

# HOME VISIT AND LONE WORKING POLICY



## PURPOSE

This policy highlights areas of potential risk and ways of minimising this risk when visiting people in their own homes, and other settings as a lone worker.

This policy applies to all clergy and volunteers.

Personal safety must be the first priority for everyone. This policy is a good practice guide to help manage potential risk.

## BEFORE YOU GO

- Only initiate contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Make an appointment so that people will have advance notice of your visit.
- You should be clear about why you are going and the limit of your helping relationship.

## Guidelines for managing risk

- Make the first contact by phone and ascertain as much information as possible during this contact. Find out if the person is likely to have other people in the house, and who they are.
- Visiting in pairs is best practice – not husband/wife pairs. Never visit someone of the opposite sex on your own. If you do not have the luxury of taking a second person with you each time but there are any doubts in your mind then consider if two people should go for at least the first visit.
- Always carry an ID card if you have been given one. If not then take some form of identity linking you to the church you are representing (a signed paper with the church logo on or a photo of yourself on church headed paper, whatever your church decides).
- Let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back.
- Keep your mobile on.
- Arrange a time to telephone the person you have told at the end of the visit. This can be done by sending a standard mobile text message after the visit.
- You can arrange to meet the person outside of their home, or on neutral territory, if this is practicable.
- Try to be punctual. Delay or early arrival (even by a few minutes) can be upsetting to the person you are visiting. If you are unavoidably delayed, please ring them and explain the reason for your delay and give an approximate time of arrival.

## **DURING HOME VISITS**

### **Communication**

Effective communication can greatly reduce the risk of aggressive, or potentially violent, situations developing.

- ✓ Be aware of tone of voice and body language, cultural issues and sensitivities.
- ✓ If necessary ask the client to turn off the TV or radio as they can be a distraction.
- ✓ Ask the client how they would like to be addressed.
- ✓ Remind the client that everything they tell you will be treated in confidence.

### **Precautions**

While acknowledging that some visits cannot be planned in advance and will happen spontaneously it is important to take care take some basic precautions at all times:

- Always try and park in a well-lit area and facing the way you need to leave.
- Do not enter the property if you feel unsure or uncomfortable with the situation.
- Always be prepared to leave immediately. Do not take off your coat or unpack any papers until you feel comfortable in the situation.
- Ask for any dogs or other pets to be secured where appropriate (a dog could be used in conversation to defuse an aggressive person, it could also attack you if the owner were to become aggressive)
- As you enter, ask the person to lead the way so you are behind them, not the other way round.
- If possible, sit so you have a clear exit to the door and the client is not between you and it. Do not go upstairs or into any bedrooms.
- If the person is confined to bed either regularly or temporarily then remember to knock & wait before entering the bedroom. Sit on a chair not on the bed and leave the door ajar.
- Find out if anyone else is in the property and what their relationship is to the client. If applicable, ask the client if they have given their permission for the third party to attend the meeting.
- Never give or accept money or gifts of any kind from the client. If they wish to donate to the church it should be done in an official way agreed by your parish finance officer and the nominated person for adults. Some vulnerable people will be very eager to please a visitor and may feel obliged to give a gift and some may have poor memory so that they may not remember that the 'gift' they are offering is actually a valuable piece that their daughter is expecting to get in the future.
- Record visits in a notebook – date, times, people present, any concerns to pass on etc. This is especially important if you think there may be safeguarding issues present but is also good practice generally.
- Explain clearly if & when you will return.