

Pastoral Visit & Lone Working Policy



Chowdene Church

Chowdene
CHURCH

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy Chowdene Church (Registered Charity: 239787) shall refer to the Senior Leadership Team, Trustees, Employees and Volunteers of Chowdene Church currently meeting at the Strongpoint Centre, 660 Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead, NE9 6JA, by telephone and online including Zoom, Microsoft Teams and YouTube.

Current activities of the church include regular church services, youth and children activities, small groups, bible studies, prayer meetings and trips arranged by the church in addition to outreach projects in the local area, with a view to letting all know the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chowdene Church understands that as part of its responsibilities within the community there will be a need for Senior Leadership Team, Trustees, employees and volunteers of the church to carry out pastoral visits as part of their roles, and there will also be a need for them to work alone. The church recognises and values their worth, and this policy has been written to set out guidelines in order that the work can be carried out safely, and without fear of physical violence or of damage to individual or church reputations.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Chowdene Safeguarding Policy and the Chowdene Health and Safety Policy.

All workers and volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, and work with others where possible. However, if this is not feasible, they should be aware of the importance of personal safety, and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances. Disciplinary action may follow a failure to follow the procedures laid out.

Introduction and Purpose

The aims of this Policy and Procedure are:

- To ensure lone working and pastoral visitation occurs in a safe and secure way
- To protect the reputations of both the individual and also of Chowdene Church

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- To ensure risks are identified, and measures are put in place to respond to risks or concerns raised, swiftly and appropriately.
 - To clearly identify the responsibilities each person has in relation to lone working and pastoral visitation.
 - To ensure that Senior Leadership Team, Trustees, employees and volunteers are familiar with and use the policy.
 - To outline the procedures and principles which are in place to minimise the risks faced by lone working and during the course of pastoral visitation.

Pastoral Visitation

As part of the life in Chowdene Church it will be necessary for the pastoral team, and on occasion, employees and volunteers to meet with members of the congregation. It is acknowledged that this may be on church regulated premises, an individual's own home or in an alternative venue. These visits should be conducted in a safe way in order to protect both those being visited and those visiting, and also to avoid damage to the reputations of the individual and the church. It is recognised that some 'visits' are phone calls, or virtual calls on Zoom, Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp

A written record will be retained by all pastoral visitors, in individual books, in order to assist with Safeguarding within the church and avoid any criticism of activities.

Chowdene Church acknowledges the need for pastoral confidentiality, so as a minimum the following information should be recorded:

- Name of person visited
- Approximate date of visit
- Type of contact
- Any area of concern
- Any follow up action taken

All information will be recorded on an on-line system, accessed through the church website, which can be monitored by the Head of Digital Communication. The information will not be made accessible to other church workers in order to maintain confidentiality and will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

When arranging to meet with an individual consideration should be given to the following:

- The timing and venue for meetings.
- Whether others are aware of the meeting taking place or not.

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- Whether meetings are to be formal or informal.
 - The setting of the meeting: whether its atmosphere, lighting and furnishings are appropriate.
 - Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection.
 - Being sensitive about the use of first names or terms of endearment.
 - The appropriateness of either visiting or being visited alone.
 - Whether the person would be considered vulnerable in terms of Safeguarding. (Remember vulnerability can be a temporary as well as permanent situation).

The Pastoral Team, volunteers and employees that are required to carry out any visits or phone calls to an individual should employ the following good practice:

- Be aware of their own emotional needs and vulnerabilities and those of the other person, and the dangers of dependency in pastoral/church relationships.
- Act with compassion and non-judgement while keeping appropriate emotional, psychological and physical distance.
- Be clear as to what sort of help or advice is being sought, and that their involvement is actually wanted.
- Use the skills which come naturally (e.g. listening, empathy) but recognise their own limits.
- Discern the right time to bring on-going pastoral support to an appropriate conclusion, thus encouraging maturity and growth.
- Be sensitive to any potential manipulation.
- Seek advice from one of the Safeguarding Team if there are any concerns or if they are in any doubt about their own competence to deal with the situation.

Pastoral situations which must be avoided include:

- Visiting someone alone in their home late at night.
- Arranging for someone to visit with a member of the pastoral team in their own home when they are alone late at night.
- A male lone worker visiting an unaccompanied female member of the congregation and vice versa.
- Long-term pastoral relationships with a married person, especially if pastoral care focuses on difficulties in the marriage, when the couple should either be seen together or referred to a suitably qualified couple counsellor.
- Allowing a particular pastoral relationship to endanger the life and well-being of the church and/or the wider community

Working Alone in Church or at another Building

It is important not to over-emphasise the risks of lone working, and create an unnecessary fear amongst Senior Leadership Team, employees, and volunteers that is disproportionate to the reality of the risks faced. However, lone workers do face increased risks

because they do not have the immediate support of colleagues, or others, if an incident occurs, and particularly if they are in someone's home, or are working in an isolated or rural location.

The following guidance is, therefore, intended to reflect good practice in relation to the protection of lone workers.

Lone working refers to situations where individuals work alone, or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance.

In this regard, Chowdene Church will:

- Undertake a risk assessment on building safety to determine if the church/building needs extra security. For example, door chains or outside lighting can all help to safely identify callers.
- Consider how lone workers will raise the alarm if necessary, and ensure they have a means of communicating with others in the event a problem arises.
- Agree a protocol for visitors to the building; and decide whether or not to allow visitors in when only one person is there.

No-one should ever plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people. However, if they should find themselves in this situation, it is important that another adult is made aware immediately. The Chowdene Safeguarding Team can also be contacted for advice. In addition, the lone worker should assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with them.

Personal Safety

Whilst Chowdene Church has a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its Senior Leadership Team, employees and volunteers, there are also a number of things individuals can do to take reasonable care of themselves.

- Lone workers should never put themselves at risk. If a situation arises that they are unfamiliar with, or in which they feel unsafe, they should withdraw and seek further advice or assistance.
- Senior Leadership Team, employees and volunteers should conduct their own risk assessment on the occasions when they are working alone, which will help them to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken to avoid danger, e.g. making a trusted colleague aware of the visit and the agreed emergency coded message.
- Lone workers should be aware of themselves, their behaviour and the signals they may be giving, and to think about their body language, tone of voice and the choice of words they use with others that could be misunderstood or taken as confrontational.

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- Senior Leadership Team, employees and volunteers who work alone also need to be aware of changes in the behaviour of the person they are with, especially if they seem to become over familiar, angry or threatening.
 - If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – the employee or volunteer should notify their line manager, the Safeguarding Officer or another member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible in order that the procedures outlined in the Chowdene Safeguarding Policy can be followed.

Emergency Situations:

Employees may find themselves in an emergency situation. Should this happen they should dial 999 and seek police assistance. If however, by openly calling the police the situation would be inflamed the lone worker should call a trusted colleague or a member of the Chowdene Safeguarding Team and use an agreed coded message that will alert the recipient to the need for Police assistance - e.g. The lone worker should repeat the phrase '**I am going to be late home for tea, I am still at**' and confirm their location.

Situations which may constitute an emergency include (but are not limited to):

- Conflict or aggression is taking place between 2 individuals in the church building or at a church event i.e. a youth social meeting, where there is concern that the situation may escalate into actual physical violence and/or need police intervention.
- There is concern that drugs or other substances have been consumed by those attending an event or being visited by a lone worker, that make the situation potentially dangerous.
- Threats are personally made to an employee, volunteer or other lone worker.
- Actual violence takes place.
- Any situation where the lone worker is fearful for their safety or feels under threat.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team or following an event, in order to ensure that it is still relevant and fit for purpose.

Date of next review January 2027