

St Francis of Assisi – Isleworth

Lone Working Policy

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures and guidelines for staff and volunteers of St Francis of Assisi who may be required to work alone, particularly when visiting individuals in their homes. The aim is to protect lone workers from potential risks and ensure their safety while fulfilling their pastoral and professional responsibilities. At present, it is largely only the incumbent who regularly undertakes lone working on behalf of the Church, but it can also apply where someone other than the incumbent is in church along eg to open the church on a Sunday.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all church staff and volunteers who engage in lone working, including home visits, pastoral care, and other church-related duties carried out alone.

3. Definition of Lone Working

Lone working refers to situations where a staff member or volunteer is working without direct supervision or the immediate presence of colleagues.

This includes:

- Visiting individuals in their homes alone.
- Working alone in the church building.
- Travelling alone for church-related duties.

4. Risk Assessment.

Before undertaking lone working activities, a volunteer may be asked to conduct a risk assessment with the incumbent, considering:

- The location and nature of the visit.
- Any known risks associated with the individual being visited.
- The time of day and expected duration of the visit.
- Alternative options, such as having two people attend when necessary.

5. Home Visits

St. Francis' does not have any lay staff or volunteers currently conducting home visits on behalf of the church. If it ever does, we will follow the following policy:

Pre-Visit Preparations:

- Staff should speak in advance to the incumbent, and confirm details of any visits including the contact details of the visit, location, time, and expected duration. They should also keep their own notes of any pastoral conversations.
- Inform the incumbent of the visit details, including location, time, and expected duration.
- Find out whether the person has a dog at their home.

- Ensure that a mobile phone is fully charged and accessible and that you have any important contact numbers stored.
- Where possible, schedule visits during daylight hours.

During the Visit:

- Do not enter a property if the person you expect to see is not there.
- Remain aware of personal safety and surroundings. Scan the room for risks.
- Position yourself near an exit in case of emergency.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid entering bedrooms or isolated areas of a home.
- If at any point you feel unsafe, leave immediately and report concerns.

Post-Visit Procedures:

- Check in with the incumbent to confirm your safety, if you have any concerns.
- Report any incidents, concerns, or safeguarding issues to a church safeguarding officer.
- Document the visit, noting any important details or concerns.

6. One-to-one in person meetings

- No adult should be alone with an under 18 in a private or enclosed space. However, if you find yourself in this situation, ensure you find another adult to join you and make a church safeguarding officer aware of the interaction.
- Pre-agreed mentoring/pastoral conversations with under 18s should always take place in a public space and only by those who have an enhanced DBS check and are appropriately safeguarding trained.
- When communicating with under 18s digitally, refer to the Social Media Policy for guidance.

7. Lone working in the church building

- Always ensure that external doors are locked and not left open or on the latch.
- Be mindful of opening the back door, look to see who it is before you open the door, even if you are expecting someone.
- When leaving the side door of church, scan the area outside the vicarage before turning to lock the door.
- Where possible, avoid arriving or leaving the church on your own in the dark.

8. Lone working in a public place, including travel

- All lift-shares between adults are private arrangements and are not arranged centrally by the church.
- Please see the Driving Youth Policy for guidelines on giving lifts to people under the age of 18.
- In addition to the above policy, all lone working staff and volunteers should be made aware of the personal safety guidance shown in appendix A.

9. Training & Awareness

- All lone workers should receive training on safety procedures and safeguarding practices.

10. Emergency Procedures

- If an emergency arises, the lone worker should contact emergency services (999) immediately.
- Any serious incidents must be reported to the church leadership and safeguarding officer and recorded accordingly.
- A debrief should be conducted after an emergency to review and improve procedures.

11. Review & Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually or whenever significant changes occur in working practices.

Appendix A.

Personal Safety Guidance

Walking

- Avoid shortcuts through dimly lit or enclosed areas.
- After dark, steer clear of bushes, doorways, and alleys.
- Walk facing traffic to avoid being approached from behind.
- Walk confidently to avoid appearing vulnerable.
- Avoid headphones to stay alert.
- Wear practical footwear for quick movement if needed.
- If followed, cross the street; if still pursued, seek a populated area and call the police.
- Keep your distance when approached for directions.
- Carry minimal cash; keep wallets in inside pockets.
- Hold bags close to your body, away from the curb, and ensure they are securely fastened.
- If robbed, do not resist—your safety is most important.
- Avoid sharing personal details in conversations.
- Trust your instincts; avoid crowds or groups that seem threatening.
- Be cautious of stationary vehicles with occupants.
- If a car stops and the situation appears threatening, move away quickly and call for help.

Driving

Before You Travel:

- Keep your vehicle well-maintained.
- Ensure you have enough fuel.
- Plan your route in advance.

On the Road:

- Keep valuables out of sight.
- Lock doors and keep windows closed, especially in stop-and-go traffic.

- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- If followed, drive to a police station or busy area and call for help.

Providing Lifts:

- Only give someone a lift if you feel comfortable and know them well enough. If you have any doubts, trust your instincts and don't feel pressured.
- Consider informing a third party about your plans. Let someone know in advance and check in with them once the journey is complete.
- It may be safer to ask the passenger to sit in the back.
- Ensure passengers wear a seatbelt at all times.
- To help avoid unnecessary detours, familiarise yourself with the destination and route beforehand.

Parking & Leaving Your Vehicle:

- Always lock your car and hide valuables.
- Park in well-lit, busy areas if returning after dark.
- Use manned car parks when possible.
- Reverse into parking spaces near exits.
- Have your keys ready before returning to your car; check the interior before entering.