**Lone Working Policy**

**for**

**XXXXXX Methodist Church**

***Reviewed June 2020***

This guidance is for **those working in an employed or voluntarily position** for the Church Council of XXXXXX Methodist Church who, on occasion work, alone. It aligns closely with the advice to employed staff which can be sourced from https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers/lay-employment-advisory-information/ regarding Lone Working [Section 13.3].

Additional guidance in respect of Home Working may be found in the adoption by Methodist Council of the Connexional Team Homeworking Policy [MC/10/61] <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/coun-1061-homeworking-policy-290310.pdf>. Both are available on the Methodist Church website.

As part of the *Safer Recruitment* policy of the Methodist Church everyone undertaking an office, employed position or voluntary role needs a written **Job/Role Description** of the role they are undertaking and a named person who regularly reviews the work undertaken and any changes which need consideration (Supervisor/Line-manager). It follows from this that the anticipation of any vulnerabilities or risks will be made when the role is first assigned and be repeated at each review. **This task is a joint one never to be undertaken by the employee or volunteer alone.**

Starting from the principle that **‘If it isn’t safe don’t do it’** this guidance encourages:

* Anticipating vulnerabilities and risks
* Assessing identified risks
* Taking steps to eliminate or minimize risks

**Anticipating vulnerabilities and risks**

The Church Council **should have a clear understanding of the actual working situations of the employees and volunteers who are involved with their duty of care**. If this entails any periods of lone working for staff or volunteers, it is essential that this is acknowledged and that this Lone Working Policy is accepted and that the Procedures are implemented. **The employee/volunteer has a responsibility to give attention to their own safety.**

**Assessing identified risks**

It is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of the risks which will be encountered in undertaking work alone. A **Risk Assessment for Lone Working** needs to be written and continually reassessed as a working ‘live’ document, which is jointly owned by the employee/volunteer and the supervisor/line-manager, a draft form is supplied at the end of this policy. It is helpful to note that the Risk Assessment is not just a written task but a developing mental awareness of environment. The written assessment simply proves that risk has been thought through and all possible eliminations/controls have been put in place.

Each situation needs to be considered separately. The following points are intended to help identify reasonably foreseeable risks:

* Insecure facilities: e.g. can callers be identified before they are invited onto premises or into an office?
* Unnecessary isolation: e.g. if there is a problem, can the volunteer call for help and receive it speedily?
* Poor communication: e.g. when a volunteer is working alone, who knows they are safe and how?
* Unnecessary lone working: e.g. has consideration been given to more than one person undertaking the work? Can a home visit be done by two people?
* Misuse of social media: e.g. are volunteers clear about how to respond to invitations to use *Facebook* or other social media?
* Poor preparation: e.g. has work been planned?
* Health and Safety concerns: e.g. have any H&S matters been identified? Does the worker know when and how to complete the Accident Book? Is insurance cover in place?

# Taking steps to eliminate or minimize risks

**Training**

Training for Lone Workers is an essential part of Induction, ensuring all employees/volunteers are sufficiently experienced and trained, and understand all risks and procedures before starting to work alone is the responsibility of the line-manager/supervisor.

Training should heighten staff awareness with regard to:

1. Up to date an appropriately levelled Methodist Safeguarding Training (Foundation/Advanced) including the procedures, emergency arrangements and after-hours working contact points.

2. Risk Assessment Training - the writing of formal Risk Assessments and Risk Management including personal risk assessment technique - the continual awareness of potential risks of violence, verbal/ physical aggression and allegations ensuring the maintenance of a safe environment for staff and young people at all times, including practical issues such as the use of personal alarms (where appropriate) and mobile phones.

3. Recording of concerns and incidents.

4. Being aware and actively willing to adhere to the Methodist Social Media Guidelines <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/digital-communication-guidance-for-churches/social-media-guidelines/> and the Methodist Online Working Guidelines

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/being-a-community-when-you-cant-meet/creating-safe-virtual-communities-with-children-and-young-people/before-you-begin-some-safeguarding-pointers/> **These should be adopted when working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.**

5. Other training considerations may be: First Aid, Conflict Resolutions, Mental Health First Aid.

**The supervisor/line manager** on behalf of the Church Council has a responsibility to put in place arrangements which support employees/volunteers’ safety. It is helpful to consider the following points:

* The remoteness of the workplace
* Potential communication problems
* Potential for verbal and physical abuse
* Vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress and depression
* Whether or not all the plant, equipment, materials to be used can be handled safely by one person
* Whether or not the person is medically fit and able to work alone
* How the lone worker will be supervised/ mentored?
* How the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as assault, vehicle breakdown, accident or fire?
* Whether or not there is adequate first aid cover

**The responsibility of the volunteer/employee** is to support their own work and that of other volunteers/employees. Individuals should consider the points below and any other matters they can identify which will anticipate predictable risks.

* Take reasonable care for your own safety
* Report any incidents of violence or aggressive behaviour
* Arrange to meet unknown individuals in a public place and preferably with another person present
* If making a home visit, make sure that someone knows where you are going and that you have a mobile ‘phone with you that is turned on
* Tell someone where you are going and when you anticipate being back
* Consider a 'buddy system' when you let a colleague or friend know that you have arrived at a visit/premises and when leaving a visit/ premises
* To consider carrying a Personal Shriek Alarm
* To always be 'streetwise' and vigilant, taking note of what is going on around you

**Scenario for consideration:**

The following scenario offers opportunity to reflect on appropriate responses to situations where lone working, appropriately or inappropriately, is one of the options.

* **Pat and Maria**
* Pat is a pastoral visitor for her church. She has been visiting some church members on and off for three years. It is generally acknowledged that she has a gift in this area and, as she lives alone and with few family commitments, she has the time available to do this.
* Over the last year the church congregation has been steadily growing and the need for pastoral visits has increased. Pat was recently asked by the Minister to visit Maria, a relatively new person to the Church after the Minister had received a ‘phone call to say that this person was feeling low.
* On arrival, Pat found that Maria had not been taking good care of herself. She was invited in and offered a cup of tea. Maria had locked the door behind her and seemed agitated. As time went by, Pat became increasingly uneasy. Every time she mentioned leaving, Maria got up and barred the way to the door. She noticed that her pupils were dilated. When her hands were not in her dressing gown pocket where she had the door key, she could see that her hands were shaking.
* Eventually, with the promise of going to get Maria a pint of milk from the local shops, she made her escape. No one knew Pat was doing this visit at this time and no one was expecting her home at any specific time.
* *What issues arise and how may they be addressed?*

***June 2020***

*To be reviewed in June 2022*

**Useful links to Methodist Policy and Guidance**

**Methodist Social Media Guidelines**

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/digital-communication-guidance-for-churches/social-media-guidelines/>

**Methodist Online Working Guidelines**

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/being-a-community-when-you-cant-meet/creating-safe-virtual-communities-with-children-and-young-people/before-you-begin-some-safeguarding-pointers/>

**Methodist Lay Employment Advice**

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers/lay-employment-advisory-information/>

**Sample Job/Role Descriptions**

<http://www.catshillmethodists.org.uk/03-2019%20CMCC%20Volunteering%20Roles.pdf>

**XXXXXX Methodist Church**

**Lone Working Risk Assessment**

*(boxes will expand to suit each assessment)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Employee/Volunteer | | Xxxxxxxx (Volunteer) | |
| Name of Supervisor/Line Manager | | Xxxxxxxx (Supervisor) | |
| Date Written |  | Date Reviewed |  |
| Activity to be Assessed | Pastoral Home Visit of xxxxx | | |
| Signed |  | Signed |  |
| Employee/Volunteer |  | Supervisor/ Line Manager |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risk Identified | Who could potentially be harmed by the Risk? | How will the Risk be managed or eliminated? | When will the management measure be in place? |
| No-one aware of where Volunteer is during a pastoral home visit | Volunteer | Supervisor to be informed by email of scheduled pastoral visits  Buddy to be given text when arrive at the home and when volunteer leaves  Buddy to have contact number of Supervisor in case of an emergency | Ongoing – Weekly schedule to be sent  Need to find Buddy before commencement of visits  As Above |
| Previous Pastoral Visitor indicated an unhealthy reliance on them from the person to be visited | Volunteer | Good use of Mentor/Pastoral Visiting Coordinator/ Supervisor – Including debriefing and being aware of previous situation.  Rotation of people having contact with this person. | Completed  Ongoing |