

## **Newcastle Diocese Lone Worker Guidance**

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy and church workers including youth workers, children's workers and parish visitors. Home working, working alone in an office, work travel and working at remote locations, such as home visits, could all constitute lone working.

Lone worker includes:

Those working at their main place of work where:

- Only one person is working on the premises
- People work separately from each other, e.g. in different locations
- People working outside normal hours, e.g. cleaners

Those working away from their fixed base where:

- One person is visiting another premises or meeting venue
- One person is making a home visit to an individual
- One person is working from their own home.

The Parochial Church Council / Church Wardens should show that "reasonably foreseeable risks" have been identified and updated regularly with appropriate action taken to minimise them. This can be done in conjunction with the Health and Safety officer.

They have the responsibility to ensure that Lone Worker procedures are implemented in order to ensure that all church volunteers and staff:

- think how to undertake lone working safely,
- assess the risks of situations where a threat to personal safety could occur
- reduce those risks through appropriate procedures and control measure

Risk assessments should be undertaken where appropriate.

### **Who does this affect?**

- Vicar and other clergy
- Church Administrator
- Cleaner

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- Church Hall manager
- Volunteers who cover the office on Saturday mornings
- Other volunteers who come into church to sort out, the flowers, clean the brass or prepare the church for special services
- Those locking the church
- Those doing maintenance in church
- Someone doing a solo pastoral visit to people's homes
- Volunteers taking cash to the bank
- The vicar working at home

### **The Risks**

This list is not exhaustive but identifies some of the risks faced.

- Physical accident (from injury, fire, etc such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help if necessary)
- Sudden illness, again when there is no one to raise the alarm
- Physical violence or threat of abuse in any form from a visitor
- Sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses
- Stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive calls or digital media

### **Some Good Practice Guidelines**

#### **Procedures When Working Alone**

People should not work on their own unless they have a means of communication and have notified a colleague of the details of the work being undertaken and agreed a procedure to ensure their safety is checked on. When working alone volunteers and staff should be alert to possible dangers and minimise them:

1. Tell someone where they are working. . Get them to check on you if you are not home when expected and if they can't contact you, to raise the alarm.

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2. Carry a mobile phone if possible.
3. If working in church after dark and it is appropriate, lock the doors
4. Carry keys so they can leave by another exit if necessary.
5. Report any defects to the building i.e. trip hazards etc. to the Churchwardens
6. Report any incidents to the Churchwardens.
7. Do not work at heights when alone; do not use power tools when alone, use safety guards on power tools – and do not use them when in the building alone.
8. Choose different routes to the bank, when taking cash.
9. Inform the Church Wardens or Vicar of any suspicious behaviour noted or any threats made.

### **Lone working – For those in licensed and authorised ministry, in their specific Pastoral Duties**

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral support should be properly planned, risk assessed and recorded.

It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection are to be avoided.

### **Consider - What, why, who, when, where, how**

**What** is the nature of the contact? Pastoral, supportive, mentoring.

Make the purpose of the meeting clear at the outset and the time available for the discussion

**Why** is one to one necessary?

Confidentiality should not be confused with secrecy or privacy. It is possible to hold a confidential conversation in a public area, where there is privacy.

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**Who** is involved?

Provider, Receiver, others with knowledge of arrangements

**When** will the contact take place? The timing of contact and meeting is important to ensure actions are not misinterpreted. Whenever possible make prior arrangements to meet rather than meet 'on demand'

**Where** will the contact take place?

Can a public venue that affords privacy be used, or if a private venue is used there is a need to ensure it is not secretive. N.B. Openness with others in awareness of the contact arrangements supports all involved. Deviation from this principle should be exception and justified by compelling circumstances which must be recorded in a risk assessment.

### **Some simple tips**

- Try to have someone else in the next room or nearby whenever possible.
- Don't take any unnecessary risks – if you feel uncomfortable at all, end the meeting and report your concerns to your PSO/ Archdeacon
- Respect personal space and never do or say anything that could be misinterpreted
- If there is any known risk, complete a risk assessment to ensure you remain safe (see 'Guidance on Risk Assessment' and the personal risk assessment at the end of this guidance)

If meeting off-site, ensure someone knows where you are and what time you expect to return; you should carry a mobile phone

**How** will the needs of **safeguarding** all involved be addressed?

Are there particular factors which add to the vulnerability of either party?

If so, a full risk assessment should be completed. ( see risk assessment proforma)

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Records should be maintained that are relevant to the contact.

Minimum recording requirements for all one to one visits include:

- date and time;
- persons present;
- venue;
- nature of contact.

It may be pertinent to record in more detail if there is any indication that this person, the context or content of the meeting has a heightened vulnerability either before or during the meeting. eg

When and where the meeting / discussion took place

- Purpose of the meeting / discussion
- The time you / the other person arrived and left
- Who else was present (if applicable)
- A brief, factual account of what was discussed / agreed
- Any potential or actual safeguarding concerns identified
- Any actions taken / to be taken and any decisions made, including advice taken and who shared with
- Sign and date the record and store securely

It is good practice to check with the person concerned at the start, midway through and at the end of the meeting that they are comfortable with the arrangement and process of the meeting

### **Using your own home for Activities**

Where activities are formally organised by the parish, the following guidance should be noted. If however informal groups are organised by parents / other members of the congregation (e.g. baby-sitting circles or home groups), the responsibility remains with those organizing the group to ensure that the activity and those leading it are safe.

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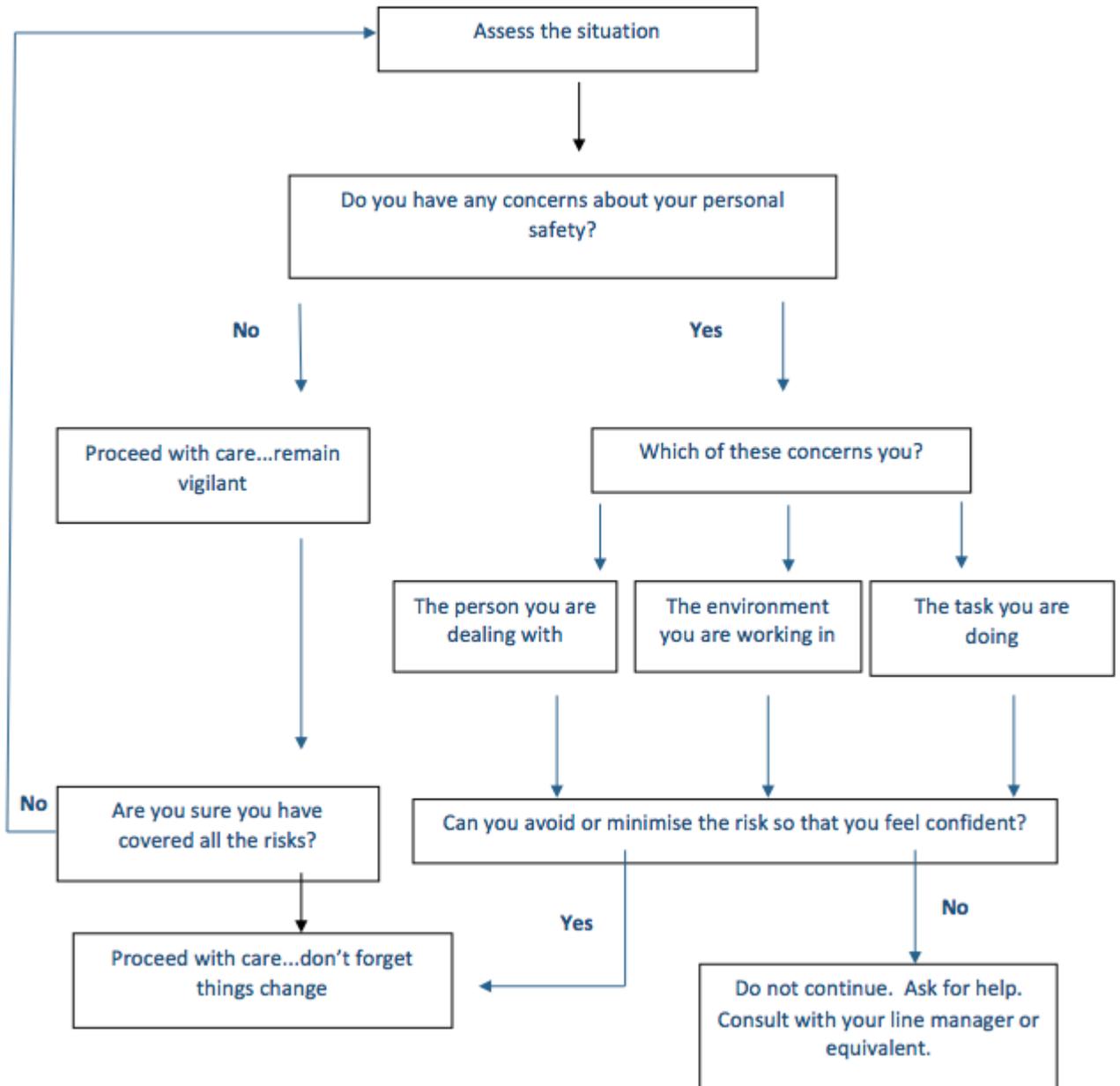
Activities for at risk groups will normally take place on church premises however if meetings are to be held in a leader's own home the following points need to be considered:

- Ensure you have the consent of your parish priest 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
- Ensure that the Diocesan and parish policies for at risk groups are followed.

### **Personal Safety Risk Assessment**

Use this to assess your environment, and your working practices, as well as for an instant assessment of a situation.

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