

# Otter Vale Mission Community

## Lone Worker policy

The Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) of the Otter Vale Mission Community (OVMC) are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all its clergy and volunteers who, in the course of their work and ministry, may have to work alone, and this policy provides a framework for managing the risks presented by lone working, as well as identifying the responsibilities each person has in this situation.

### Who does this affect?

- Clergy when carrying out their duties in the church, at home and out in the locality
- All church cleaners
- People who undertake sacristy and verger duties, arrange the flowers, or prepare the church for services
- Organists preparing for services and those practising the organ
- Those opening and locking the church
- Those doing maintenance in church
- Someone doing a solo pastoral visit to people's homes including home communion
- Volunteers driving parishioners to church services and events
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank

There are a number of areas where risks may be greater when working alone:

- Accidents or sudden illness when there is no-one to summon help or first aid
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Allegations of inappropriate and/or abusive behaviour
- Fire
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)
- Travelling, particularly in bad weather

### Principles

Working alone is an essential practice for many in our church, either within the church buildings, in their own or other people's homes. Lone working cannot always be avoided. However, this policy recognises the risks and tries to minimise them by common sense and appropriate measures. All workers and volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, and work with others where possible, however, if this is not feasible, they should be aware of the importance of personal safety and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances.

The perception of risk can be seen differently by each individual, and, therefore, it is important that all lone workers receive relevant information about the identified risks within their role, in order that they are equipped to recognise these, and are enabled to take responsibility for their own safety and security.

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### Procedure

It is important not to over-emphasise the risks of lone working and create an unnecessary fear amongst workers that is disproportionate to the reality of the risks faced. However, lone workers do face increased risks because they do not have the immediate support of colleagues, or others, if an incident occurs, and particularly if they are in someone's home, or are working in an isolated or rural location.

### Working Alone in Church or Church Hall

When working alone in church or in a church hall you should observe the following precautions:

- Do not work at height
- Ensure that you have a mobile phone with you that is on, charged, has credit and carry it with you
- Ensure that someone knows where you are and when you expect to leave.
- Ensure that you are sufficiently fit and well to be carrying out your tasks alone.

In addition to the general guidelines:

- Ensure that you know where to find the first aid kits
- Ensure that you are familiar with the procedures for dealing with fire
- Check that the building is empty with another person if you are being left on your own after an event or activity
- Do not plan to be alone with children or young people. However, if you should find yourself in this situation, it is important that another adult is made aware immediately. You should also assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – tell a Churchwarden, Incumbent and/ or Safeguarding Representative know as soon as possible in order that the appropriate risk assessment and follow-up action can be taken.

### Home Visits

- Lone workers should always ensure that someone else, i.e. the Incumbent/a Churchwarden/a colleague or family member, is aware of their movements. This means providing them with the address of where they will be visiting, details of the person they are visiting, telephone numbers if known and expected arrival and departure times, informing them when the visit is completed safely, if needed. This may be particularly necessary for a first visit.
- Lone workers should be alert to any signs of potential danger during a home visit and be prepared to leave immediately if they have any concerns. Confrontation should always be avoided, and lone workers should never assume that violence won't happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported to the Incumbent, Church Warden and/or Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible.

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### **Managing Money**

Consideration should be given to managing cash e.g. at fundraising activities, taking money for banking. Large quantities of cash should not be kept in a person's homes for long periods and should be held in the church safe overnight.

**Reviewed: 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 by the clergy and Churchwardens of the OVMC**