

Lone Working Policy

This version: October 2025

Approved by PCC: October 2025 (Away Day)

To be reviewed/revised: October 2028

St Paul New Southgate Parish is committed to providing a safe working environment as far as reasonably practical that meets the needs of its staff and volunteers and conforms to Health & Safety legislation.

Resources drawn on: Safer Environment and Activities (CoE 2019), Parish Safeguarding Handbook (2018).

Definition of lone working

Individuals are alone at work when they are on their own, they cannot be seen or heard by another worker, and/or where assistance is not readily available.

Definition of volunteer

Anyone who has been asked to carry out an activity on behalf of St Paul's Church. Requests to help might come from a member of the PCC, the parish priest, or someone else from the congregation. These may be formal or informal.

Aims of the policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- Increase awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- To protect volunteers and staff from false accusations
- Ensure that the risks of lone working are assessed regularly and that systems are put in place to minimise the risk as far as is practical.

If working alone in the church building

- All individuals are to take relevant and sensible precautionary measures whilst lone working. If a volunteer or member of staff feels they are putting themselves at risk through lone working they should discuss the situation with the parish priest.

- If staff and volunteers are not planning to meet anyone, they should lock the door behind them, unless it is immediately before a church service when other members of the congregation are likely to arrive.
- If the staff or volunteer is expecting to have a 1:1 meeting in church they should stay in the nave of the church, in order that the person being met is in the most visible/public area of the church. The link-way should also be unlocked, as a second exit. The main door should be left wide open.

If working alone in the parish hall or church building

- Staff and volunteers should have a mobile phone with them at all times.
- Staff and volunteers should not engage in any potentially hazardous activity, e.g. climbing a ladder or using machinery.
- When working out of hours (after 10pm, before 7am) the volunteer/staff member should ensure someone else knows they are in the hall.
- When leaving the building at night, staff and volunteers should be mindful not to leave one person to lock up alone as far as is possible. For the Hall, the PCC stipulate that two persons must always lock up together if after 10pm.

If working alone at home

- Staff and volunteers should not invite a lone client i.e. someone not known to them personally from interactions at church or in the community, into their own home when they are there alone. The only exception are callers to the Vicarage.
- No one should give money to a caller or give out any personal details (of themselves or others, other than the parish priest). Callers should be invited to come to church on a Sunday or Thursday, access Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB) or other relevant provisions.

The Parish Priest working alone at the Vicarage

- The priest should feel no obligation to open their door if they don't feel comfortable with the person(s) who present themselves.
- If the priest invites callers into the vicarage, they must be mindful of their personal safety and ensure they have an available exit, and access to the vicarage's panic button.
- A record should be kept in the Vicarage Visitor's Book noting any unplanned visits when the priest has been alone, and any concerns the priest had. This is a safeguarding record. No sensitive information will be recorded in this book. Safeguarding issues will be followed up as per our Parish Safeguarding Policy.

Doing a pastoral visit at someone's home

- Staff and volunteers must work in pairs when visiting someone unknown to them (who has asked for a visit from the church). This allows the team to assess the risk of future lone-visits.
- Staff and volunteers should “listen to their gut” and exit any context they do not feel safe or comfortable about, even if the reasons are not immediately clear.
- Staff and volunteers who work in the community, and undertake home visits should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times, which is in good working order.
- The parish priest should be told of all home visits so these can be recorded, as clear and detailed record keeping may prevent problems in the future.
- If a member of staff or volunteers is looking to make a visit to a child (in any context) then parental consent must be given. If the pastoral concern is likely to be serious then two people ought to go together.
- Lone workers should be alert to any signs of potential danger during a home visit, and be prepared to leave immediately if they have any concerns. Confrontation should always be avoided, and lone workers should never assume that violence won't happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported to the parish priest and Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) as soon as possible. Signs of abuse should also be reported to the PSO.
- Staff and volunteers who undertake home visits should ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets they may have which may present a safety risk.
- Where possible, home visits should be conducted in the morning or early afternoon, rather than the evening or late afternoon, in order that lone workers can avoid traveling in the dark, particularly in areas that they don't know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.

New: Children

- Adults should not intentionally be alone with children (under 18) without express parental consent. This includes giving lifts to children.
- Adults should be mindful of any physical touch.
- Adults should not message children online. Contact should be through the parents/carers. This includes ‘friending’ or ‘following’ children on Social Media. The only exception would be if we have an official church account which is monitored by several church officers.

New: Online chat/direct messaging

- There should be awareness when someone is contacting a vulnerable adult as a friend (connected perhaps through church) and in their capacity as a church officer e.g. part of the PCC, rota co-ordinator, regular pastoral visitor. We do not

want people to feel pressured into volunteering, or engaging with church community life while also continuing to invite them to be part of our life together.

- All online communication which is 'direct' should be respectful. Behave in the online world as you would offline: Simply put, if you would not say it offline, do not say it online!

General

- A copy of this policy will be made available at the back of church, and put on our website. PCC members and anyone with a formal role in the church will be given a copy and it is their responsibility to read and follow the principles and procedures described in this document.
- All staff and volunteers should ensure that the parish priest and Church Wardens have their up to date mobile phone number and home address.
- Members of staff and volunteers are encouraged not to handle cash when lone working. Church collections must remain on the High Altar (or put in the safe) until at least two people authorised to do the count are present.
- Any occurrence or near miss occurrence where the staff member or volunteer felt threatened should be verbally reported to the parish priest or Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. This should be followed up with a written record which is signed and dated.
- If staff or volunteers are not in a good state of health they should not be alone in a building.
- When leaving the church or hall, please be mindful of the safety of anyone else left in the building. For example, you could offer to shut the door to prevent visitors dropping in.
- Personal Panic Alarms are to be available on request (for volunteers to keep).

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

What this lone working policy looks like in practice at St Paul's:

People likely to be working in the parish hall or church building alone:

- Martin, Margaret, Chris Bettiss, Lola, Fr Matt.

Actions needed:

- Ensure everyone who helps with church collection counting follows the rule of not starting to count before someone else is present.

Risk Register

The PCC should look to include a Risk Register when this policy is next revised.