

Guidelines for Pastoral Visiting

Introduction

Much pastoral care takes place in an informal way within the church community. Formal pastoral care is carried out by church representatives on behalf of the parish. This guidance is intended for all who undertake pastoral care in this official capacity in our parish as licensed ministers, church officers, or members of groups responsible for certain aspects of pastoral care (e.g. bereavement and baptism).

Any person wishing to undertake formal pastoral care will be expected to follow the Diocese of Southwark's 'Safer Recruitment' guidelines. This will be subject to the necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, pastoral care training, and safeguarding training.

Home Visits, Lone Visiting and Risk Management

Lone visits pose increased risks because there is no immediate support from others. All workers and volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, however at the same time it is recognised that lone working is an everyday and essential practice for clergy and other authorised lay personnel. It is essential that the additional risks associated with lone working are fully understood in order that they can go about their daily work in relative safety.

The following Code of Conduct for visiting should be adhered to:

- Safeguarding policy as set out in *A Safer Church* must be followed at all times;
- Only visit alone if you have been authorised by the Rector or Team Vicar;
- Never visit someone alone if you have any question or concern whatsoever about whether it is safe so to do;
- Work in pairs on at least a first visit and perform a visual risk assessment of the person being visited and then discuss this with the Rector or Team Vicar whether lone visits are suitable;
- Visit only in the morning or early afternoon;
- Maintain clear time boundaries for the meeting;
- Take a switched-on mobile phone and inform the Rector, Team Vicar, or another suitable person about a visit before it takes place and again after it has been completed;
- Always discuss situations where you believe there is a material change in a visited person's wellbeing or mental health with the Rector or Team Vicar;
- Always refer to the Rector or Team Vicar if you feel the level of risk has increased;
- Request further advice from the Rector or Team Vicar if you feel the visited person's needs are outside your competence;
- Never visit a child or young person alone or in pairs unless a parent or carer is present;
- Be aware of your surroundings and ensure that you can leave quickly if necessary;

- If you have any concerns for your personal safety when you visit (e.g. the visited person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, displays challenging behaviour, or the environment is unsafe) **LEAVE IMMEDIATELY**;
- **If you have any concerns about an immediate risk to the visited person, dial 999 and request help from the appropriate emergency services, and call the Rector or Team Vicar;**
- If you have any concerns about safeguarding, please report these to the Rector, Team Vicar, or Parish Safeguarding Officers at the earliest opportunity.

Record Keeping

The only records which are kept as part of pastoral care will be names and contact details, date of visits, and any relevant notes. Any notes of visits should be completed within 48 hours of a visit and kept securely on church premises.

Confidentiality and Respect

Visitors should respect the views of every person to whom they provide pastoral care. Whatever a visited person tells you, it must be treated with respect and kept confidence. You are encouraged to seek advice from the Rector, Team Vicar or Parish Safeguarding Officer if faced with an ethical dilemma regarding confidentiality and the law. Where possible, ask for consent to share information. Where there is a risk of harm or criminal activity, you should consider it your duty to break a confidence.

Safeguarding

If you have any concerns regarding the welfare and protection of vulnerable people or groups or if there are any concerns expressed to you by any other person, they should be raised **IMMEDIATELY** with the Rector, Team Vicar, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Churchwardens, or if they are not available, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team directly:

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Hugh Constant

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
020 7973 9423 (office hours)
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kate.singleton@southwark.anglican.org

Policy agreed and adopted by the PCC at a meeting on 7th July 2025