

# Lone Working Policy for Pastoral Visitors in the Walgrave Benefice

## 1. Introduction

In the Walgrave Benefice the safety and well-being of our pastoral visitors, and the people they serve, are of utmost importance. Pastoral visiting often involves working alone in the community, visiting vulnerable individuals, and spending time in private homes or isolated settings. This policy provides guidance for pastoral visitors to ensure their safety and well-being while offering pastoral care and support to those in need.

This policy outlines the procedures and practices that must be followed to minimize risks to pastoral visitors and ensure a safe and supportive environment during lone visits.

## 2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all pastoral visitors who work alone, including:

- Clergy, lay ministers, and other trained pastoral visitors
- Volunteers who assist with pastoral care and visitations

It covers all pastoral visits, including home visits, visits to care homes, hospitals, or any other location where pastoral support is provided to individuals outside of church premises.

## 3. Definitions

- **Lone Worker:** An individual who carries out their pastoral visiting responsibilities without direct supervision and is alone at the time of the visit.
- **Lone Working:** Refers to situations where pastoral visitors are alone during a visit, which may involve a variety of settings and potentially vulnerable individuals.

## 4. Risk Assessment

Before any pastoral visit, a **risk assessment** should be carried out to identify potential hazards or safety concerns. This includes:

- The nature and location of the visit (e.g., home visits, hospital visits, care homes)
- The health and safety of the pastoral visitor
- The potential vulnerability of the person being visited
- Any history of aggressive or unsafe behaviour from the individual being visited or others in the vicinity

The risk assessment should consider the specific risks associated with the location and the individual(s) being visited. If risks cannot be mitigated, the visit should not proceed, or alternative arrangements should be made.

## 5. Responsibilities

- **Church Leadership / Coordinators:**
  - Ensure that all pastoral visitors are informed of and adhere to the lone working policy.

- Ensure that risk assessments are conducted for each visit, particularly if the situation is unknown or may present potential risks.
- Provide pastoral visitors with the necessary training and support to manage lone working situations safely.
- Monitor the well-being and safety of pastoral visitors and address any concerns.
- **Pastoral Visitors:**
  - Understand and follow the lone working policy and risk assessments for each visit.
  - Ensure that the designated contact person is informed of their visit schedule and contact details before going on a visit.
  - Maintain communication with the designated person during and after the visit, as per the agreed check-in procedure.
  - Report any concerns, incidents, or unsafe situations to the appropriate church leadership.
- **Designated Contact Person:**
  - A designated person (e.g., churchwarden, pastoral care coordinator) should be identified for each pastoral visitor and will be responsible for ensuring communication before, during, and after visits.
  - The designated contact person should be available for immediate assistance if necessary and should monitor the visitor's safety by ensuring regular check-ins.

## 6. Safe Practices for Lone Working

- **Pre-visit Preparation:**
  - **Inform a designated contact:** Before each visit, the pastoral visitor must inform a designated person (e.g., churchwarden, office manager) of the details of the visit, including:
    - The location (address or care facility)
    - The name of the person being visited
    - Expected duration of the visit
    - Estimated time of return or check-in time
  - **Check the location:** If the visit is to an unfamiliar location, the pastoral visitor should research or ask for directions to ensure they are familiar with the area.
  - **Personal safety:** Pastoral visitors should dress appropriately, carry a fully charged mobile phone, and ensure that personal belongings are secure.

- **During the Visit:**
  - **Stay aware of surroundings:** Be conscious of the environment and any potential safety hazards (e.g., areas with aggressive dogs, known risks in the area).
  - **Limit distractions:** Avoid distractions (such as talking on the phone) while visiting in potentially unsafe locations, to ensure full attention to the situation.
  - **Monitor behaviour:** Pay attention to the behaviour of the person being visited, especially if they are known to be unstable, aggressive, or unwell. If any situation seems unsafe or uncomfortable, leave immediately.
- **Post-visit Communication:**
  - **Check-in procedure:** The pastoral visitor should check in with the designated person after the visit, reporting that the visit has concluded safely. If no contact is made within the expected time frame, the designated person should initiate a follow-up call.
  - **Debriefing:** If any incidents, concerns, or difficult situations occurred during the visit, these should be reported to the designated person for support and action.

## 7. Emergency Procedures

- **In Case of Emergency:** If a pastoral visitor feels threatened, or if an emergency arises (e.g., health emergency, aggressive behaviour, or a dangerous situation), they should:
  - **Leave the situation immediately** if it is safe to do so.
  - **Call 999** for emergency assistance, if necessary (police, medical, or fire services).
  - **Contact the designated person** or another trusted contact to report the emergency and seek further guidance.
- **First Aid:** Pastoral visitors should be familiar with basic first aid and carry a basic first-aid kit if appropriate, especially for longer visits. All pastoral visitors should know the location of first-aid facilities in the church and the contact details for local emergency services.

## 8. Training

All pastoral visitors must receive training on:

- **Risk management and safety:** Understanding the potential risks involved in lone working and how to mitigate them.
- **Conflict resolution:** How to handle difficult or aggressive behaviour from the person being visited, and how to de-escalate a potentially dangerous situation.
- **Emergency response procedures:** How to respond appropriately in case of an emergency, including when to contact emergency services or the designated contact person.

Training should be reviewed regularly and provided for new pastoral visitors before they begin their work.

### **9. Monitoring and Review**

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and address any changes in circumstances, feedback from pastoral visitors, or any incidents that may have occurred.
- Pastoral visitors should be encouraged to provide feedback about their experiences to help improve safety measures and refine procedures.
- Risk assessments and visit logs will be regularly reviewed to identify any trends or issues.

### **10. Policy Compliance**

Pastoral visitors must comply with this policy to ensure their safety and the safety of those they visit. Failure to follow the procedures outlined in this policy could result in disciplinary action, including the suspension of pastoral visiting duties until the issue is addressed.

### **11. Conclusion**

[Parish Church Name] is committed to supporting its pastoral visitors and ensuring that they can carry out their work safely. By adhering to the Lone Working Policy, pastoral visitors will have the guidance and support needed to provide compassionate care while ensuring their personal safety. This policy will help foster a safe environment for both the pastoral visitors and the individuals they visit, ensuring that the pastoral work of the church can continue with confidence.

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**Date Approved:** .....

**Review Date:** .....

**Approved By:** [Churchwardens

Signed .....