

High Street Chapel Lone Working Policy

Introduction

High Street Chapel (HSC) has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees, volunteers and others who may be affected by the work of the church.

Lone working is an everyday and essential practice for some employees, workers and volunteers. Home working, working alone in an office, work travel and working at remote locations (such as home visits) can all be forms of lone working. The aim of this policy is to help everyone think how to undertake lone working safely.

The purpose of this policy is to

- Reduce the risks presented by lone working
- Adopt a consistent approach to the safety of lone workers throughout the life of the church
- Comply with relevant legislation.

The following policy has been written in order to minimise risks for employees conducting lone work. Under the Health & safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 it is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary. Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of them and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

HSC will regularly review the policy to ensure its implementation and to ensure that it is relevant to working practice. In addition, HSC has a responsibility to undertake risk assessments with employees and volunteers that may be at risk from lone working and to put in place safe working practices that take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies.

Definitions

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Examples of lone working are given below.

- Employees/volunteers working alone in an office or area of the premises
- Anyone who works at home on a regular basis
- People working outside normal hours, for example working early or late
- An employee/volunteer who is required to travel alone to and from a fixed base to another place or to a meeting elsewhere

Potential Risks:

- Unknown members of the public
- A requirement to lock up when leaving a building
- Using certain pieces of equipment.
- Being taken ill whilst working alone
- Lack of knowledge regarding Health and Safety procedures

Requirements

Procedures for employees working in the building

Employees/volunteers should always adhere to the following guidelines in order to minimise personal risks when working alone at the church. Employees/volunteers must not assume that having a mobile phone is sufficient safeguard in itself. Employees/volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

- Avoid unnecessary 'out of normal office hours' working, wherever possible
- Notify your team leader or line manager if you are intending to work 'out of normal office hours'.

- Ensure that you have keys. Lock all doors that allow direct access to the building or office you are working in.
- Familiarise yourself with the Fire Safety Procedures and know escape routes.
- In the case of unknown contractors, ask for identification and do not let them in until you have checked it out, if unsure.
- If possible, avoid parking your car in badly lit areas; move it nearer to the place you exit the building, if possible.
- Carry a torch and personal alarm, if applicable, if working late, or early mornings.
- Notify people at home when you intend leaving work and what time to expect you home
- Two people should be involved in counting and recording money. Preferably only ever count and record money in a secured room and away from public view.
- Should you feel ill whilst working alone – seek help immediately – dial 999 if necessary
- If you have any concerns undertake a risk assessment for lone working with your line manager. Report any concerns, hazards or potential risks to your line manager immediately

Procedures for workers and volunteers working away from their fixed base

The nature of the work at HSC is such that some employees/volunteers may conduct their work at a variety of locations.

Keeping track of individual movements is sometimes difficult but it is the responsibility of the employees/volunteers, and their line manager, to identify potential risks in carrying out their work and to minimise these risks, by maintaining regular communication.

- All employees and relevant volunteers should leave written details of their movements and give an idea of how long they are going to be away from base and when they expect to be back.
- Details of the venue being visited, the contact being visited and a contact number should always be provided.
- Record the names of the main contact you are planning to meet.
- Always meet unfamiliar people in a public area.

Personal Safety

It is not wise to rely on alarm systems or breakaway techniques to get you out of trouble – there are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. HSC have a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves. This is not about raising anxiety levels, but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk, for yourself and for other users in your care.

Be aware of the environment

- Know what measures are in place where you work: exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.
- Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order.
- If your work takes you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night, or known for higher crime rates, arrange to check in when the visit is over, or work with a partner.
- If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes.
- Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings which you control.

Be aware of yourself

- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.

Be aware of other people

- Take note of their non-verbal signals.
- Be aware of their triggers.
- Do not crowd people – allow them space.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and do not make promises which cannot be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.
- Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- Listen to them, and show them you are listening.

Driving

Common sense strategies can help you to stay safe when travelling alone by car

- Plan your route in advance and use a SATNAV/map, so you do not have to ask directions. Allow yourself plenty of time to travel.
- Tell people your destination and what time you expect to arrive.
- Check your fuel, oil and tyres and think through what you would do if you had to change a tyre.
- Check your breakdown organisation membership is up to date and keep your card handy.
- Carry a safety-approved can of petrol.
- Carry a basic survival kit, particularly when travelling in rural and isolated areas, for example a blanket, torch, hazard triangle and first aid kit and some loose change or BT charge card.
- Do not keep your registration, MOT, or insurance documentation in the car; it could help a thief to sell your car.
- Do not keep valuable items on view within the car (laptops and other equipment).
- Never pick up hitch-hikers.

In the event of breakdown

- Pull off the road as far as you can and switch on your hazard warning lights.
- Try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car or get out. Take account of how isolated you are and the time of day. If you have to start out for assistance, make a note of the surroundings, names of streets or landmarks, so you can easily relocate your car.
- Call your breakdown organisation or the police.
- If you have a mobile phone, you must give your location, so note the road name or any landmarks.
- If you breakdown in a rural isolated area and you cannot get a signal on your mobile phone, then stay inside the car, lock the door and display a 'HELP' notice in the window.
- If someone stops to offer help, roll down the window just enough to ask them to contact the recovery service or the police.
- Never accept a lift from a stranger.

Parking

- Always park your car in a well-lit area – especially if you intend returning to it after dark. If possible, ask someone you know to accompany you to the car.
- If this is not possible carry a small torch and personal alarm, if applicable with you.

Planning and Communication

- By thinking things through and planning for the unexpected, it will help you to remain confident when faced with an emergency.
- If you work alone on a regular basis, assess any risks with your line manager and identify any measures needed to ensure your personal safety.
- Communicate your whereabouts – this is crucial – don not forget to tell someone about your plans.

Reporting an incident

It is important to report any incident that occurs to you, whether it is aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident to your team leader/line manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify any additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening in the future.

Planning lone working: considerations for risk assessment

- Is lone working necessary? Confidentiality can be assured with other people within reach.

- Who will be involved? And who else should know about it?
- When and where will it take place? Avoid making arrangements which could be misinterpreted.
- 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 increased risks to the particular worker/volunteer? Are there any known medical risks or other factors which could make either party more vulnerable?

Assessing the risks of lone working

The perception of what is a risk and the actual risk itself may be seen differently by individuals. These factors should be considered and assessed for the particular risks in their working environment. Appropriate steps should be taken to reduce the risk, particularly where the environment around the location is lonely, poorly lit and/or in an area where criminal activity is more likely.

Control Measures

- The proposed lone working should be planned in advance and noted in an appropriate diary or other record (cloud-based storage). Where possible, it should be notified to an appropriate person (this is not necessary when work is done at home and does not involve face-to-face contact with other people).
- Some of the people the lone worker is at risk of meeting are those who, through medical reasons or substance abuse, are liable to mood swings leading to physical violence. It is recommended good practice to encourage the person you are meeting with to enter a room first and for the lone worker to seat themselves closest to the door. Should the situation lead to risk of violence, the lone worker then has a higher chance of withdrawing safely.
- The lone worker must have access to a landline phone or carry a mobile phone and be accustomed to using it.

Assessing Risks

The law states that when an organisation employs more than five people, a simple risk assessment should be recorded and control measures identified for their work. This should be undertaken by an employee's line manager.

Reporting Incidents

Please report any incidents that happen to you so that you can be supported and we can learn any lessons and improve practice in this difficult area. If you have any concerns, please talk to your Line Manager.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Further details on personal safety can be obtained from:

Suzy Lamplugh Trust - <http://www.suzylamplugh.org>

Home Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>