

CHURCH/CIRCUIT LONE WORKER POLICY

A risk assessment should be undertaken of:

- the working practices for a lone worker
- the working environment provided by the employer for an employee

The risk assessment would be part of the Health and Safety at Work Policy of an Employing Body.

Working practices for a lone worker

Lone workers include those who

- work away from an office base
- work outside normal working hours
- are the only person on the premises
- work in the same building as colleagues but in a space on their own

At times, many church and circuit employees will be in situations where they are a 'lone worker'. The recommendations below try to be realistic about what can and cannot be put in place. Whilst it must be recognised that the church/circuit, as an employer, does not have the structure associated with a large business, it aims to be a good employer who is concerned about the safety of its employees.

Many lay employees work on a part-time basis, from their own home and so it is equally important to have a system in place to account for their safety too. It is important to note that lone workers maybe at higher risk of being seriously harmed by hazards at work because there may not be anyone to support or help them in the event of an accident or illness. The church/circuit must ensure that it trains, supervises, and monitors the provision of robust health and safety practices for its employees, as part of its overall duty of care.

Responsibilities of the employer

- To assess the 'reasonably foreseeable risks' (e.g. is there glass in the office door so that all callers can be seen before the door is opened? Does the church/circuit Youth Club finish at the same time as the local pub/football match etc? Does the cleaner work late at night and needs to use an un-lit passageway to get home?)
- To ensure that a system is in place for calling for help if there is a problem on the premises
- To keep on file in a secure place, the employee and their next-of-kin contact phone numbers
- To keep records of any health issues that may affect the employee whilst working alone and review this as necessary
- To ensure that a system is in place so that the employer knows that an employee is safe when working on their own either on or off the premises
- To provide all employees making home visits with a mobile phone or reimbursement of costs incurred for work-related calls made.
- To ensure that the employee receives a Health and Safety Induction training and that the Certificate of Employers Liability is displayed in the office at all times
- Check that insurance cover adequately covers the work to be undertaken
- To ensure the availability of appropriate and adequate personal protective equipment for mandatory use by employees as necessary
- Provide an accident book and ensure it is kept up to date at all times.

In relation to a lone worker risk assessment, consideration should also be given to:

- the remoteness of the workplace
- potential communication problems
- potential for verbal and physical abuse and violence
- vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress, anxiety and depression
- whether or not all the plant, equipment, materials etc 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 effectively
- how the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as assault, vehicle breakdown, accident or fire etc.
- whether or not there is adequate first aid cover and the lone worker's capacity to administer this on themselves before help arrives.

Responsibilities of the employee

- To take reasonable care for your own safety
- To report any incidents of violence or aggressive behaviour etc.
- To arrange to meet unknown individuals in a public place and preferably with another person present
- If making a home visit, to make sure that someone knows where you are going and when you can be expected back. Ensure that you have a switched on working mobile phone on you, at all times
- If practical, to leave a note stating who and where you are visiting and how you will get there
- To 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 stay alert and be 'streetwise' and vigilant, taking note of what is going on around you.