



Hinckley United Reformed Church – Lone Working Policy

Introduction

Hinckley URC recognises that staff and volunteers may sometimes need to work alone for extended periods without close supervision. This may occur in isolated areas, outside regular hours, or while travelling alone. This policy outlines measures to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of workers engaged in lone working, whether on an occasional or regular basis.

The aim of this policy is to safeguard children and adults at risk when we are ministering on behalf of the church through the internet, social media, or mobile devices, and to provide guidance on our approach to online safety.

The church will:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of lone workers.
- Conduct relevant risk assessments to identify hazards and control risks effectively.
- Develop safe working arrangements to eliminate or mitigate risks.

This policy applies to both paid staff and volunteers working alone at Hinckley URC premises, off-site events, or during pastoral care activities. Some measures will also apply to online activities.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Good Practice 6 – Safeguarding for Everyone – URC
- Hinckley URC Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and Data Protection Policies

Aims

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure church leaders/elders and workers understand their responsibilities and accountability regarding lone working.
- Protect workers from the risks associated with lone working through support and training.
- Communicate arrangements for managing risks and maintaining safe working standards.
- Ensure risk assessments are conducted, documented where necessary, and regularly reviewed.
- Report, investigate, and learn from incidents, accidents, and near-misses to improve practice.

Responsibilities of Elders/leaders

Elders/leaders are responsible for ensuring that 'reasonably foreseeable risks' associated with lone working are identified and that risk assessments are completed where necessary. All reasonable steps must be taken to minimise any identified risk.

They should also:

- Ensure that lone workers have access to all relevant policies, procedures and risk assessments
- Provide suitable training for lone workers before they begin or change work patterns.
- Ensure that all lone workers are covered by liability insurance, regardless of their role ([Good Practice 6](#), section 3.5)
- Provide appropriate supervision / support
- Ensure that the Health & Safety policy covers relevant points on lone working e.g. use of equipment, provision of an accident book

Risk assessment

Risk assessments need to be made when planning an activity, and during the activity, in order to respond to any changes in the environment or people's behaviour which affect the level of risk.

Risk assessment before an activity

One helpful approach to risk assessment for lone working is to consider:

- Risks linked to the **environment** e.g. the building, neighbourhood, lighting, security, accessibility / means of transport for reaching the premises.
- Risks linked to **people** e.g. levels of either vulnerability or aggression, unrealistic expectations of a worker's role, significant power imbalance.
- Risks linked to **tasks/activities** e.g. breaking bad news, having to turn someone away from church premises/a worker's home.

Each situation needs to be assessed specifically, but some examples of risks in these different categories could include:

- Physical accident (from injury, fire, etc such as when using kitchen or maintenance equipment when there is no one available to fetch help)
- Sudden illness when there is no one to raise the alarm
- Physical violence or threat of abuse in any form from a visitor
- Sexual behaviour or advances deemed to be inappropriate or threatening
- Accusations by a visitor of inappropriate behaviour by staff / volunteers when there are no witnesses
- Stress caused by working in isolation or from abusive calls or digital media.

See also section 3.4 of [Good Practice 6](#) and Resource SA1: Risk assessment template.

Dynamic risk assessment during activities

A dynamic risk assessment involves assessing risk in developing and changing situations. It enables a worker to quickly identify new risks and take action to minimise them.

Examples of situations requiring dynamic risk assessment could include:

- Visiting people's homes e.g. if there are other people there unexpectedly
- Significant changes in someone's behaviour e.g. becoming more aggressive
- Going to a new location e.g. finding it is more isolated than anticipated

The flowchart in appendix 1 below illustrates a process for assessing dynamic risks.

Lone worker devices and apps

In some circumstances e.g. where lone working is very frequent or in situations where the perceived level of risk is high, the church may provide a personal safety device and/or enable use of a lone worker app. The need for devices / apps will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Procedures for lone workers

Lone workers need to:

- Be aware of all relevant policies and procedures
- Be familiar with the risk assessment for a particular activity and implement any identified measures to reduce risk

Lone workers should also follow these steps, adapting them as appropriate for different situations or activities:

- Inform a designated contact (e.g., an elder, team leader, family member, or friend) of their location, activity, and estimated finish time.
- Carry a charged mobile phone for emergency communication.
- Confirm completion of work with their contact; if not, the contact should escalate appropriately.
- Ensure premises are secure, including locked windows and doors.
- Familiarise themselves with emergency exits and evacuation procedures.
- Have access to first aid equipment.

Incident reporting

Incidents, including verbal abuse or situations where workers feel threatened, must be reported to an elder, team leader, line manager or safeguarding coordinator. This includes unplanned events with potential for harm, even if no injury occurs. Reporting ensures:

- Incidents are documented and investigated.
- Lessons are learned to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Lone working in pastoral care

One to one contact with individuals in the context of pastoral support should be properly planned, risk assessed and recorded.

In addition to the steps outlined in section 5 above, lone workers engaged in pastoral care will:

- Make prior arrangements for contact whenever possible rather than meeting 'on demand'
- Use public venues that afford privacy where possible
- If a private venue is used, take steps to reduce any secrecy e.g. have someone else in the next room or nearby where possible
- Respect personal space and take great care with any use of personal touch (see section 3.13 of [Good Practice 6](#)).

Home visits

Please refer to section 3.20 of [Good Practice 6](#).

Boundaries

Those providing pastoral care need to maintain a healthy self-awareness when working on their own and recognise when a person is showing signs of a risky dependence on them. Supervision and support from a team leader / elder / line manager is also important for discussing any concerns about someone becoming too dependent on the care provided by one individual.

Record keeping for 1-1 visits

Records should be maintained that are relevant to the contact. Minimum recording requirements for all one-to-one visits include:

- Date and time
- Persons present
- Venue
- Nature of contact

More details should be recorded if an individual is particularly vulnerable, there are safeguarding issues or any other indicators of concern:

- Purpose of the meeting / discussion
- The time each person arrived and left
- Who else was present (if applicable)
- A brief, factual account of what was discussed / agreed
- Any potential or actual safeguarding concerns identified
- Any actions taken / to be taken and any decisions made, including advice taken and who information has been shared with
- Sign and date the record and store securely

Unplanned lone working

There may be times when, despite careful planning, a worker finds themselves in a situation where they are unexpectedly alone with a child or adult at risk.

Examples could include:

- A youth worker is locking up after an activity, their co-leader has just gone home and a young person returns to the building and asks to chat
- A young person or adult at risk turns up at a worker's home unannounced
- An unplanned meeting or encounter in the street with a child or adult at risk that results in more than social chat or small talk

In these circumstances, workers will take appropriate steps to minimise risk, for example:

- Move to an area of a building that is covered by CCTV (if applicable)
- Wherever possible, phone or message another appropriate person to report the situation and ask for assistance
- Keep the contact as short as possible in the circumstances
- Make a written report of the situation immediately afterwards and inform the church safeguarding coordinator.

See also section 3.18 of [Good Practice 6](#) on lone working with children.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed. It must be adopted by the church meeting.

Signed:

Role:

Date:

Other useful links

Health and Safety Executive: Protecting Lone Workers

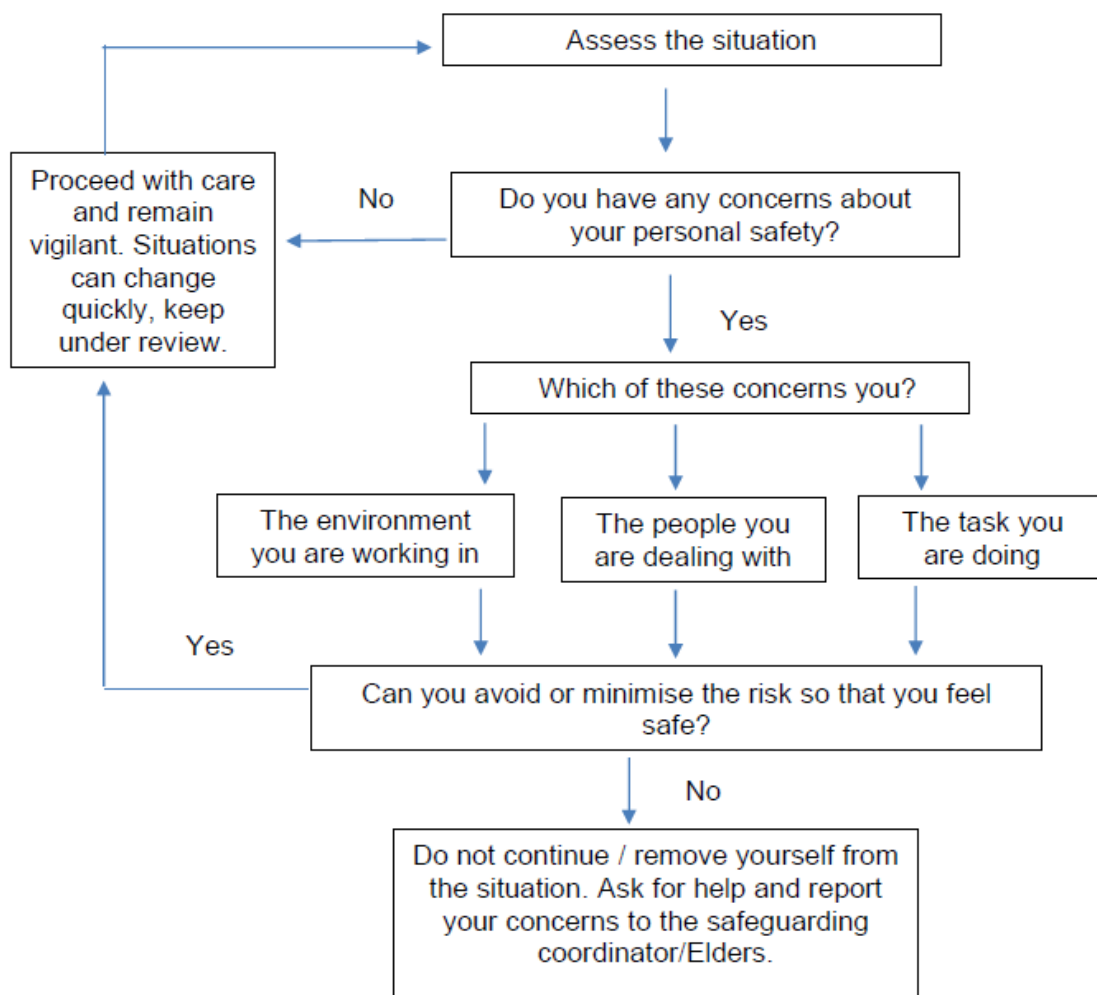
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm>

Suzy Lamplugh Trust: Personal Safety Advice

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/personal-safety-advice>

Appendix 1

Personal Safety Dynamic Risk Assessment



Adapted from material available from [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

