

# LONE WORKER & PERSONAL SAFETY POLICY

## 1 Introduction

Each UEC Church should be committed to reducing the risks to its members, staff and volunteers associated with lone working. Much of what should be done is common sense, but Churches have a duty of care to everyone doing work on its behalf. This can be done by identifying potential risks and acting as follows:

- Identifying the risks associated with lone working ('risk assessment')
- Giving practical advice and clear guidance to members, staff, and volunteers associated with lone working on how to avoid and manage risks associated with lone working
- Developing the ability of members, staff, and volunteers to anticipate risks and to manage and deal with them
- Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring members, staff, and volunteers do not avoid reporting them in the belief that they are not serious enough or that it may suggest failure on their part
- Members, staff, and volunteers share the responsibility for achieving these objectives
- This document is intended for use as a reference guide and also contains advice to help members, staff, and volunteers to work more safely. This advice is not exhaustive, nor is it a substitute for safe systems of work
- It is essential that Members, staff, and volunteers co-operate to develop simple and practical systems.

## 2 What is "lone working"?

- Lone working describes any situation whereby someone is not working alongside or near to other members, staff, and volunteers. Potentially this could include any member, staff, or volunteers
- Due to the nature of some of the work, there are frequent occasions when you will be in a situation where you are working alone, sometimes in remote or isolated areas or at night
- Given some forethought and a few simple precautions, the slight risk of going missing or becoming the subject of an assault etc can be reduced to a minimum.

## 3 Risk assessment

- Lone workers could be more vulnerable e.g. to assault, or because they are unable to raise the alarm if they have an accident. Therefore the risk for lone workers is greater and more rigorous systems are needed to protect them.

## 4 Basic requirements for all lone workers

- Take care of your own safety and that of others affected by your actions or inactions
- Comply with risk assessments and safe systems of work
- Report any shortcomings in systems of work to a member of the Pastoral Team or Diaconate
- Ensure all/any incidents are reported in the event of incidents or near misses.

## 5 Working alone at the church

- Members, staff, and volunteers must inform someone that they are at the church and alone with an expected time of departure
- An expected leaving time should be notified in advance to a contact person
- Protect your own safety by taking good and sensible precautions
- Lock all external doors on arrival but ensure you have a plan for evacuation if necessary
- Do not allow access to people or persons of whom you are unfamiliar with
- Ensure you have access to a phone in case of an emergency
- Follow all normal protocols when leaving the premises, i.e. making sure doors/windows are shut and locked/alarm set etc.

## 6 Working alone away from the church

Before leaving your normal place of work, i.e. SEC, members, staff, and volunteers should:

- Leave details of where you plan to go, approximate times when you expect to be there, details of any meetings you have arranged (including the name of the person you are meeting)
- Ensure you have an appropriate means of communication
- If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving
- Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated farm, adverse weather conditions for driving); if there are, discuss them with the Leadership Team or Diaconate
- Contact your named person to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule
- Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this
- Return to your normal place of work or contact the person as agreed, when you have safely completed your work / assignment / meeting etc
- Please remember that these procedures are there to protect you.

## 7 Visiting individuals and families in their own homes

- Make a note of where you are going
- Do not enter if the person/people you are visiting is not there and you do not know the person inviting you inside
- Tell the Leadership Team about any incidents which arose during the meeting
- Remember you are visiting someone else's territory, acknowledge it is their home and wait to be asked in, invited to sit, etc
- Familiarise yourself with the surroundings in case you need to leave quickly
- Don't block the other person's line of egress, but make sure your own isn't blocked
- Let the other person enter the room first and make sure you have a clear line of escape
- Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting
- If you feel threatened by dogs etc, ask politely if they can be moved, or leave
- On entering a building or premises, make sure you know how to get out in a hurry
- If the person/people you are meeting appear/s to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it may be appropriate to make another appointment
- Ensure your behaviour is honest, fair, even-handed, considerate and helpful; never be aggressive, don't be patronising.

## 8 If an accident/incident occurs

- Report all incidents, including near misses
- Provide a statement if asked to do so by the Pastoral Team or Diaconate
- Follow any new procedures if they are revised following the incident / near miss.

## 9 Travelling by car

This might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night.

- Plan your route and take appropriate maps
- Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather
- Keep valuables out of sight; female staff should not leave obvious signs that the driver is female (handbags, coats etc) on the seats
- Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit; when returning to the vehicle, check the back seat
- Carry a mobile phone for emergency use (do not use whilst driving unless hand free)
- Do not pick up hitchhikers
- Carry a torch at night
- If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help
- If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened.

## 10 Road rage

- Unfortunately this type of incident is becoming more prevalent. If at any time you are confronted by this situation, it is important that you do nothing to fuel it further
- Do not stop to confront the third party. If a car pulls in front of you and you are approached, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and windows closed; keep the engine running and drive away as soon as possible
- If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash lights etc to gain others' attention
- If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until you reach a busy area - e.g. a 24 hour garage
- If you are stationary and have a mobile phone, ring the emergency services.

## 11 If you break down on a motorway or dual carriageway

- Park as near as possible to an emergency phone
- If you have to walk, wear high visibility clothing if possible
- Leave your car by the passenger door
- When making an emergency call, face oncoming traffic, so you can see if another vehicle is approaching
- Tell the operator if you are a lone female
- Never cross the carriageway
- Wait behind the barrier, beside your vehicle if this is safe
- Ask for ID from uniformed persons to ensure they are bona fide.

## 12 Travelling by public transport

- Plan your route (outward and return) in advance
- Try to avoid travelling alone late at night
- Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits
- Have your fare / ticket ready and separate from other valuables
- Try to keep one hand free
- Sit downstairs on double-decker buses
- Try to avoid falling asleep.

## 13 Travelling on foot

- Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings
- Keep one hand free if possible
- Avoid short-cuts, underpasses or poorly lit areas
- Walk facing on-coming traffic
- Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers
- Keep valuables out of sight and avoid areas where groups may gather e.g. clubs, discos etc
- Avoid wearing personal stereos
- Ensure your mobile phone is accessible and fully charged.

## 14 Travelling in isolated areas or late at night

- Wherever possible arrange meetings so that they are completed during daylight hours.
- If you have to go to an evening meeting, be aware of safe parking areas, particularly after dark.
- Follow normal protocols for working away from the church as shown above.

## 15 Procedure for alerting to personal danger

- If members, staff, and volunteers find themselves in danger and unable to speak freely, they should emphasise to the antagonist that they are expected to call in to a central point at a pre-determined time, and that if they don't, the alarm will be raised.
- On telephoning, the member, staff, and volunteer should say: "Hello, this is ....., may I speak to xxxxx?" and say "I am finding today really hard" thus indicating a warning.