

Lone Working Policy Tonbridge Parish Church

1. Guidelines for working.

Tonbridge Parish Church is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers are not exposed to unnecessary risk if working alone.

These guidelines apply when;

- working alone at the church building either out of earshot or sight of another colleague or outside of normal working hours.
- when making home visits to church members or members of the public,
- attending other meetings/activities away from the church or working from home when related to a role being carried out on behalf of Tonbridge Parish Church.

These guidelines have been drawn up to minimise the risk to staff and volunteers should issues arise from accidents or incident when working alone or with others. This risk could include either allegations being made towards you or having to deal with unwelcome or unacceptable behaviour.

These guidelines are a part of a bounded approach to church life in which expectations of our actions and behaviour are made clear, they are designed to promote the safety of all parties.

2. Definitions

Children

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as someone who is under the age of 18 years old.

Vulnerable Adult

The Church of England defines a vulnerable adult as a person over 18 whose ability to protect him/herself from violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation or is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or old age, emotional fragility or distress or otherwise and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to be temporarily or permanently impaired.

Adult at risk

The Care Act 2014 applies safeguarding duties to “adults at risk”. An ‘adult at risk’ is defined as a person who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect, or the risk of it.

3. Lone working in a church building.

While on many occasions there will be more than one person in the church building there are times where you may find yourself alone, particularly when opening or locking up.

When working alone you should ensure that:

- No work is carried out that could be considered dangerous. If there is any risk involved, another person must be present with you.
- You have informed someone where you are working and booked into the church diary via the Church Office where possible.
- Church keys are kept secure and not accessible to visitors.
- You carry a charged mobile phone with you so you can call for help if needed.
- You have numbers of contacts available to call for support if anything happens that you do not feel able to deal with on your own. Including a list of emergency numbers, also located on the notice boards in each church.
- You are aware of the location of the First Aid box.
- If you are meeting someone in an office/meeting room, the seating arrangements should allow you to exit the room without needing to step past the person you are meeting.
- If you are not meeting someone or providing a space for people to visit the church, and it is appropriate to do so, secure the entrance points and don't admit someone to the church whom you do not know, or who was not expected.

If you are the last person in the building or responsible for locking up you should ensure that:

- All windows and doors are secured to prevent unauthorised access so that the working environment is as safe as possible.
- Doors are only opened to allow entry to expected visitors, staff or volunteer colleagues after they have been positively identified.
- On leaving the church premises, ensure windows are closed, doors locked and any relevant alarms are set.

If you suspect there is an intruder:

- Do not put yourself at any unnecessary risk. If an intruder(s) is suspected call the police and then also call for support from one of the people listed in this policy.
- Leave the building and secure the door behind you and wait for support to arrive in a safe place. Do not re-enter the building alone.

4. Visiting people and places known to you

If working alone away from the church premises you should consider if your visit might present a risk to you.

Most situations involving working away from the church building, including home visits, are likely to be 'low risk'.

However, this is not exclusively the case.

In all cases it is good practice to tell someone before you go out on a visit.

You should always aim to do the following:

- Let a family member, friend, neighbour or colleague from the Church know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Make a note in your diary of who and where you are visiting and the anticipated length of the visit.
- Keep a record of the nature and location of the meeting or activity.
- Take a charged mobile phone with you.
- If your plan changes contact a staff or volunteer colleague or family member to let them know what is happening and that you are safe.

5. Visiting people and places that are not known to you or may present a risk.

If you have any concerns for your safety, it is advisable to get a colleague or another volunteer from the Church to come with you. Where possible meet in the church building when another member of staff or volunteer is present. Do not take unnecessary risks

As well as the points above you should also:

- Keep mobile phone switched on throughout so that you can use it quickly in an emergency.
- Familiarise yourself with the quickest means of exit should you need to leave.
- Sit in such a way that you can exit the room without needing to step past the person you are meeting.

6. Lone working with children, young people or adults at risk

It is House of Bishops and Diocesan guidance that **no-one** will plan to undertake lone working with a child, young person, adult at risk, or person with mental ill health, especially where the adult is known for violent or abusive or challenging behaviour.

Anyone acting in a formal capacity on behalf of the church (i.e. not in a personal capacity) should avoid situations where they are on their own with a child or young person, including the giving of lifts.

Under no circumstances should a youth worker invite a child or young person to their home alone nor go to the child or young person's home if they are there alone.

No one acting in a formal capacity on behalf of the church is permitted to conduct one to one work with a young person **without** the express permission of the Incumbent (or Churchwarden if in vacancy).

With permission obtained for an organised meeting, consideration should be made as to an appropriate place to meet. If the nature of the conversation is thought to be confidential then it may be appropriate to find a quieter area in the church building, or a room where a door can be left open, or if there is glass where those meeting can be viewed, a second adult must remain within close proximity whilst still allowing for confidentiality.

For 1:1 mentoring or Bible reading, meeting in a public place such as coffee shop maybe appropriate ensuring isolated spaces are avoided. These scenarios require a separate bespoke risk assessment.

The Safer Environment and Activities Practice guidance and its accompanying Code of Practice sets out ratios for working with children and young persons and states *"those working with children and young persons must always aim to work with or within sight of another adult."*

7. Unexpected Lone Working.

It is possible that a person might find themselves unintentionally lone working on behalf of the church due to unforeseen circumstances.

An example of this would be an unplanned meeting, an encounter in the street or after a church service.

If the level of contact is significant, complete a detailed record as noted previously.

This record should be concise, factual, and include the how and why the lone working took place and an account of what happened.

Report to your line manager or volunteer team lead any areas of concern as soon as possible.

Where there is a disclosure of a safeguarding nature, whether during a planned visit or an unexpected encounter, it must be reported to the PSO as soon as possible following usual procedures.

Emergency Procedure

If there is an intruder or you are threatened, or there is an immediate risk of harm, dial 999 without hesitation.

If you are at a church building when the emergency occurs, give the address of the church as:

St Peter & St Paul – Church Lane TN9 1DA

What 3 words – puts.safety.buddy

St Saviours – Dry Hill Park Crescent TN10 3BJ

What 3 words – shots.cross.stays

St Philips – Salisbury Rd TN10 4PA

What 3 words – advice.sends.games

St Andrews – Hadlow Road TN10 4LS

What 3 words – across.certified.else

PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer)

psso@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk Tel 01732 770962 X 42

Associate Vicar (Pastoral Care lead)

wendy.carr@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk 01732 355200

Incumbent

ben@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk 01732 770962 x23

Church Office

parishoffice@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk 01732 770962 X24

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