

Circuit Lone Worker Policy

1. Introduction

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, an employer is responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their staff and volunteers. ***(In this document the words “staff” and “employee” are interchangeable and relate to Ministers and Lay Employees.)*** They also have responsibility for the health and safety of any contractor or self-employed people doing work for them. However, staff and volunteers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to cooperate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations. Many staff work from their own home and are entitled to expect systems to account for their safety there too.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of the Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire. Each Methodist Church within the Circuit is responsible for its own risk assessment of its activities, when employees, Church members/volunteers are working alone.

A lone worker is anyone who works in isolation from their colleagues without close or direct supervision. This includes:

Those working at their main place of work where:

- Only one person is working on the premises
- People are working separately from each other, eg. in different locations
- People are working outside normal office hours (9am – 5pm).

Those working away from their fixed base where:

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

3. Aims of Policy

The aim of the policy is to:-

- Increase Circuit staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working and also acknowledge the responsibility of Church Councils within the Circuit with regard to lone working of their own employees (eg. cleaners) and volunteers;
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk, so far as is reasonable and practicable;
- Ensure that appropriate support and training is given to all staff and volunteers, that enables them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone;
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working;

- Reduce the number of incidents involving staff and volunteers which are related to lone working.

4. Responsibilities

The employer is responsible for:

- Assessing “reasonably foreseeable risks” – identifying, evaluating and managing risks associated with lone working;
- Ensuring that the employee has a means of summoning help if necessary;
- Ensuring that contact details for the employee and their next of kin are kept on file;
- Recording any health issues that might affect an employee’s ability to work alone safely;
- Ensuring that a system is in place so that the employer (or supervisor) knows that the employee is safe when working on their own or off the premises (eg. via phone calls and location visits);
- Requiring all employees making home visits to have a mobile phone, switched on, and providing other personal safety equipment, where this is felt to be desirable;
- Ensuring that the employee receives a Health and Safety induction and that the Certificate of Employment Liability is displayed;
- Checking that the insurance cover adequately covers the work undertaken and ensuring that an accident book is kept up to date;
- Reviewing risk assessment periodically or when there has been a significant change in working practice.

Employees are responsible for:-

- Taking reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, and others affected by their actions or omissions at work;
- Observing guidance and procedures designed for safe working;
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone;
- Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and requesting guidance as appropriate; (*see Appendix B*)
- Participating in training or consultation designed to meet the requirements of the policy.

5. Guidance for Risk Assessments of Lone Working (*see Appendix A*)

- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Does the workplace or task present a special risk to the lone worker? (Vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress and depression)
- Are there adequate channels of communication in an emergency? (eg. How would a lone worker be “missed” if taken seriously ill and unable to summon help? How would a lone worker obtain help in an emergency, such as assault, vehicle breakdown etc?)
- Has safe travelling between appointments been arranged?
- Is there a risk of violence? (Verbal or physical abuse)

- Are there any reasons why the individual might be more vulnerable than others and be particularly at risk if they work alone? (eg. if they are young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee)
- Is any known risk attached to a client(s)?
- Can an alternative to a home visit be arranged?
- Can the whereabouts of the lone worker be traced? (Consideration of supervision)
- Have reporting and recording arrangements been made where appropriate?

6. Good Practice for Lone Workers

- All staff leaving the workplace (or home) to undertake work-related activities alone should consider leaving details of where they are going and their estimated time of arrival back at base;
- When arranging one-to-one meetings, staff should consider whether contact could take place in an environment where confidentiality could be maintained but others would be in the vicinity;
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and be conversant with the use of fire extinguishers;
- Lone workers should carry a mobile phone and other personal safety equipment where this is deemed necessary.
- Lone workers will adhere to the safeguarding guidance and procedures as stated in the “Methodist Safeguarding Handbook”

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