

# HCC Lone Working Policy



## Introduction

1. Huntingdon Community Church (HCC) staff will not normally be expected to work alone; however, on occasions, employees and volunteers of HCC may be required to work alone. If this becomes necessary, for example due to working alone at 83a or, in 1-to-1 sessions with young people or other individuals, the arrangements that must be put in place are covered in this policy.
3. Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where HCC workers or volunteers work alone or are physically isolated from other staff and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may occur where there are other people in the building or onsite but the nature of the building or location itself creates isolated areas.
4. HCC workers and volunteers must assess and reduce the risks that the proposed lone working situation presents before undertaking such activity.
5. This policy should be read in conjunction with HCC's Health and Safety and Safeguarding policies.
6. For HCC workers and volunteers in a school context, this policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Health and Safety, Safeguarding, and any other relevant policies.

## Aims

7. This policy is designed to alert HCC workers and volunteers to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in such situations, and to describe procedures that must be taken to minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give workers and volunteers a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

## Hazards of Lone Working

8. The main hazards associated with lone working are:
  - Risk of an accident going undetected and injuries not being tended to, or sudden illness
  - Risk of attack, violence (verbal, physical, sexual or otherwise) or any kind of abuse from individuals being worked with, intruders or others.
  - Accusations of any kind
  - Inappropriate behaviour when there are no witnesses
  - Stress on the lone worker and isolation

## Policy

9. Should an incident occur while an HCC worker is lone working, their line manager must be contacted immediately afterwards, and reporting and de-briefing should follow.

10. This policy is designed for the safety of HCC workers and volunteers when working alone; however, there is recognition that at times there may be a need for flexibility within this policy. It has been agreed that when this occurs, documented conversations will need to take place with the relevant line manager and/or the Safeguarding Lead Trustee.
11. HCC employees are responsible for agreeing and facilitating such amended arrangements which must be agreed by HCC's trustees. Such amended arrangements would be tailored to the operating conditions faced by HCC workers and volunteers.
12. Lone working is never acceptable when dealing with potential conflict.
13. HCC will ensure that all its workers and volunteers are trained in and adhere to this policy. Any lack of adherence will be reported to the Eldership and addressed by suspension of lone working and additional training.

### **Lone Working at the Church Centre**

14. Most work at the Church Centre, 83a, takes place during normal working hours, and usually when there is more than one employee on site. The measures within this policy should be applied, however, when HCC staff find themselves alone in the building, perhaps at the beginning or end of the day. Special care should always be taken when opening up the building or locking up alone at the end of the day.
15. If an HCC staff member is working alone, care must be taken when answering the door to visitors and staff members should be cautious in allowing them into the building and aim to deal with them at the door. Ideally, no visitors will be allowed into the building if there are not two members of staff present. Use should be made of the chain at the front door to converse with callers if necessary.
16. No member of staff, volunteer, or employee should work alone with a vulnerable person at 83a. HCC expects that if a vulnerable person turns up at the door when someone is lone working they are not allowed into the premises. The member of staff should either meet with the individual in a public space where there are other people or arrange to see the person on another day when there are other people in the centre.
17. Staff who need to work alone must do so for short periods only and should ensure that they have immediate access to a phone while doing so.
18. Any individual who works at 83a must receive a Health and Safety Brief.

### **Lone Working with Young People**

19. HCC workers and volunteers must avoid putting themselves in isolated positions with children or young people.
20. HCC workers' safety should be considered when choosing locations for 1-to-1 meetings.
21. HCC workers should be fully briefed about the risks of meeting with others in a lone working situation, as well as the task itself.
22. Communication, check-in and fall-back arrangements must be in place (see paras 31 – 36). HCC workers should ensure someone is always aware of their movements and expected return time. It is their responsibility to complete the movement board in the office for their planned group and individual sessions.

23. When HCC workers or volunteers undertake activities with children or young people, these activities should always take place in the open, and in the event of working with young people at a distant site, public transport should be used wherever possible.

24. If an HCC worker or volunteer needs to travel with a child or young person together in a car, they must always get written consent from the parent/guardian/carer (this can be a text message or email). There needs to be another identified DBS-checked adult in the car. The young person should sit at the back of the car with an appropriate seat belt.

25. An HCC worker or volunteer should only meet a young person in their home if a parent, guardian or carer has given permission and is present, and should always keep open the door of the room they are in.

26. HCC workers should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their home address remains confidential. HCC workers should never take a child or young person to their home or give them their address without the express permission of their parents, and should notify their manager if they do so.

27. HCC workers contacting a child or young person from home should be aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on Caller Display and can be retrieved on 1471. To prevent the caller's number being accessed mobiles should be used or 141 be dialled before using any landline number.

28. If an HCC worker or volunteer brings their own child and friends to an HCC event, it is acknowledged that this is done in their own time and not as part of their role as a worker or volunteer within HCC.

### **Assessment of Risk**

29. In drawing up a risk assessment for a particular activity that involves lone working, HCC workers and volunteers should consider the following:

- the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
- the environment – location, security, access
- the context – nature of the task, any special circumstance
- history – any previous incidents in similar situations
- any other special circumstances.

30. All available information should be considered and updated as necessary. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of an HCC worker or volunteer in a situation, consideration should be given to two HCC workers taking part or making other arrangements to complete the task.

### **Lone Working WhatsApp Group**

31. Workers and volunteers who carry out lone working should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times. They are responsible for checking that the mobile phone is charged and in working order.

32. HCC has set up a 'Lone Working' WhatsApp Group to assist in ensuring the safety of its workers when working alone in the church centre or away from the centre (eg working delivering group or 1-to-1 mentoring sessions as part of youth work). The WhatsApp group will consist of the following people: HCC Pastor, Safeguarding Lead Trustee, HCC Administrator, and any individual who undertakes lone working

33. The HCC worker who is lone working should give accurate details of their location and the timings of the lone working session on the WhatsApp group before the session starts. They should keep their mobile phones on silent when meeting an individual to avoid interruptions in the session but ensure they check in with the WhatsApp Lone Working Group text or phone after the period of lone working has finished.

34. If the HCC worker/volunteer does not make contact at the expected time, a decision must be made within the Lone Working WhatsApp group that a nominated person will ring the HCC worker/volunteer's mobile phone to make sure the lone working session has finished and that they are safe.

35. If there appears to be any cause for concern, a question and code word response will be used. The HCC worker/volunteer should respond accordingly to the question when asked. The question that will be asked is 'Can you please check the red diary?'. The response if all is well is 'yes, I will'. If all is not well, the response is 'I haven't got access to it at the moment, I'll check tomorrow'.

36. If there is no answer, the Lone Working WhatsApp Group should try to make contact again after 5 minutes. Several attempts should be made to contact the HCC worker/volunteer at their home, as well as their partner, if appropriate, by telephone, to confirm they are safe. If no contact can be made, consideration should be given to escalating this as an incident to the Police.

### **Practical Guidance for Personal Safety when Meeting People Alone**

37. This is not about raising anxiety levels, but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk, both for HCC workers/volunteers and their contacts.

38. The following is some practice guidance for personal safety when lone working:

- check whether the person you are meeting with is known to present a risk and agree on a plan for working with them in advance.
- ensure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to finish
- ensure that items such as mobile phones are carried discreetly
- check directions for a destination before setting off for an off-site meeting
- ensure your car, if used, is road-worthy, has break-down cover, and follows the vehicle requirements as stated in the HCC Travel Expenses Policy
- avoid, where possible, poorly lit or deserted areas.