churchwardens.
8. Do not work at heights when alone; do not use power tools when alone and use safety guards on power tools.
9. Choose different routes to the bank when taking cash.
10. Inform the churchwardens immediately of any suspicious behaviour noted or any threats made.