

Parish of St Thomas with St Stephen Policy for Home Visit where the Primary Purpose is Pastoral Care

Purpose

This policy highlights areas of potential risk and way of minimising this risk when visiting people in their own homes and other settings.

This policy applies to all volunteers.

Personal safety must be the first priority for everyone. This policy is a good practice guide to help manage potential risk. It particularly applies to first visits and people not previously known.

Before you go

- Only initiate contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Make an appointment so that the person will have advance notice of your visit.
- You should be clear in your own mind why you are going and the limit of your helping relationship.

Before Visits

- Make the first contact by phone (or in person for someone you already know) and ascertain as much information as possible during this contact. Find out if the person is likely to have other people in the house, and who they are.
- Visiting in pairs is best practice – ideally not husband and wife pairs. Never visit on your own someone of the opposite sex whom you do not know well. If you do not have the luxury of taking a second person with you each time but there are doubts in your mind then consider if two people should go for at least the first visit.
- On the first visit always carry an ID card with you (photo on STwSS headed paper provided by the office). Let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back.
- You can arrange to meet the person outside their home or on neutral territory.

- Make sure you have the person's contact details. Try to be punctual. Delay or early arrival (even by a few minutes) can be upsetting to the person you are visiting. If you are unavoidably delayed, please ring them and explain the reason for your delay and give an approximate time of arrival.

During Home Visits

Communication

- Effective communication can greatly increase the value of your support and reduce the risk of aggression, or potentially violent situations developing.
- Be aware of tone of voice and body language, cultural issues and sensitivities.
- If necessary ask the person to turn off the TV or radio as they can be a distraction.
- Ask the person how he/she would like to be addressed.
- Assure the person that everything they tell you will be treated in confidence by the Pastoral Group, the exception being when the information indicates that they or others are placed at risk.

Precautions

While acknowledging that some visits cannot be planned in advance and will happen spontaneously, you are advised to take some basic precautions at all times:

- If practical, visit during daylight hours. Keep your mobile phone on (set to silent).
- Do not enter the property if you feel unsure or uncomfortable with the situation.
- Always be prepared to leave immediately. Do not take your coat off or unpack any papers until you feel comfortable in the situation.
- Ask for any dogs or other pets to be secured where appropriate.
- If possible, as you enter, ask the person to lead the way so that you are behind them.
- If possible, sit so you have a clear exit via the door and the person is not between you and it.
- If the person is confined to bed either regularly or temporarily then remember to knock and wait before entering the bedroom. Sit on a chair not the bed and leave the door ajar.

- Find out if anyone else is in the property and what the relationship is to the person. If applicable, ask the person if they have given their permission for the third party to attend.
- Never give or accept money or gifts of any kind from the person. If they wish to donate to the church suggest that they contact the STwSS church office.
- Record visits in a notebook – date, times, people present, any concerns to pass on etc. This is especially important if you think there may be safeguarding issues present but is also good practice generally.
- After discussion with the person, explain clearly if and when you will return. You may wish to take advice from the Pastoral Group.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and procedures annually.