

AGE UK EXETER

Controlled Document

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Pass amendments to: Governance Lead

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Document Description

This policy sets out good practice and health and safety guidelines for staff and/ or volunteers working alone with clients.

Implementation & Quality Assurance

Implementation is immediate and this policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed.

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Board of Trustees, sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

All aspects of this policy shall be open to review at any time. If you have any comments or suggestions on the content of this policy, please contact the CEO on, info@ageukexeter.org.uk or at Age UK Exeter, The Sycamores, Exeter, EX4 7AE, 01392 202092.

Lone Working Policy

Good practice and health and safety guidelines for staff and volunteers

1. Purpose of policy

Age UK Exeter's (AUKE's) duty to assess and control any risks around lone working is governed by the Health and Safety at work Act 1974 (HSWA). This requires AUKE to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of its employees.

These guidelines should form part of an employee or volunteer's introduction to working with AUKE. They are intended:

- To promote good practice and safeguard the health and safety of all concerned.
- To offer staff and volunteers a practical and realistic framework for assessing and reporting risk when working alone on behalf of AUKE.
- To provide guidance on how to prevent and reduce risks associated with situations where a member of staff or volunteer is working alone.
- To provide guidance on what action to take in the event of concerns being raised regarding the personal safety of a member of staff or volunteer.
- To show procedures for dealing with an emergency out of office hours.
- To communicate recommendations on new technology such as client's filming staff as a record of meeting.

2. Before a lone working visit/situation

- AUKE only initiates contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Clients will have advance notice of any visit (unless the service lead agrees that this is not necessary). Initial visits to a new client will always be arranged with them in advance and a (telephone) risk assessment will be undertaken to inform the first visit.
- The reason for the visit, the client's home circumstances, and an assessment of risk and hazards will be given to the home support worker/staff member or volunteer visitor wherever possible.
- There are some limited situations where a service lead may not have made an initial visit. The staff member or volunteer will be told when no initial visit has occurred so that they can be aware that the information they are given may not be comprehensive. Where an initial visit has not been possible, e.g. prior to an I&A visit, the lead will take

basic information over the phone, e.g. who lives in the house, any family/neighbours/regular visitors, any pets (especially large dogs), any health and safety hazards, parking.

- Staff and volunteers should be clear about the limits of their 'helping' relationship following discussion with their line manager and with regard to the principles of their boundary training.
- If a staff member or volunteer anticipates that a home visit may be difficult, then they should talk it over with their line manager before going. It may be that going with another staff member is the best available option or taking detailed notes of the interaction and feeding back to the line manager.
- Staff and volunteers should remember to take their ID card to any meeting with a client, along with their mobile phone and the client's emergency contact information, if known.

If a staff member or volunteer has any reason to be concerned for their own or anyone else's safety, these concerns should be reported to the line manager without delay, and they should leave or not attend a property.

3. Keeping safe

The general rules are:

- Staff and volunteers should always put their own safety first.
- Leads, coordinators, and all staff and volunteers should take reasonable steps to assure themselves that it is safe to make a solo visit to a new client. If there are any concerns, staff and volunteers should discuss this with their line manager or another senior colleague to mitigate the risk.
- Ways to mitigate a risk may be doing a dynamic risk assessment, attending an appointment with another staff member, having a clear point of contact, and a discreet way to raise the alarm, note taking within the meeting, having a debrief with the line manager, and timely escalation of concerns. It must be remembered that initial contact with a client (be that over the phone or in person) could lead to a dynamic risk assessment that suggests AUKE is not the best provider for the person and that their case needs to be escalated to adult social care or safeguarding. See our Safeguarding Policy for more information.
- If a service lead or staff member is making an initial home visit e.g. an assessment or review, they should follow the additional instructions detailed in Appendix A.

- Service leads or staff making routine reviews or repeat visits to clients they know should make it clear on outlook at what time they will return to the office and will ideally enter Charitylog reference against the appointment.
- If, for any reason, a staff member or volunteer feels uncertain before entering a property, they should follow the check-in procedures set out in Appendix A. If they feel unsafe for any reason, they should not enter the property, alert their line manager, raise the alarm, or contact the police if necessary.
- If staff or volunteers feel unsafe when already in a property, they should make an excuse to leave immediately if possible or discreetly raise the alarm. The wording to be used to discreetly raise the alarm if it is considered that leaving the property could escalate the situation is, **“Would it be possible for someone to bring my yellow folder to this visit.”** All staff should be aware of this wording.
- Staff and volunteers should park in well-lit areas if it is dark and not carry unnecessary valuables into client’s homes.
- Volunteer visitors should text in and out of visits to the duty phone and should know how to alert AUKE should they have any concerns. Volunteer visitors should also be aware of this policy and how to raise the alarm or escalate a concern.
- Where it is noted that a member of staff or volunteer has not texted out of a visit at a reasonable interval after the expected time, service leads should a) try the person’s mobile phone b) ring the client’s house and depending on outcome c) alert a member of the Senior Management Team, or the CEO, who will decide on next steps.
- If a staff member or volunteer was not concerned for their safety during a visit, but is a victim of harassment or bullying, they should alert their line manager immediately and keep a record of the exchange/interaction.

4. No reply at a client’s home

If staff or volunteers make a prearranged visit and cannot get a reply, they should follow the simple steps below. There is often a simple explanation, but it is important that we are confident that the person is not inside and unable to answer the door. Staff and volunteers should give the client plenty of time to respond as they may move slowly or have a hearing impairment and not realise that someone is there.

Simple checks would include:

- Calling through the letter box.

- Looking and calling through any accessible windows.
- Ringing their phone.
- Calling AUKE (01392 202092) to see if they know anything. The office will contact the person's emergency contacts. If there is still no answer, the service lead should be contacted who can then decide on the next steps. If the service lead cannot be reached on the main number, the duty phone should be called (**0799 039 7946**). This will always connect staff or volunteers with a member of the Senior Management Team between the hours of 8am-6pm.

5. Escalation/Informing the service lead or a member of the senior management team (SMT)

Staff and volunteers should let the service lead or service officer know immediately:

- If they have had to enter an unoccupied property.
- If they have received 'no reply' when they visited.
- If a client has given a gift or money and they have felt unable to refuse (see Bribery Policy).
- If there are any significant changes affecting the client or their circumstances.
- If they are aware of any new or existing risks or hazards in the client's environment that may cause a risk to the client, staff and/or volunteers or others.
- If there is a concern for personal safety or the safety of another person.

A member of the Senior Management Team can always be contacted on the duty phone (0799 039 7946) between the hours of 8am-6pm.

6. In an emergency

Occasionally, home support workers, volunteer visitors or staff members may encounter an unexpected risk, emergency, or hazard when they visit. This could be because a client is ill, has fallen, is aggressive or distressed, an unexpected family member or other individual is present, pets are not contained, or there may be a fire risk or structural neglect.

The general rules are:

- For staff and volunteers to put their own safety first and leave if necessary and report back to the service lead and the emergency services if appropriate.

- In each situation, staff and volunteers should report to AUKE as quickly as possible and keep a record of proceedings.

When an emergency occurs outside of office hours (8.30am–4.30pm, Mon-Fri) staff and volunteers should contact 0799 039 7946 (the duty phone) which will transfer them to a senior manager who will be able to help them.

Only senior staff should be locking up. Lone working guidance also applies and is made available to cleaning staff, or other staff who may be working alone after hours in the office.

7. New technology/staff and volunteers being filmed on entry or during a visit

New technology is emerging all the time and can be both a help and a hindrance to older people. Some people have been employing the use of home CCTV or doorbell cameras for some time to improve their sense of personal safety and/or as a record of meetings or a medical exchange. Legally this sits within the realm of note taking if filming an exchange and the client is responsible for GDPR compliance as it is their personal equipment.

Recommendations would be for the clients to make AUKE aware that they are using this type of equipment. It may be added to their client information sheet (CIS), so that all staff are aware. Clients could get relatively cost-effective stickers to inform staff and volunteers of the technology they employ, and AUKE could provide them with guidance in this area if deemed necessary. Any staff with concerns should discuss this with their line manager.

Revision History

Revision date	Summary of Changes	Other Comments
11.1.16	Routine review by Standards Committee.	No changes but the phone number for Care Direct has been updated
12.1.16	Approved by Board of Trustees.	Next review due January 2018
5.2.18	Routine review by Standards Committee A number of changes made to give more clarity and direction.	Recommended to Board for approval.
13.3.18	Approved by Board of Trustees	Next review due March 2020
6.1.20	Reviewed by Standards Committee. Updated to incorporate procedures for initial visits and out of hours support.	Recommended to the Board for approval
14.12.21	Ratification of new policy due to re-location.	Review due Dec 2024
12.01.24	Updated 'keeping safe' section in line with best practice. Added	Approved 30.04.24. Review due April 2027.

	section on new technology to aid staff.	
04.06.26	Update to outline new systems, especially around volunteer visitors texting in and out of visits. Duty phone number also made clearer.	

Appendix A

Emergency or Out of Hours Contact Procedures

1. Keeping Safe During Office Hours

AUKE recognises that there is an element of risk to all visits when working alone but have assessed that the greatest risk is for staff and volunteers going to a client's home for a first visit where the situation is unknown. Those usually involved in such visits are service coordinators making assessment visits or I and A staff. To mitigate this risk the following procedures have been put in place.

Instructions for Service Coordinators making a home visit or I&A Staff and Volunteers

- When making such a visit, the member of staff to ensure that the clients Charitylog ID number is on their outlook calendar as a minimum.
- Staff or volunteer should send a text to **0799 039 7946** which is a dedicated phone for this purpose.
- When sending a text staff or volunteer to give name and client Charitylog ID number, say that they have arrived and their expected time of departure.
- When leaving the clients house, staff or volunteer to send a second text to say that they have left client.

Instructions for Reception

The mobile phone will be held by reception who will monitor the texts and should take the following steps:

Record in the logbook the following information:

- Staff/volunteer name
- Client ID
- Time in
- Expected time of departure
- Time out

Once both in/out times have been recorded both text messages can be deleted from the phone.

All entries in the log to be checked periodically throughout the day and final check at the end of the day.

If someone has not checked back that they have left the client, then the Senior Management Team or the On Call person should be alerted who will investigate.

End of Day Procedures for Reception staff or SMT

- At 4.30pm the duty staff member should check the logbook to make sure that everyone has reported that they have finished their visits.
- If everyone has finished ensure that all messages are cleared.
- If there are still some visits which are ongoing report this to the senior manager and hand them the phone.

2. Out of Hours Emergencies

Instructions for Home Support Workers

If a home support worker has a problem, they should telephone the Enabling Office on **07887658333** where they will be forwarded to a senior manager who will be able to help them. If they have a problem during office hours, they should contact the enabling team in the usual way.