

Health & Safety Management Plan

Appendix B –Specific Policies and Procedures

5. Working Alone Policy

Policy Statement

We are committed to ensuring that proper procedures are in place in keep safe those of our workers who work alone.

Purpose

Extra precautions are needed when normal contact with others is not available. The procedures below seek to ensure our workers' wellbeing and safety when working alone. They cover:

- working alone in the community
- working after hours or alone on church premises
- working from home.

Working Alone in the Community

Risks

Due to the nature of our ministry, some workers are required to visit people in the community in their homes. Often these visits are undertaken alone. Most of the situations envisaged in this procedure relate to clergy or paid ministry staff, such as parish nurses. There may also be occasions where voluntary workers make home visits, but it is strongly urged that whenever possible volunteers make home visits in pairs.

Making home visits alone gives rise to the following risks, which are increased when working alone for significant periods:

- violence or personal harm during a home visit
- becoming unwell and unable to summon help
- stress from confronting medical emergencies
- being falsely accused of inappropriate behaviour
- lack of access to hygiene or rest facilities
- being stranded in an emergency, eg. earthquake or flood.

Minimising Risks

Those working alone must be aware of these risks and take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure their own health and safety. This includes being physically well before going out to visit, ensuring their vehicle is in good working order and has enough fuel, and being comfortable with situations they enter into.

New home visits

Extra precautions should be taken when visiting someone new. The visitor should inform a colleague of the expected duration of the visit, the address and any other relevant details. First time visits should be carried out during normal work hours and a check-in plan put in place. Workers should assess each situation as they arrive and ensure they have a safe exit. This may mean sitting in the chair closest to the door.

If at any time the visitor feels unsure or unsafe, they should immediately remove themselves from the situation and inform their manager.

Check in system

Those working alone must put in place an appropriate check-in system, informing another person of their whereabouts and timetable, to ensure that if something goes wrong an alarm is raised quickly. This is especially important for those who are unmarried and live alone and cannot rely on someone at home noticing if they don't arrive as expected.

There are different options available and each individual must choose that which works best for them. Some options include:

- Using a shared diary with other church workers or, for small parishes, another church in the Diocese, so others know your whereabouts. Workers can also text or phone a trusted person at the end of the day to confirm they are home safely.
- Using a Lone Worker phone app on a smartphone, allowing the worker to set the time a visit should finish. At that time an alarm will sound and, if not responded to, an alert will be sent to those designated. This is ideal for those living alone who may not otherwise be missed.

If confidentiality is an issue, workers can give a list of addresses they will be visiting without giving names. The list can be left with a trusted person at the parish who will only access it if the worker doesn't check in at the end of the day.

Hygiene and rest facilities

Workers should ensure they know the location of public rest rooms, schedule breaks throughout the day and ensure they have enough to eat and drink.

First aid kit

Workers are encouraged to carry a first aid kit in their car and consider what else they may need in an emergency. Those who travel for work should consider carrying an overnight bag with water, a torch, a change of clothing (including something warm), toiletries, non-perishable food etc. in case they can't get home for any reason.

Medical emergencies

If a worker arrives to find a person in need of medical attention or deceased, they should immediately call 111 for assistance. They should also report the incident to their manager, who will ensure they are supported and given an opportunity to debrief.

Guarding against accusations of inappropriate behaviour

Workers should keep notes of their visits and what was discussed. This may be as simple as making a diary or notebook entry. If ever in a situation where workers feel there may be a negative outcome, they should immediately share their concerns and details of the visit with their manager.

Working After Hours or Alone on Church Premises

From time to time a staff member or volunteer may be the only person on church premises, or the last to leave at the end of the day, for example a church receptionist, cleaner, etc.

Risks

Risks include:

- having an accident and being unable to summon help
- sudden illness or incapacity
- fatigue
- physical violence from an unwanted visitor.

Minimising Risks

As with those working alone in the community, those working alone on church premises must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure their own health and safety.

Check in

A check –in system should be established so that an absence will not go unnoticed. In many cases this will involve making contact with a spouse, vicar or nearby parishioner.

Threats from others

Workers should take precautions against the threat of an unwanted visitor, such as locking doors and having a phone close by to call 111 for help if in danger.

Wherever possible, a second person should be present when locking up at the end of the day/evening. Parishes should maintain good outdoor lighting and those leaving alone should ensure they park close to an exit door. If in any doubt about safety, workers should call a trusted person to meet them before they leave the building.

Workers should report instances where they feel in danger to the Safety Advocate and Vicar. All such will be investigated and, where possible, controls put in place to prevent recurrence.

Working From Home

The church is committed to ensuring the safety of staff members who work from home.

Risks

- mental stress due to lack of support
- sudden illness
- emergencies such as earthquake or fire
- threat of harm from an unwanted visitor.

Minimising Risks

Staff have a responsibility to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure their own health and safety when working from home. Managers should discuss the home environment with their staff to ensure they have a suitable place to work that is free from uncontrolled hazards, eg, trip hazards from power cords.

If staff regularly work from home, their manager should check-in with them regularly by phone. The manager should also check-in in emergencies such as natural disaster. Staff must be contactable by phone during office hours.

All other Diocesan policies, such as confidentiality, apply to staff working from home.