



Solihull Parish Policy for Loneworking

Purpose

Solihull Parish recognises that church officers**, during the course of their work, may find themselves working alone, and wishes to ensure that they, and the individuals they come into contact with, are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

These guidelines apply:

- when working alone at the church or any associated buildings,
- when making home visits,
- when attending other meetings/activities away from the church,
- when receiving people in your own home, related to your role.

The Rector or Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) will assess any foreseeable risks of any role that requires a church officer to work alone on a regular basis. Training can be provided to help minimise risks to church officers, and all church officers working alone must be familiar with strategies for dealing with difficult situations and de-escalating volatile encounters. A list of contact details, including next of kin, will be kept of all church officers – this will include car details for those carrying out home visits.

Church officers must take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others and not intentionally or recklessly interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interest of health, safety or welfare. They must observe all health and safety rules and procedures at all times and report any unsafe conditions or practice.

The Risks of Lone Working

Risks that Solihull Parish will assess for each role or individual may include:

- physical accident (from injury, fire, etc. such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help or offer first aid if necessary)
- sudden illness, again when there is no one to raise the alarm

- violence or threat of abuse, in any form
- accusations or allegations of inappropriate behaviour when there are no witnesses
- stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive phone calls or digital media
- attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone (e.g. heavy lifting or use of certain equipment)
- lack of a safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)
- travelling – particularly in bad weather

Lone Working on Church Premises (including a vicarage, church halls or at home)

- Church officers must have the means (*e.g. alarm button, landline phone, charged mobile phone*) to summon help if anything happens that they do not feel able to deal with alone
- Church officers who need to work alone in the building must have easy access to contact details for those they should inform if they feel unsafe or threatened
- Church officers should know how to raise the alarm, who to inform and how to record, if they have an accident, or fall ill
- If a one-to-one meeting is requested, consider who else might be available to work in the building at the same time
- If a church officer is meeting someone in an office/meeting room/church/home the seating arrangements should allow them to exit the room leaving the person behind
- Where possible, a third party should be aware that a church officer is working alone in the building, in order to raise the alarm, if they do not return home safely
- If a church officer is the only or last person in the building or responsible for locking up they should ensure that:
 - a) All windows and doors that could give visitors access to the premises are secured to prevent unauthorised access so that the working environment is as safe as possible
 - b) Doors are only opened to allow entry to expected visitors or other church officers after they have been positively identified
 - c) Keys should be kept secure and inaccessible to visitors
 - d) Windows are closed and doors locked and relevant alarms set, before leaving the premises
 - e) If a church officer suspects there is an intruder they should:

- f) Carry out a visual check of the building and, if they feel it is safe to do so, carry out an internal inspection, so far as they can. They should not put themselves at any unnecessary risk and should only inspect the building externally, if that is the safer option.
- g) If an intruder(s) is suspected call the police and inform the Rector or a Parish Warden or Deputy Warden. If there has been an intruder, the Parish Health & Safety Officer should be informed.
- h) Leave the building and secure the door so the suspected intruder is locked in and wait for back up to arrive. Do not re-enter the building alone.

Visiting Alone

(Please note that best practice is to visit in pairs (non-related individuals) where possible, with one visitor being the same gender as the person being visited)

Before the visit

- Gather as much relevant information as possible about the person being visited and use this to assess the risks of the visit and any measures that might need to be taken to reduce these:
 - a) What is known about the individual's current circumstances?
 - b) Have they experienced some recent trauma that might increase the risk of assault? (Bereavement, separation from a partner, prosecution, removal of children etc).
 - c) Have other church officers, or other agencies, had recent contact that could provide insight into the individual's current temperament?
 - d) Are there drug or alcohol issues?
 - e) Are other people going to be present – who and how are they related?
- Ensure an agreed person knows where you are going and when you expect to return
- If you're part of a team, keep a team diary, (online if possible), recording when, where and who you are visiting, that all members of the team have access to
- Ensure you have a charged mobile phone with you
- Where appropriate, carry a torch and/or personal attack alarm
- Pre-arrange visits – avoid unannounced visits whenever possible
- Be clear about why you are visiting and the limit of your 'helping' relationship
- Carry identification with you that shows you are representing the Church
- Read and be aware of the Lone Visiting Checklist at the end of these guidelines

Before entering the premises

- Always try and park in a well-lit area, facing the way you need to leave
- Carry with you the minimum required for the purpose of the visit

- Listen and observe and try and evaluate what is happening within. If you are uncertain, it is better to leave than to put yourself at risk
- Before entering the premises consider the presentation, disposition and demeanour of the occupant
- Be aware of any dogs on the premises and ask the owner to put the dog in another room if you feel uncomfortable
- Always follow the person into the premises – do not walk in front of them
- Upon entering the room consider where the visit is to be conducted and try and position yourself in easy reach of a clear exit, unimpaired by furniture or a closed door

During the visit

- Keep your mobile phone on during the visit so that you can use it quickly in an emergency
- Never give or accept money or gifts of any kind from the person being visited. If they wish to donate to the church it should be done in an official way agreed by your treasurer and the PSO.
- If you feel uncomfortable or threatened at any time, leave as soon as possible, or make an emergency alert call, in accordance with a pre-agreed procedure. e.g. The church officer under threat contacts an agreed person and says *"I'm running late, can you let Mr. Smith know!"* The person who receives this call should immediately notify the police, providing them with all relevant details of the church officer's location and circumstances and then contact the PSO who should liaise with police and, if safe to do so, undertake a visit to the known location

After the visit

- Contact your agreed person to let them know you have arrived home safely
- Pass on any safeguarding concerns to your PSO
- Where appropriate, share information about the visit with other members of your team so that lessons can be learned and practice improved
- Keep a record of visits – date, time, people present, any concerns

Emergency Contact

- If you feel threatened dial 999 and give the address of the premises. Inform the PSO as soon as possible.

Further information on personal safety is available from:

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

Model Lone Working Risk Assessment checklist

Name of adult to be visited:

Address of adult to be visited:

1. Does the adult have a history of violence, or threatening behaviour? *Yes / No / Not known*

If yes, please detail below

2. Is the adult a risk to themselves? *Yes / No / Not known*

3. Does anyone living in the house have a history of violence or threatening behaviour? *Yes / No / Not Known*

If yes, please detail below

4. Does anyone who visits the adult have a history of violence or threatening behaviour? *Yes / No / Not Known*

If yes, please detail below

5. Does the adult have any vulnerabilities that would make it inappropriate for him/ her to be visited alone (e.g. by a single male or female?) *Yes / No / Not Known*

6. Does the adult have any health problems that may cause unpredictable behaviour? *Yes / No / Not Known*

If yes, please detail below

7. Are there any health risks associated with visiting the adult at home? *Yes / No / Not Known*

(Examples might be infestation, smoking, intravenous drug use, infectious diseases, dangerous pets?)

If yes, please detail below

**** Church officers are lay or ordained people, appointed or elected to serve within a church in a paid or voluntary capacity.**

**If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone
please contact:**

Pam Price 07913 260868, the Rector or any member of clergy.

Parish of Solihull agreed by the Parish Church Council on 17.03.2026