



# Home Visits Policy

## MISSION STATEMENT

At St Anne's we aim to meet people where they are on their faith journey and accompany and guide them on their way to achieving their full potential. We strive to create a Catholic community which shares common beliefs and where, following Christ's example, we recognise the unique and equal value of each member. Our commitment to each person's growth is reflected in the quality of our school's provision which seeks to maintain the highest possible standards of achievement and outcomes for students post 16.

**Policy Adopted:** 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**Review date:** September 2020

**Signed:** Mr D Wright (Headteacher)





### **Introduction**

This policy provides guidance for staff at St Anne's who may visit homes as part of their role. There is a generic risk assessment attached as Appendix A.

### **References**

HSE Working Alone – Health & Safety guidance on the risks of lone working.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

### **Who is governed by this policy?**

All staff working at St Anne's RC High School

### **Advice about completing a risk assessment;**

- Read the attached document. (Appendix A).
- Review the current risk assessment for those staff who may work alone by comparing it to the attached risk assessment (Appendix B).
- Make provisions for the vulnerable employees who may be at greater risk from lone working (Appendix C).
- Ensure that you consider the questions posed in Appendix D.
- Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed regularly.
- Ensure that all staff making home visits are given guidelines set out in Paragraph 5 and Appendix E.



## **Appendix A** **Undertaking Home Visits guidance**

### **1. Background**

It is sometimes necessary to visit families at home either before students start at St Anne's or while they are on roll. This guidance covers those undertaking home visits and appointments with professionals at parents' home/another venue, i.e. schools or offices.

Working in such a situation can result in a risk from:

- Having an accident and being unable to attract help.
- Aggressive/violent behaviour of another person.
- The subject of false allegations.

This policy outlines the procedures for undertaking home visits and provides good practice guidelines.

### **2. Policy Statement**

- St Anne's is committed to ensuring that it does not put any of its staff in a situation of unreasonable risk.
- Risk Assessments, approved by line managers, for visits out of school must be undertaken to reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable.
- All staff are encouraged to make home visits in pairs, if this is impossible and a member of staff is working alone, s/he must take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety. If at any time they feel unsure of their safety, they should remove themselves from that situation as soon as possible.
- Recruitment officers at St Anne's ensure that if a member of staff is likely to be in a position of lone working and visiting, this will be specified in the recruitment information, in order to make this requirement explicit to all applicants.
- At St Anne's there is an induction programme for all staff and volunteers including written materials and discussion about the guidance for staff undertaking home visits.

### **3. Responsibilities**

- All staff at St Anne's undertaking home visits have responsibility for informing their line managers of work movements which are outside of school.



- Any visits or movements which will place any staff at unacceptable risk will not be sanctioned or allowed.
- Staff at St Anne's will not be asked to undertake home visits outside school hours unless they are absolutely unavoidable.
- All staff at St Anne's must ensure they are dressed in a professional manner – in line with the Staff Code of Conduct when conducting home visits.

#### **4. Good practice guidance for managers (an aid to completing the risk assessment).**

- All staff have a responsibility to make themselves fully aware of all background information before making a visit.
- When arranging the first home visit with a parent/carer over the telephone ask who will be present in the home.
- Staff are advised to always take a colleague on a home visit – this is especially pertinent where it is deemed that there may be a higher personal safety risk factor.
- Staff should ensure they are not left alone with any child in a home.
- Clear notes of the meeting must be made and filed at school by the member of staff.
- Any meetings arranged at neutral venues should be logged with the line manager of the member of staff involved, with timeframes and venues clearly stated.
- All movements must be logged with line managers.
- If a member of staff finds they are delayed, they will call the parent / carer and let them know they will be arriving later than originally planned.
- If, on arriving at a home, a member of staff considers they are at risk, they must decline to enter or make an excuse to leave where necessary, e.g. "I've left the car lights on" or "I've left some papers in the car" and depart. **Do not attempt to enter what is considered a risk situation.**
- All staff are strongly advised to leave a mobile phone on at all times so that they can be contacted for checks or can report any issues.
- If at any time, a member of staff experiences any aggression or verbal abuse, or other unwelcome approaches, this should be reported to their line manager as soon possible / as soon as it is safe to do so. Staff should ensure they leave the situation at the earliest opportunity.



- Staff must not arrange to make another appointment with the abusive or aggressive person until the issue has been reviewed.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure they have appropriate vehicle insurance for transporting parents/carers and their families if this situation arises.

#### **5. Best practice guidelines for those undertaking home visits**

- Always trust your instincts – if you are in any doubt or feel unsafe, remove yourself from that situation.
- Act in a confident manner and terminate the visit apologetically, for example by saying you have to be at another meeting which you had forgotten about.
- Plan your route and take a map along, to avoid having to stop and ask for directions in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Consider where you park and always reverse into a space, so it is easy for you to drive out.
- If using public transport, sit where there are other people, not on your own.
- If walking, use well lit public streets – do not use shortcuts.
- Pay attention to your surroundings when in someone's home – where are the doors? Sit in a seat nearest to a door.
- Ensure you always have your mobile telephone switched on and to hand.
- Keep your keys easily accessible. Avoid carrying valuables or large sums of money.
- **Do not allow a parent/carer to leave you alone with a child. If, whilst talking, a parent walks out of the room and leaves you with a child in the room, follow them (i.e. into the kitchen if they are making drinks etc.).**
- Always have a legitimate reason for leaving, e.g. that you have another appointment.
- It is advisable not to accept offers of a drink or food whilst on a home visit.

#### **DO**

- Prepare and plan. Check records and speak to colleagues.



- Set up your case file with papers that may need signing, for example confidentiality agreement, sensitive data consent form.
- Keep the School informed of your whereabouts at all times when you are off site on a visit.
- Plan your route in advance. Avoid known unsafe areas. Carry a fully charged mobile telephone with credit available.
- Do have a contingency plan if things go wrong – car breaks down/battery is flat/arrange to be picked up.
- Maintain a discrete distance. Ensure you sit close to exits. Speak in a friendly and polite manner.
- Avoid dangerous areas.
- When transporting parents/carers and/or their children, wherever possible ensure they are seated in the rear of the car and wearing appropriate restraints e.g. seatbelt, child car seat.

#### **DON'T**

- Visit without having read the appropriate paperwork.
- Forget to keep a simple case file, taking pen and paper.
- Forget to let Manager know and others of your whereabouts.
- Forget to report back on your home visit to say all is well.
- Forget to charge up or take your mobile telephone.
- **Give out personal details, your mobile, address.**
- Forget to report any trips, falls, and accidents or report abusive threatening behaviours.
- Park near to high walls, hedges or unlit areas.



**Appendix B**

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

**School: St Anne's  
Assessor(s):**

**Work activity:**

**Home visits**

<b>What could go wrong?</b>	<b>Who might be harmed?</b>	<b>Control measures at present</b>	<b>Further action required (if any)</b>
Break down Road traffic accident Road rage Dangerous dogs / other animals Threatening behaviour Physical assault Accidents on premises e.g. slips, trips or falls	Staff members	Means of communication e.g. personal / work mobile phone for emergencies  Consider 2 members of staff visiting – particularly on a ‘first visit’  Ensure visits are pre-arranged  Signing in-out procedures including details of visit and return time  Reporting / recording procedures for visits including feedback Appropriate training where necessary e.g. dealing with difficult customers  Pre-arranged welfare calls for longer visits  Car parking in a safe well lit area  Business mileage added to motor vehicle insurance	Personal panic alarm  Mobile phone  Written guidelines / procedures for staff



## Appendix C

### Vulnerable Employees that may be at a higher risk from home visiting/lone working

Group	Additional Considerations for home visiting/lone workers
<b>New and Expectant Mothers</b>	<p>St Anne's duty of care extends to the unborn child as well as risks to the mother herself, therefore <b>assessments must include the risk to any unborn child or mother who is still breast-feeding.</b></p> <p>Consideration must also be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Impaired mobility may make the mother more prone to slips, trips and falls (especially in the later stages of pregnancy).</li> <li>➤ Impaired ability to carry out physically strenuous work</li> <li>➤ Increased likelihood of back injuries.</li> <li>➤ Entitlement to more rest breaks.</li> <li>➤ Risk of early labour or miscarriage.</li> </ul>
<b>Young People Aged Under 18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Possible lack of experience and immaturity.</li> <li>➤ Possible inability to concentrate for long periods.</li> <li>➤ Entitled to more frequent rest breaks.</li> </ul>
<b>Disabled People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mobility problems and visual impairment may make unassisted evacuation difficult.</li> <li>➤ Potential difficulties in raising the alarm when assistance is required.</li> <li>➤ Unable to hear alarms.</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

### General questions for managers to consider when completing risk assessments

Do staff have a system for vetting or checking people they are going to meet alone?	If not, devise and implement a system for vetting and checking. Information about prospective parents/carers who could pose a threat to other workers should be shared.
Do you know where colleagues are at all times?	If not, it is imperative that adequate record is kept of the whereabouts of all workers. Good practice dictates that people in the



	office have these details in order to pass on appropriate information in an emergency. The system should detail time, place of visit, name of the person visited, if possible a telephone number, the venue of the meeting, time of return.
If staff change their plan, do they inform the team?	If not, devise and implement a system of informing if plans are changed
If staff do not return at the stated time what happens?	Line manager is alerted and contacts member of staff, if they are not contactable the police are called.
Can staff be contacted?	All staff contact numbers are held with line managers.
Do staff check in when working alone or in isolated situations?	All staff carrying out home visits notify their line manager of where they are going and then notify them when they are back on school premises – they will phone to tell them that they are not coming back to school if, for example the meeting overruns.
Where will cars be parked? Is it safe?	Staff must make a decision about parking their cars where they will be safe, particularly after dark.
Which route will be used – quickest or safest?	Safest routes are always used. Shortcuts, through isolated or problem areas are never advocated.
Are workers currently medically fit to work alone?	Reasonable adjustments are always made to safeguard the health of the worker
Will there be a risk of aggression or violence?	If there is a risk of aggression or violence managers must consider the risk and determine what appropriate action should be taken.

## **Appendix E**

### **Further guidance for staff regarding driving:**

- Always keep doors locked when driving and keep any bag, phone or valuables out of sight.



- When escorting in a car, managers and workers should consider the need to have a colleague who can sit in the back of the car with the person being escorted.
- Before making a long journey, ensure that the vehicle is in good condition and has an up-to-date service history.
- If you hire a car, make sure that it has been checked, especially the spare wheel, and that the vehicle has a full tank of fuel.
- Tell anyone who is being met en route of the route to be taken and planned arrival time. Have a plan in place for situations where workers are late or fail to arrive.
- Drivers should not stop if flagged down other than by a police officer. They **must** always ask for identification even if the officer is wearing a uniform, before they unlock the car.
- Use a Satnav or have directions and a map in the car to avoid having to stop to ask. Transfer brief notes of directions on to a note that can be attached to the dashboard rather than driving around with a map book open.
- Drivers must never pick up hitch hikers.
- Only wind windows down enough to let a little air in. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in while you are stationary in traffic.
- Anyone who thinks they are being followed should try to alert others by flashing lights and sounding the horn. They should keep driving until they reach a busy area or a police, fire, ambulance station or garage.
- Drivers who are forced to stop by a car pulling up in front of their vehicle should keep the engine running in case they need to leave quickly.
- Staff must think about where cars are parked, especially if it could be dark when they return to the vehicle. Could the car be vandalized? Is it close by if needed quickly? Is it parked in the direction of travel?
- Drivers of quality cars should consider the purpose of the visit. If it is to see someone about a controversial matter e.g. exclusion, give thought to parking the car out of sight of the person you are visiting.
- Staff should have keys ready when returning to the car and not open car doors remotely until standing beside the vehicle. Unlocking the door from a distance increases the chance that someone could secrete themselves in your vehicle.
- The back seat of the car should be checked before the driver gets in – keep a torch handy.

