

Personal Safety Plan for Church People



Personal Safety - issues to consider

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you know how you would react if faced with a situation where your personal safety was in danger?
- What about if this threatened your family or others you are responsible for?
- Have you thought about this in advance or would you simply rely on instinct?
- Do you have a personal safety plan? If not, why not? If you do, do others know what it includes and how they can help you?
- Do you require additional training to provide support or guidance when dealing with visitors or parishioners who require special attention e.g. mental health issues or other disabilities

Personal Safety Plans should:

- Include an assessment of the hazards and risks encountered
- Be sensitive to location / activity
- Be clear and easy to understand
- Outline safety actions /control measures
- Be made known to all who need to know the content
- Be regularly reviewed

Remember – it is OK to put the safety of yourself (and family) above the needs of others!

Remember – You should take suitable precautions to prevent an accusation of inappropriate behaviour with a child or vulnerable adult.

Some suggested control measures/actions

At Home/Office

- Complete a security assessment of the property (i.e. are boundaries, doors and windows adequately secure; is there security lighting/an intruder alarm / CCTV fitted, as appropriate). Financial support may be available from the diocese
- Check who is at the door before opening (i.e. use a spyhole or security chain)
- Ensure keys to the home and car and not obviously visible or easily accessible from the door / windows
- Consider whether you need to let uninvited callers in to the home (i.e. could you have seating outside, in clear view of the house, where you could sit and talk)
- Plan how you will deal with requests for food / money from unexpected visitors (i.e. place in a bag so that you can pass it to them with one hand, leaving the other free to close the door quickly, should you need to. Keep your foot or a doorstep planted firmly behind the open door to prevent it being forced open)
- Keep the office separate from the home, where possible
- Don't leave visitors alone in your home / office
- Read the situation / visitor – have a prepared excuse to terminate the meeting i.e. "I've got another meeting now so need to leave; can we re-schedule for another time?"
- Consider having a personal attack alarm available and ensure that others know what to do should they hear it
- Establish an emergency code / phrase with your family so that they know you are concerned (i.e. "I am expecting a call from John Smith, could you let me know when he calls?") and that they know what to do if you say it
- Try to plan meetings when others will be at home
- Do not let uninvited callers know that you are alone in the house
- Keep a record book for visitors who are unexpected

At Cathedrals/Church/Churchyard

- Try not to be in situations where you are alone at the church
- Ensure someone knows when to expect you home
- Ensure you have an escape route from the building
- Ensure your car keys are to hand and you are parked so that you can get away easily
- Consider having a personal attack alarm available and ensure that others know what to do should they hear it
- Ensure that your mobile phone is easily accessible and in good working order
- If worried about a situation take whatever action you need to escape to safety
- Be aware of your surroundings and visitors unknown to you
- Read any information or instructions for working alone at the location
- Ensure suitable first aid facilities are available

Visiting Others (at their homes and elsewhere)

- Ensure your family and others know where you are and when to expect you to return
- Ensure that your mobile phone is easily accessible and in good working order
- Ensure that you have emergency contact telephone numbers programmed in to your mobile phone (if possible, consider adding these as "speed dial" shortcuts)
- Consider having a personal attack alarm available and ensure that others know what to do should they hear it

- If possible try to meet people in public locations, rather than a location that you are unfamiliar with
- Establish an emergency code / phrase with your family so that they know you are concerned (i.e. "I am expecting a call from John Smith, could you let me know when he calls?") and that they know what to do if you say it
- Read the situation / visitor – have a prepared excuse to terminate the meeting i.e. "I've got another meeting now so need to leave; can we re-schedule for another time?"
- Arrange for a family member (or another person) to call you at regular intervals to check that you are safe (NB: ensure that this conversation does not further alarm an agitated person or worsen a situation, by using agreed coded messages)
- If worried about a situation take whatever action you need to escape to safety
- If meeting at someone's home, make a mental note of the layout and how to escape quickly if you need to. Be aware of how the door locks/unlocks.
- Allow the host to lead the way, so that doors cannot be locked behind you
- Sit as close to the door as possible
- If you use your car for transport make sure you park so that you can leave quickly, if needed. For example reverse into a space.

Remember - always report any suspicious incidents or persons to the Police, your Archdeacon and/or others that might need to know.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Advice Line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00, excluding Bank Holidays) or email us at risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

You can find out more about how to keep your church and community safe at www.ecclesiastical.com/riskmanagement

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