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**Mustard Tree Community Church**

*Connect with God. Grow together. Change our world*

**Lone Working Policy and Guidelines**

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The Mustard Tree Community Church

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Version History

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# Policy statement

The Mustard Tree Community Church (MTCC) is committed to reducing the risks to employees/volunteers and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place to reduce the specific risks associated with lone working as far as is reasonably possible and practicable.

MTCC recognises that some employees/volunteers staff are required to work by themselves in the community without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or during out of office hours. The MTCC acknowledges that these employees/volunteers are potentially at risk and that these risks must be minimised as far as reasonably practicable. As such procedures and guidelines have been developed and set out within this document, these should be adhered to at all times, prior to or when working alone.

This document applies to all employees and Volunteers who are undertaking lone-working activities on behalf of MTCC. The purpose is to help you think about and improve your personal safety, be aware of risks and to take steps to reduce and adapt strategies to keep you safe.

MTCC will not ask any employee/volunteer to undertake lone working where they do not feel safe/comfortable. If an employee/volunteer feels an activity they have been asked to do is unsafe, or they feel uncomfortable undertaking that activity, they should withdraw from the activity and notify their line manager/the leaders of this.

# Definitions

‘Lone Worker’: anyone who works away from other volunteers or paid workers without direct support or supervision.

# Dynamic Risk Assessment

MTCC carries out static risk assessments for all its activities. However, where lone working is involved the situations can be varied and changeable e.g. if visiting people at home no one visit will be the same. Therefore employees/volunteers should carry out dynamic risk assessments when lone working.

Here is an example of a dynamic risk assessment:

*A volunteer visits a sick parishioner. Upon entering the home, they look around to identify and assess the risks, and they notice empty alcohol bottles and hear voices coming from another room. They become aware that the parishioner, or other people in the home, may be under the influence of alcohol.*

*Next, they consider what they know about the parishioner, the situation, and the environment, and ask themself questions such as:*

* *Does the parishioner have a history of alcohol abuse? Do they have a history of violence? Might the parishioner behave erratically?*
* *Who else is here other than the parishioner?*
* *Do I feel safe? Do I feel confident? Am I prepared? Is there anyone else around who is at risk? Is this situation likely to lead to an incident?*
* *Am I vulnerable in any way? Is there a weapon here that could be used against me? Do I have a way to call for help? Is there an excuse I can make to leave? Where are the exits?  Who knows where I am?*
* *Are my words or actions making the situation worse? Does the parishioner want me to be here? Am I invading their space?*

*Asking questions like these helps the volunteer assess the situation and decide whether or not they should proceed, how they can proceed safely, and how they could call for help and/or leave in the event of an emergency.*

# Guidelines

## General Guidelines:

* Ensure someone knows where you are going and when you expect to return.
* Have an appropriate means of communication e.g. a mobile phone (charged and with credit)
* If meeting with others, meet in a public place if possible (this may not be possible when visiting the sick or discussing confidential issues).
* When visiting a new/unfamiliar location (or undertaking a new activity) spend additional time considering any risks that you may need to take account of.

## Aggression or violence

This includes aggressive or inappropriate physical contact which may or may not result in pain and/or injury or offence and other non-physical abuse including verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset.

* Consider the safety of others and protect yourself. If you feel it’s necessary, call 999.
* Contact your line manager/the leadership team immediately after the incident

## Procedure for alerting to personal danger

Consider having a “trigger phrase” for use when calling/texting a named contact. This could be something like asking a partner/friend (who knows where you are) if they have remembered to empty the kitchen bin or buy something specific. This would alert the named contact without alarming the antagonist. In the event of the trigger phrase being used checks should be made by the named contact to establish the well-being of the employee or volunteer.

## Travelling by car

This might include travelling to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night.

* Park in well-lit areas
* If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help
* If forced to stop, keep engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened
* If being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until a busy area is reached, such as a 24-hour garage

## Travelling by public transport

* Try to avoid travelling alone late at night
* Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits
* Have your fare/ticket ready and separate from other valuables
* Sit downstairs on double-decker buses
* Try to avoid falling asleep

## Travelling on foot

* Think ahead, be alert and aware of surroundings
* Avoid short-cuts, underpasses or poorly lit areas
* Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers
* Avoid wearing headphones/earbuds that block out surrounding sounds
* If carrying a personal alarm, ensure that it works and that it is accessible

## Dogs and other pets

If visiting an unfamiliar home, check if they have a pet and that it’s friendly. If you feel uncomfortable with a pet, politely ask the resident to remove or restrain it.