

Home Visiting

Best Practice Guidance when helping to serve each other well

1. Introduction

Visiting adults at home can be a valuable aspect of pastoral care. This will often be done on an informal, neighbourly basis amongst St Mary's Church Family either through Lifegroup friends or people who have become friendly through meeting at church services etc.

Home visits can make a significant difference, especially for individuals who are housebound due to illness, disability, or age. However, visits must always be carried out safely, respectfully, and with clear boundaries to protect both the visitor and the person being visited. These are points that are used when formally visiting as a 'church organised' visit but they can be used as useful guidelines to help with transparency when helping out with friends, especially regarding boundaries, handling money and any gifts given.

2. Core Principles for Volunteers

As a volunteer, you should always:

- Act with **care, respect, and integrity**
- Maintain **appropriate boundaries**
- Follow safeguarding guidance at all times
- Be **accountable and transparent** in your actions
- Know your **limits** and when to seek help

3. Good Practice When Visiting People at Home

3.1 Planning and Communication

- Arrange visits in advance wherever possible
- Clearly explain the purpose of your visit
- Be clear about confidentiality:
 - Conversations are private
 - But concerns about safety must be reported

3.2 Visiting Arrangements

- If possible, **visit in pairs**, especially for a first visit
- If visiting alone:
 - Follow lone working guidance carefully to ensure that someone knows where you are.
- Always carry **identification** and offer to show it

3.3 Personal Safety and Risk Awareness

- Before visiting, consider:
 - Any known risks
 - Other people in the home
 - Pets or environmental hazards

- Always:
 - Carry a mobile phone
 - Inform someone where you are going
 - Share your expected return time

3.4 Respect and Consent

- Always respect the person's wishes
- Ask:
 - If they would like future visits
 - How they prefer to be contacted
- Ensure they feel **in control of the relationship**

3.5 Record Keeping

- Keep a brief record of each visit:
 - Date and time
 - Key points or concerns
- Store records securely
- Be open about record-keeping with the individual

3.6 Handling Money and Practical Help

- Avoid handling money unless absolutely necessary
- If you are asked to get shopping or a prescription etc, do:
 - Keep receipts
 - Return change promptly
 - Record what was done and why

3.7 Boundaries and Role Clarity

- You are a **supportive visitor**, not a professional carer or counsellor
- Do not:
 - Over-promise help
 - Take on responsibilities beyond your role
- If additional help is needed:
 - Refer to a church leader or appropriate service

3.8 Gifts and Donations

- Avoid accepting gifts beyond small tokens
- Declare any accepted gifts to a church leader
- Direct donations that are given to St Mary's through proper church processes

4. Financial and Legal Matters

Volunteers should **not**:

- Manage someone's finances
- Act as a will executor

If asked:

- Politely decline
- Refer the matter to a church leader or safeguarding advisor

5. Safeguarding Reminder

Confidentiality is important, but **safety comes first**.

If you become concerned that someone is at risk of harm:

- Report it to your safeguarding lead immediately
- Do not promise to keep secrets in these situations

6. Summary

As a volunteer, your role is to offer **safe, respectful, and supportive presence**. By following this guidance, you help ensure that home visiting remains a positive and safeguarding-focused experience for everyone involved.

If there are a group of friends taking it in turn to visit/help it may be worth putting a whatsapp group together for transparency between the group – ie if money has changed hands for shopping, or access to the home via a key in a key safe.

Checklist on next page

Pastoral Care Home Visiting Checklist

Before the Visit

- Visit arranged in advance (where possible)
- Someone informed of where I am going and when I will return
- Mobile phone charged and with me
- Identification ready to show
- Aware of any known risks (person, environment, pets, etc.)
- Know the purpose of the visit
- Prepared for any specific needs

During the Visit

- Introduced myself clearly and showed ID if needed
- Explained the purpose of the visit
- Checked the person is comfortable with the visit
- Respected personal boundaries and wishes
- Remained aware of safeguarding (no promises of secrecy)
- Maintained appropriate conversation and behaviour
- Stayed alert to personal safety and surroundings

After the Visit

- Left safely
- Checked out with designated contact if required
- Made a brief record of the visit
- Recorded any concerns or follow-up needed
- Reported any safeguarding concerns promptly
- Stored notes securely

Ongoing Good Practice

- Maintain clear boundaries at all times
- Do not over-promise or take on inappropriate responsibilities
- Do not handle money unless necessary (and record it)
- Do not accept significant gifts – record any small gift received
- Respect confidentiality (within safeguarding limits)
- Seek advice or support if unsure
- Refer additional needs appropriately