

## **DIOCESE OF CHESTER**

### **Guidelines on Lone Working and Personal Safety for Lay Workers**

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#### **Introduction**

Lay Workers may find themselves working alone in the course of carrying out their duties – this may be less if there is a parish office out of which they work, or more if they operate entirely from home.

Lay Workers working alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, this work may carry additional risks and it is important that these are fully understood and that sensible precautions and adequate arrangements are made to ensure they are as safe as possible.

These guidelines seek to provide information on how lay workers can protect themselves from allegations. Avoiding lone working where possible will protect lay workers as well as protecting others.

#### **Potential hazards of lone working**

There are a number of areas where risks may be greater when working alone:

- Accidents or sudden illness when there is no-one to summon help or first aid.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Allegations of inappropriate and/or abusive behaviour.
- 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**

The perception of what is a risk and the actual risk itself may be seen differently by individuals. For example, an inexperienced person may underestimate the risks of an activity; some lay workers especially those in urban parishes may feel particularly vulnerable to violence after dark; or a medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.

Equally, consideration should be given to the safety of others when lone working, for example, the risk to the person to whom the lay minister is ministering.

Lay ministers should consider these factors and assess the particular risks in their parish environment. Appropriate steps should be taken to reduce the risk, particularly where the environment around the church plant is lonely, poorly lit and / or in an area where criminal activity is more likely.

Consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate to visit alone. It is best practice to reduce lone working as much as is possible. It is recommended that lay ministers always visit in pairs for the protection of the lay minister and for the protection, or perceived protection of the person they are visiting.

Further information can be found in the Church of England Code of Safer Working Practice:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/code-of-safer-working-practice-02.07.2021.pdf>

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

There are a number of things which can be done to minimise risks when working alone.

The most important precautions you can take are:

- Know as much about as possible about any potentially risky situation  
Consider whether you need to go alone
- Ensure you have a mobile phone with you with plenty of charge
- Do not put yourself into a situation where you are very vulnerable
- Let someone else know where you are if you feel you must go into that situation alone.

The Church of England National Safeguarding Team has produced a useful document: “Safer Environment and Activities”. It includes advice about making visits safely.

The document can be accessed via the link:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf)

## **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment should be conducted for each situation to ensure that the individuals are not being put at undue risk. This would include the potential risk or concern to a visitor as well as the person being visited.

A Risk Assessment template can be found on the diocesan website:

Church House menu: HR, Policies and Procedures

[Chester Diocese | HR | Policies and Procedures](#)

Under the heading Lone working and personal safety, document called ‘Lone Working Risk Assessment’

[Lone Working Risk Assessment \(4Rs Framework\)](#)

Templates for personal risk assessments and risk assessments for home visits can be accessed from the Church of England website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/policy-practice-guidance/templates-and-resources>

## **Reporting incidents**

Please report any incidents that happen to you, so that you can be supported and so that we can learn any lessons and improve practice in this difficult area. If you have any concerns, please talk to your Minister.

## **In Conclusion**

Establishing safe working practices for lone working is similar to organising other safe systems, but the risk assessment should take account of any extra risk factors, and then implement the safest ways of working.

**Further details on Personal Safety can be obtained from:**

Suzy Lamplugh Trust <http://www.suzylamplugh.org>

National Churchwatch <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support/support-organisations/national-churchwatch>

Local Police Force websites:

Cheshire police: <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/>

Merseyside police <https://www.merseyside.police.uk/>

Greater Manchester police <https://www.gmp.police.uk/>