

Guidelines for Lone Working and Personal Safety – Conducting Visits

Date policy began	Jan 2026
Author	EA Geddes
Relevant to	Church House Staff ✓ Clergy ✓ Parishes ✓
Version number	Version 1
Date of last change	January 2026
Next review date	April 2027
Approved by	Central Services Committee Jan 2026

Introduction

Employees may find themselves visiting parishes, clergy and others as part of their tasks during their working day.

It is important that the risks associated with making such visits alone are understood and that sensible precautions and adequate arrangements are made to ensure the staff are as safe as possible.

Visiting

When undertaking visits to clergy, church members and others in their homes or others venues, care must always be taken to protect the visitor and those who they are visiting. There should always be accountability and transparency in the manner in which such visits are conducted.

Risks

Other than the general risks of lone working, additional risks when making visits may include the following. This list is not exhaustive but identifies some of the risks faced.

- Physical accident, particularly when driving

- Sudden illness when there is no one to raise the alarm
- Physical violence or threat of abuse in any form
- Sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses

Good practice when making visits

- Avoid, as far as possible, situations with significant risk of vulnerability.
- Make an appointment in advance so people you are visiting know in advance that you are going to visit, particularly if it is your first visit.
- When making a first visit, or if the conversation is likely to move onto sensitive pastoral matters, ensure that the person is aware that the conversation is confidential, but also what the boundaries of confidentiality are.
- If possible, visit in pairs - again, especially if it is the first visit. However, it is recognised that many work duties involve visiting parishes or church officers, and will need to be conducted alone. This guidance does not place a restriction on that, as long as the other aspects of safer working practice in the policy and this guidance are followed. When there is significant uncertainty, and perhaps particularly when meeting someone you don't know, make visits with another person.
- Consider using public places for meetings, particularly when meeting people for the first time.
- Park safely and as close to the destination as possible.
- If you do not know the person you are visiting, carry some identification on the first visit and be proactive in letting the person see it.
- Consider the risks of the visit. Is the person, or another occupant, volatile or unpredictable? Do they have a dog who does not like visitors? You may not know everything before a first visit but try and find out what you can.
- Carry a mobile phone that is charged and let someone know where you are and when you expect to return. This may be a work colleague.
- Make it obvious where you are working. Use the Outlook calendar to say where you will be, in a way that is sufficiently detailed to identify a precise location.
- Give realistic estimates of how long you expect to be there, again using the Outlook calendar
- Where appropriate, make a note of the visit; store all such notes in accordance with data protection requirements. The note does not need to be extensive, but the date, time of arrival and departure, and any significant observations or points of conversation should be recorded.
- Know as much as possible about any potentially risky situation in advance.

- Ensure you have a means of communicating with others.
- Do not get into a situation where you feel vulnerable;
- Inform another person as to the details of the lone situation, by having a “Buddy” who is aware of the situation and will call to check for safety. A predetermined code word between staff member and Buddy should be agreed in case the need to summon help arises.
- If you are at all unsure about the risk associated with the visit, for example if you are visiting someone for the first time, or are in an isolated location, make sure a colleague is aware of the visit and let them know when you have finished it.
- Inform your line manager and/or the Safeguarding Team if you encounter behaviour that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Risk Assessment

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 \(4Rs Framework\)](#)

A Risk Assessment template specifically for making visits can be found on the diocesan website (see above)

Under the heading Lone working and personal safety, document called ‘Model Risk Assessment for Home Visiting’

[Model Risk Assessment for Home Visiting](#)

Reporting Incidents

Incidents should be reported to the Line Manager so that the staff member can be supported as well as learning lessons and improving practice.

Further information

Establishing safe working practices for conducting visits should take into account the risk factors and then implement the safest ways of working.

Further information can be found on the Church of England website:

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf

Further details on Personal Safety can be obtained from:

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

National Churchwatch <http://nationalchurchwatch.com/>

Local Police Force website <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/>