St Andrew's Church, Sandon

Lone Working policy

Lone working is an everyday practice for clergy and some church workers (for instance pastoral visitors) and working from home, being alone in the church building, office and attending remote locations (for example carrying out a home visit) could all constitute lone working.

Pastoral care / visits

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral care should be properly planned, its risks considered and recorded effectively. It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. In our preparatory prayers, let us remember to ask for God's guidance and protection in this encounter.

Planning lone working at church or at home: considerations for risk assessment

- Is lone working necessary? Confidentiality can be assured with other people within reach.
- If there are casual callers while you are visiting someone, take precautions before opening the door. E.g. use of a door chain.
- If made to feel vulnerable in any way, then exit the building as quickly as possible and call the police in an emergency or another person for advice. Watch the building from a distance if appropriate and record any descriptions and times as accurately as you can. DO NOT challenge anyone, ensure you protect yourself first and foremost.
- Who will be involved? Please ensure that at least one other person knows where you will be going and what time you should be due to return.
- When and where will it take place? Make clear arrangements. If it's possible to meet in a public place then make that the preferred venue.
- Is there a risk of violence? A good working definition of violence is: "any behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or mentally, on people".
- Are there any known medical or other factors which could make either party more vulnerable? Some medical conditions can lead to disinhibition or false accusations. Take the appropriate action with perhaps two people visiting a person's home.

During the visit

- Visiting on behalf of St Andrew's church should be done with consultation with the incumbent churchwarden or pastoral assistant.
- When appropriate, make prior arrangements.
- Consider whether it may be advisable to have someone else with you or nearby.
- Make it clear at the outset the time available, and the purpose of the visit. Share this information with at least one other person before the visit.
- Don't take any unnecessary risks – if you feel uncomfortable at all, end the meeting and report your concerns to your pastoral assistant / Safeguarding Officer.
- Respect personal space and never do or say anything that could be misinterpreted.
- Carry a mobile phone. When appropriate it may be wise to let someone know where you are and what time you expect to return, and when you return.
- If there is any known risk, complete a risk assessment to ensure you remain safe

- Supervisors of pastoral visitors will occasionally visit, accompany or observe lone workers to ensure safe practice
- With reference to a pastoral encounter (face-to-face, emails, texts, telephone calls), it may be useful to make an anonymised informal written note as an aide memoire.

Using your own home for activities

Where activities are formally organised by the parish, the following guidance should be noted. Activities for vulnerable groups will normally take place on church premises, however if meetings are to be held in a leader's own home the following points need to be considered:

- Ensure you have the consent of your incumbent/churchwarden for the activity to take place and that there is adequate insurance cover
- Ensure that a risk assessment of the room(s) to be used has been carried out
- Ensure that two unrelated adults are present at all times (arriving before the first group member and not leaving until after the last group member has left)
- Never use inappropriate rooms i.e. bedrooms

Further advice / information

It's good to talk! Although confidentiality is of utmost importance, those people offering care must have their needs supported throughout. Please ensure that we support one another and that any concerns are shared and information recorded as necessary.

All members of the church community are invited to take the online Safeguarding Training offered by the Church of England. Please contact Alison, Parish Safeguarding Officer or churchwardens for more information.

Policy agreed by Parochial Church Council on 4th September 2025

Review date on or before 3rd September 2026