



## Visiting families in the home: Safer Practice for Volunteers / Workers

**This guidance only applies to ‘formal’ visiting done by parish appointed volunteers/workers in the name of the parish. We’ve included templates to further support the visit which can be adapted by the parish to support best practice delivery.**

Examples of this pastoral support may include ministering the Holy Communion to the family or supporting a child with additional needs in the sacramental programme. The visit should have a clear outline and purpose enabling parents, carers, guardians, children and volunteers/staff to view it as a positive experience. It’s important that parishes make sure that a home visit is really necessary and if possible and/or practical, arrange for parents/carers/guardians to come into the parish. The Parish should set out a clear rationale in their risk assessment prior to visits taking place.

Care must be taken, however, both for the protection of those being visited and for the those doing the visiting. There should be accountability and transparency in the manner in which parish volunteers engage in lone working or visits to homes.

**The Safeguarding Service strongly recommends that home visits, particularly those undertaken by Volunteers, always be conducted in pairs.**

### Good Practice when visiting families at home:

Visits should be undertaken by prior arrangement. Parents/Guardians should be informed by email or by telephone clearly stating the date, time and purpose of the visit. Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents or guardians, with or without the young person.

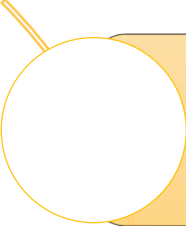
Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Do not promise not to relay information to the parish. Remember that under the parish safeguarding procedures you must report disclosures or concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible.

Do not enter a young person’s bedroom. Do not go upstairs in a property unless accompanied by a responsible adult and then ONLY if you deem it completely necessary and safe to do so. Ensure that there are no animals in the room where a meeting takes place.

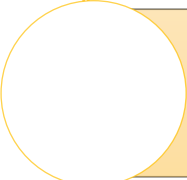
Do not enter the premises if invited to do so by a child that is on the premises unsupervised by a responsible adult. Only speak to an adult with parental responsibility and you should only speak to siblings to ask if their parent/carer/guardian is available. The purpose of the visit should not be discussed with siblings or any other unknown young person or adult at the premises.

Carry a mobile phone. You should always let someone know when you enter and leave the person’s home.

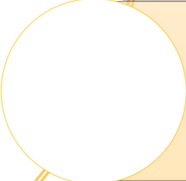
Cultural sensitivity/awareness should be observed during the home visit



**Make a note of the visit; store all such notes in accordance with data protection requirements. The notes should include the details of the people present, the activity undertaken, the date, time of arrival and departure, and any significant observations or points of conversation. Let the parents/carers/guardians you are visiting know that you will keep brief records, and always be prepared to show them your notes should they ask.**



**Set appropriate boundaries: It's important that you do not stray beyond the ministry related to the appointment you have made for e.g. providing catechesis, and if other services are needed refer to the suitable service after the visit. e.g. Extraordinary Minister to provide Holy Communion.**



**To avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family please take care when accepting any gifts other than token items. If you accept a small gift, declare it to someone at the parish for instance the Parish Priest or Parish Safeguarding Representative to ensure transparency. If someone wants to make a donation to the parish, refer them to the person/team responsible for donations.**

## **Lone Visiting Considerations**


**The Safeguarding Service strongly recommends that home visits, particularly those undertaken by volunteers, always be conducted in pairs to safeguard the people being visited and the volunteer/staff who undertake this role.**

**The leader/co-ordinator of the activity/home visits e.g. Parish Priest, Deacon or Lead Volunteer will have greater responsibility for the supervision, monitoring and support for volunteers to ensure compliance in safeguarding and health and safety while carrying out the task. The purpose of the visit, timings, risk assessment and interactions should be regularly monitored and reviewed. e.g., a risk assessment for a catechist visiting parents to advise them of topics to cover with the children or catechists teaching a child with additional needs will have very different considerations.**


While this guidance does not place restrictions on home visits by one person, it's important to ensure the other aspects of safer working practice in this guidance are followed both in this guidance and that which the Parish may have in place.



**A lone visiting policy that is provided to the volunteer as part of their induction. This includes signed agreement from the Volunteer/Staff undertaking the home visit making clear their role and responsibilities while working in isolation.**



**A person responsible for co-ordinating the visits (e.g. Parish Priest or Parish priest's delegate/Lead Volunteer) who must ascertain the risk to their team / team members when working in isolation and provide parish guidance.**



**The safeguarding risk assessment for visiting the housebound should include lone visiting procedures, timed review of the visit records between the volunteer and leader of the activity and steps undertaken to support the volunteers carrying out their role (including training)**



**Appropriate Health and Safety guidance including insurance, security, first aid and fire safety.**

## Duty of Care when visiting the home

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk in the home you are visiting, even if it's someone other than the person you have been asked by the parish to visit, please contact the police, using 999 if there is immediate danger or 101 if non-urgent.

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. If you are in any role within the Catholic Church in England and Wales, you must refer allegations directly to the diocesan safeguarding office or directly to the Police.

## Examples of home visiting for families

Catechesis for a child or family	Prayer groups	Pastoral visiting for children with additional needs	Communion for housebound children/families
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## Creating a Culture of Safeguarding: Training Considerations

Online safeguarding training is provided by Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) via their website <https://training.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/>

In the Diocese of Westminster everyone completes the same level of training:

- Clergy, Trustees, Employees and DBS Volunteers: [Level 3 for Clergy, Staff and DBS volunteers in the Diocese of Westminster](#)
- Westminster Volunteers without DBS: [Level 3 Safeguarding for Volunteers in the Catholic Church](#)

Further guidance on registering and using the online training is available according to role on our website: <https://rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/training-dates/>

The NSPCC offers an online training course for under £20, 15 mins in duration titled Safeguarding awareness training for workers who enter people's homes <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/safeguarding-awareness-course>

## Safeguarding Resources to refer to:

**RCDOW Safeguarding Service Website** [www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/)

- Reporting Concerns: [www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern-about-a-child-or-adult-at-risk/](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern-about-a-child-or-adult-at-risk/)
- Safer Recruitment: [www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment-and-dbs-applications/](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment-and-dbs-applications/)
- Safer environment: [www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/creating-a-safe-environment/](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/creating-a-safe-environment/)
- Parish Resources: [www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/resources-and-links/](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/resources-and-links/)

**Catholic Safeguarding Standards (CSSA) Website:** [www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/](http://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/)

- Parish Resources: [www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/parish-resources/](http://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/parish-resources/)
- Practice Guidance: [www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/practice-guidance/](http://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/practice-guidance/)

The national charity for the UK voluntary sector: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk>

**The Diocese of Westminster and all its parishes, ethnic chaplaincies and other agencies strive to promote a culture of safeguarding.**

**Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.**

## Appendix 1 - Model Home Visiting Risk Assessment Checklist

Name of person/people to be visited: .....

Reason of Visit: .....

***Each home should be treated as a separate risk. Some homes may have risks from more than one area - each one should be addressed***

***If the answer to any of these questions is yes please list any actions you have taken to reduce the risk posed.***

1. Does the adult or anyone living there have a history of violence, coercive or threatening behaviour? <i>If yes, please detail below</i>	Yes/No Not known
2. Is the adult a risk to themselves?	Yes/No Not known
3. Does the adult have any vulnerabilities that would make it inappropriate for him/ her to be visited alone (e.g. by a single male or female?)	Yes/No Not Known
4.. Are there any health risks associated with visiting the adult at home? (Examples might be infestation, smoking, intravenous drug use, infectious diseases, dangerous pets?) <i>If yes, please detail below</i>	Yes/No Not Known
5. Are there any other risk factors or hazards (Including mental health, substance/alcohol mis-use)? <i>If yes, please detail below</i>	Yes/No Not Known

***Representatives of the parish must not carry out home visits if they are unwell themselves as they could transmit infection.***

***Representatives of the parish should use antibacterial hand wash when undertaking home visits and between each visit to minimise the spread of any infections.***

*Please detail below any other information you think is important:*

Completed by:

Role:

***Once complete the Leader/Co-ordinator should keep a copy of the Risk Assessment and provide it to the Parish Safeguarding Representative.***

PSR Signed:

Date:

## Appendix 2: FAMILY HOME VISITING RECORD TEMPLATE – NAME OF PARISH

Home Visit Record – Parish Name								
Person being visited							Name of Parish Representative:	
Notes:							Role:	
							Reports to/Lead of Activity:	
Date	Day	Time In	Time Out	Names of those present:	Reason for visit	Discussions/Actions/Referrals	Signed Parish Representative:	Signed Parent/Carer/Guardian

## Appendix 3 – SAMPLE HOME VISIT RISK ASSESSMENT – NAME OF PARISH

DATE OF ASSESSMENT:- DD/MM/YYYY

DATE OF REVIEW: DD/MM/YYYY

Hazards	People	Severity of harm	Likelihood	Risk Level	Controls
<b>Aggressive or violent parent/child/family member</b>	Parish volunteer may be harmed	Major injury may occur	Remote possibility	Low	Refer to home visit guidance Risk reduced by informing Parish Lead prior to visit 2 persons visit if aware of risk in home Take mobile phone for communication
<b>Driving</b>	Parish volunteer may be harmed	Vehicle breakdown Accident Intruder in vehicle when unattended Use of mobile phone Fatigue	Remote possibility	Low	Maintain vehicle properly Belong to a breakdown organisation, Carry torch, phone etc for emergency, Advise parish lead or family where you are going Phone in if plan changes Do not leave valuables in car (e.g. laptop) Avoid risky areas
<b>Movement through public areas e.g. to/from car parks</b>	Parish volunteer may be harmed	Attack or Theft of property	Remote possibility	Low	Back down from confrontation Call for help Use attack alarm Keep valuables secure and out of sight or disguised Surrender valuables if personal safety is at risk Use staff bus or public transport if available Access post incident support
<b>Illness, injury or accident</b>	Parish volunteer may be harmed or injured	Illness or injury	Remote possibility	Low	Take mobile Alert emergency services Alert team members if able to Ensure access to phone Take prescribed medication as directed or as needed Complete "injury at parish" protocol on return
<b>Attack by dog or other animal</b>	Parish volunteer may be harmed or injured	Major injury may occur	Remote possibility	Low	Avoid contact with animals Seek local advice before entering premises with animals Appropriate behaviour near animals – avoid alarming them, e.g. sudden movements

I have read and understand the home visit risk assessment.

My mobile telephone number is: XXXXX XXX XXX

PERSON NOTIFIED OF ARRIVAL AND LEAVING:

SIGNED:

DATE:

TIME: