

LONE WORKING POLICY

Version: 20th November 2024

LONE WORKING – STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS	
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Department	Corporate
For use by	Staff and Volunteers
Purpose	To define the responsibility of Age UK Norfolk to fulfil its duties and obligations in respect of lone working; and, to set out the roles and responsibilities of Age UK Norfolk and its staff and volunteers to minimise the risk.
Key related documents	Risk Assessments for Home, Office and Community Working; Safeguarding Policy
Version	20 th November 2024
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DOCUMENT CONTROL			
DATE	EDITS	EDITOR / REVIEWER	CHANGE CONTROLLER / DOCUMENT OWNER
1 st June 2024	<p>A revised version of the existing policy.</p> <p>This includes the removal of <i>the Red File Phone Procedure</i> for a lone worker to call the designated phone line with a coded message.</p> <p>Concerns about effectiveness of the policy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If staff or volunteers found themselves in a dangerous situation, it may not be possible to make any phone call at all, either coded to the designated line or to the emergency services • There have been instances of incorrect use of the referral number to raise concerns with a manager or ask advice in a difficult situation and not, as intended, for the protection of the employee or volunteer in imminent danger • The reluctant response to service welfare checks by the emergency services • The disproportionate worry of staff of the responsibility to 'man' the phone and the information availability to locate the person in danger efficiently and effectively • The number of 'false alarm' calls from spammers and scammers • Limited mobile / wi-fi signal affecting the ability to make a phone call • Alternatives such as emergency pendant alarms or apps carry a cost and also may not be effective in remote locations with limited signal. 	Vanessa Brown Head of Corporate Services	
6 th August 2024	Full review, rewrite, and <i>EDITOR</i> formatting check.	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)
8 th August 2024	JT tracked changes accepted.	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)

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19 th August 2024	JF & EH comments reviewed & amendments made as appropriate	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)
25 th August 2024	Review and <i>EDITOR</i> formatting check	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)
3 rd October 2024	Final review and <i>EDITOR</i> formatting check	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)	Ann Donkin, Chief Executive (Interim)

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1. INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by lone working?

- 1.1. Lone working can be defined as any situation, or location, in which someone works without close or direct supervision; without a colleague nearby or is out of sight or earshot of another colleague. Even staff / volunteers who work in a building with others may be considered lone workers. Home workers are also considered lone workers. Lone workers face a variety of hazards. This guidance and policy focusses on the risk of physical and verbal abuse and harassment.
- 1.2. An increasing number of staff / volunteers work alone in community settings such as service users' homes or on outreach work. Lone workers can be vulnerable and at increased risk of physical or verbal abuse and harassment from service users, their relatives, or members of the public, simply because they do not have the immediate support of colleagues.
- 1.3. Employers have a duty to protect lone workers by reducing the risks of physical and verbal abuse, as far as is practical to do so. Staff / volunteers can also take practical steps to help improve their personal safety while working out and about.

What organisations must do

- 2.1 Employers have overall responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of staff / volunteers when at work, as far as is practical to do so. This includes compliance with several legal duties.
- 2.2 Employers have a legal duty to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments of any work-related activities that present a risk to staff / volunteers' health, and / or personal safety when at work. This risk assessment should identify who might be harmed, the dangers faced, and the practical measures that can be taken to prevent and reduce the risk of injury occurring. This assessment should be carried out in consultation with staff / volunteers, and take into account the job being done, the environment in which individuals will be working, the service users being dealt with, for example do they have a record of violence, and any other factors specific to staff / volunteer skills such as training and competencies.

Prevention

- 2.3 When looking at ways of reducing the risk, employers must firstly look at ways of eliminating the hazard. For example, if the risk is caused or increased by staff / volunteer visiting a service user in their own home, it may be safer if the individual comes to a more public setting, e.g. Age UK Norfolk's office, and is dealt with in a safe and secure environment. Alternatively, it may be safer if a member of staff / volunteer is accompanied by a colleague on a visit.
- 2.4 Inevitably there may be circumstances when a staff member / volunteer regularly visits service users on their own. If this is the case, employers must invest in implementing a safe system of work that deals with the risks to lone workers, including a means of raising the alarm, known as a lone worker safety device. However, it is important that this

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technology is supported by robust reporting systems that includes colleagues knowing where staff members / volunteers are, and points of contact should individuals get in trouble.

3 POLICY

- 3.1 Every organisation needs a policy to inform lone workers about the arrangements that are in place to protect employees when they are working alone. This Age UK Norfolk policy clarifies roles and responsibilities, including the identification of those responsible for the effective implementation of identified control measures.
- 3.2 In addition to covering preventative measures, the policy also outlines the actions that will be taken following incidents.
- 3.3 The policy will be communicated to all lone working staff and anyone else who has a part to play, for example at inductions or team meetings. It is important to check that this policy is understood.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 To satisfy the organisation's legal duty, Age UK Norfolk has risk assessment checklists for community support, home, and office working, community support and escalation support on the shared drive in *Teams*. The link is here [Risk Assessment \(staff and volunteers\)](#)
- 4.2 The risk assessment process will be undertaken as a collaborative exercise by both the lone worker and their line manager / coordinator, and the agreed safe working procedures will be recorded and communicated to all persons who may be required to work alone and any other employees who have a role to play in ensuring their safety.
- 4.3 Risk assessments for staff will be filed on the HR system (currently *PeopleHR*).
- 4.4 Risk assessments relating to volunteers, and risk issues relating to service users, will be held on *CharityLog*.

5 TRAINING

- 5.1 As part of the risk assessment process, Age UK Norfolk has a duty to identify individual training needs. While training alone will not reduce the incidence of violence, it is an essential part of an organisation's approach to managing violence and aggression.

6 SUPPORT

- 6.1 Age UK Norfolk has systems in place to support individuals following a 'near miss' or an incident of violence or aggression, including verbal and / or physical assaults. This includes line management support, such as investigating the incident and putting measures in place to prevent it happening again, advising how to access counselling

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support, and liaising with the Police, for example, reporting incidents and potential prosecution cases. Line managers will also support staff / volunteers who have had to withdraw from a dangerous situation.

7 THE ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS

7.1 Line managers play a key role in ensuring that policies, procedures, and risk assessments are implemented locally and are understood. Some of the other key roles of managers include:

7.1.1 Sharing information - where there has been a 'near miss' or an incident involving a staff / volunteer team member, the information will be shared at the earliest opportunity with other team members, agencies and colleagues who may be visiting the individual concerned or going into an otherwise risky environment; and

7.1.2 Training and supervision - line managers will ensure that staff / volunteers:

- attend any training related to the management of violence and aggression, including conflict resolution, personal safety, and the use of lone-worker devices in working hours
- have the relevant skills and competencies to be able to work alone safely
- agree with the best ways to support individuals through the provision of appropriate supervision depending on the risk level and their individual capability (in general, the higher the level of risk and less experienced they are, the greater need for supervision).

7.2 If a staff member / volunteer is a new worker or working in a new situation, they may be accompanied at the start.

7.3 Line managers will ensure that staff / volunteers are offered a lone worker safety device on appointment.

7.4 Line Managers will make all staff and volunteers aware of the procedure in the relevant handbooks / manuals for the logging and recording of home visit appointments on *CharityLog* or on the IAA *Outlook* calendar (via *Microsoft Teams* form), whichever is appropriate.

7.5 Line Managers will ensure that their own work *Outlook* calendars are accurate and accessible to named staff members.

7.6 Line Managers will ensure that staff / volunteers have access to contact details of relevant senior staff within core work hours (9-5) or core visiting times (10am to 4pm). A separate arrangement is in place for the befriending service detailed in the service manual.

7.7 Line Managers will ensure that staff / volunteers have access to the latest version of this lone working policy which contains the guidance set out at appendix 1 to follow should an emergency situation arise.

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- 7.8 The support of line managers is essential. If a staff member / volunteer feels in serious or imminent danger when working alone, their manager will support any decision they make to withdraw from the situation to a place of safety.
- 7.9 Managers will also provide staff with support following an incident or near miss, allowing the member of staff sufficient time to attend counselling if required and follow up and act on incident reports.

8 ACTIONS STAFF & VOLUNTEERS NEED TO TAKE

- 8.1 With Age UK Norfolk, acting as a responsible employer, and line management support, staff / volunteer roles should be much safer. There are nevertheless several things that individuals must do to protect their own safety and that of colleagues.
- 8.2 Remember that staff members / volunteers have a duty to take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by what they do – or fail to do.

Report incidents

- 8.3 Incidents and 'near misses' provide details about violent individuals, unsafe environments and other important information on the risks faced. Staff members / volunteers can help line managers and Age UK Norfolk to take steps to identify and address these risks by reporting all incidents and near misses.

Attend training

- 8.4 Staff members / volunteers should attend any training provided by Age UK Norfolk to help individuals in lone working situations.

Policy and procedures

- 8.5 Staff members / volunteers should make sure they understand and follow the local procedures put in place to protect their safety and the safety of others. This includes guidance on the use of any lone worker protection device.

Assess the risks to personal safety

- 8.6 When staff members / volunteers are going to be working alone, they should assess any immediate and unfolding risks to personal safety. This is called *dynamic risk assessment*. If individuals feel in serious or imminent danger, they should withdraw, as soon as possible, to a place of safety.

Make use of any allocated lone worker device

- 8.7 There is now a wide range of technology that can support lone workers as they go about their work. staff members / volunteers opt to be supplied with a lone worker device, they should ensure they know how to use it, and that it is well maintained, charged, and is carried on their person in line with local procedures.

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Nominate a key contact

- 8.8 All staff and volunteers, on appointment, will be asked to nominate a key contact (usually next of kin) who is aware that they undertake lone work and / or home visits for the organisation.
- 8.9 Ideally this should be someone the staff or volunteer lives with or, if living alone, a friend or relative.
- 8.10 Age UK Norfolk must be informed if these details change. The name of the key contact for staff will be held on the HR system for staff (currently *PeopleHR*), and *CharityLog* for volunteers.
- 8.11 Key contacts should be informed by the staff member / volunteer of their usual working pattern and expected time of return. The nominated individual will be expected to contact the organisation or, if out of office hours, alert the appropriate authorities should the staff member or volunteer fail to return home. Personal service user information should not be given to the key contact / s to comply with data protection requirements.
- 8.12 Lone workers must familiarize themselves with the urgent and emergency assistance protocol (see flow chart in Appendix 3).

9 FURTHER GUIDANCE

- 9.1 Further guidance and a checklist are shown at appendices 1 & 2, along with links to other reference sources such as that published by the *Health and Safety Executive*.

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APPENDIX 1

GENERAL LONE WORKING GUIDANCE

- Be prepared. If you are going somewhere new, check out the location online prior to your visit so that you are familiar with the location. If the area looks as though it could pose a risk, discuss it with your line manager.
- Record your plans – use the tools provided by Age UK Norfolk to record and make others aware of your planned activities.
- Ensure that you stay within the planned visit times and immediately report if there are any changes to these plans.
- Ensure that all visits are made and concluded within the hours of 10am and 4pm (excluding travel time)
- Make sure someone is aware of your activities and that you are working alone, in the office, or at someone's home.
- Park as near as possible in a well-lit area, away from driveways or anywhere that you could be blocked in, make sure you reverse in, so it is easier to manoeuvre out.
- Study your environment, review the checklist, and complete your own visual risk assessment. Arrive early and observe your surroundings from the safety of your vehicle. Note the exits, observe who is present and look for any dangers, such as dogs. Assess how easily you would be able to leave in an emergency. Record any identified risks on *CharityLog* or tell your coordinator / line manager immediately.
- Trust your instincts. When you arrive at a lone working situation, remain on guard. If you sense something is wrong and you feel your safety is compromised by entering a property, make an excuse and leave.
- Keep a clear path to an exit so that you do not allow yourself to become trapped.
- Carry a mobile telephone and leave it switched on. Ensure that you have the number of your line manager or supervisor programmed into the phone.
- If you feel your safety is compromised while on the premises, if possible, make your excuses and leave and when a safe distance away, and if appropriate, contact the relevant emergency service by calling 999. This should also be reported immediately to your line manager or supervisor, or if neither are available, you can contact any senior managers.

If you are unable to leave the setting but still need to make an emergency call and are unable to speak, if you are able to safely and discreetly, dial 999 on your mobile and press 55. This will connect you to the Police. They cannot track your location, but the call will remain connected if you are unable to answer the operator's questions.

PERSONAL SAFETY CHECKLIST - THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

If staff members / volunteers have any concerns about personal safety, they should contact their line manager.

Ask yourself

- Have you received up-to-date training in the prevention and management of violence (for example conflict resolution and personal safety for lone workers)?
- Are you aware of Age UK Norfolk's policies and local procedures relating to lone working?
- As far as you are aware, have you been given all the information about the risks of aggressive and violent behaviour by service users and the appropriate measures for controlling these risks?
- Do you have readily available access to appropriate safety equipment if you have opted to take it up (for example lone worker alarm devices)?
- Do you know and understand how to use and maintain lone worker safety equipment?
- Do you know how to report an incident or near miss?
- Do you understand the importance of proper planning before a visit and the need to be aware of the risks and do everything you can in advance to ensure your own safety?
- Do you always leave an up-to-date timetable / diary / visits' log with your line manager and / or your colleagues / on the appropriate system?
- Do you keep in regular contact with your base when working alone?
- Do you carry out *dynamic risk assessments* during your visits?
- Are you aware that you should never put yourself or colleagues in danger and that, if you feel threatened or unsafe that you should withdraw immediately?
- Do you understand the circumstances under which a visit can be terminated?
- Do you know and understand your own responsibilities in ensuring you work alone safely as well as your manager?

Further reading and resources

- [Health and Safety Executive: Lone workers](#) - these pages offer advice aimed at lone workers themselves. A [lone workers video](#) is also available, setting out the key advice.
- [Health and Safety Executive: Protecting lone workers - How to manage the risks of working alone](#) - this leaflet is free to download. It is for anyone who employs lone workers, or engages them as contractors etc., including self-employed people or those who work alone.
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

IN CASE OF URGENT ASSISTANCE OR EMERGENCY ON A HOME VISIT - A GUIDE FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

