

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 doorstop 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

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

Contact us

For further information on health and safety in churches call our Risk Management Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. We may monitor or record calls to improve our service

Email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

Or visit

www.ecclesiastical.com/church

Other useful contacts

Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Services:

0800 107 0190

www.ecclesiastical.com/getadvice

Ecclesiastical home insurance:

0800 917 3345

www.ecclesiastical.com/churchworker

