

# **AGE UK SURREY**

## **GUIDE TO SAFE LONE WORKING**

In this guide “Lone Worker” refers to staff or volunteers carrying out their role in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision such as in clients’ homes or outside core working hours.

## **1. Introduction**

Many members of staff and volunteers are required to work on their own as part of their job. Age UK Surrey will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff and volunteers who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety.

## **2. Responsibilities of Line Managers, staff and volunteers**

Line Managers are responsible for the implementation of these guidelines. Staff and volunteers are responsible for informing their Line Manager of any concerns about working alone.

All members of staff and volunteers must comply with any advice, procedures or working practice introduced to minimise the risks identified regarding working alone.

All members of staff and volunteers must inform their Line Manager or named member of staff if they will be working outside core office hours (9.00 am–5.15 pm Monday to Friday).

## **3. Safe Systems of Work**

When staff and volunteers are required to work alone the following specifics should be considered:

- a) Required ability of staff and volunteers, for example: professional training; experience; medical fitness/physical capability
- b) Suitability of equipment
- c) Means of communication, for example: telephone; remote or manual alarm systems; regular visits by competent persons
- d) Emergency procedures, for example: means of summoning help; means of raising alarm
- e) Supervision for new members of staff and volunteers, who must be confirmed as being competent to work alone before supervision can be relaxed to occasional visits.
- f) Defined working limits: clear procedures should be established as to the limit of what can and cannot be done. Clearly this cannot be defined in general terms, but the general precautionary principle of ‘if in doubt ask your line manager’ should be observed.

## **4. Summary**

Working alone is not illegal, but it can bring additional risks to a work activity. Age UK Surrey has developed these good practice guidelines to control risk and protect staff and volunteers. All those who are required to work alone should familiarise themselves with the guidelines and follow them. Apart from ensuring the lone worker is capable of performing the tasks associated with their job description without supervision, the other most important factors to be certain of are:

- a) The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risk to which they may be exposed
- b) All available information on clients is reviewed before visiting
- c) The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong
- d) A lone worker system is being utilised so that someone knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and the length of time that he/she will be working alone.

## **5. Lone Working Precautions**

Each service which requires staff and volunteers to work alone requires a specific Lone Working Risk Assessment and the provision of good practice guidelines relating to the specific work area in terms of service users and location.

Risk Assessments and precautionary measures should take account of:

- Remoteness of the place visited
- Means of travel
- Potential communication problems
- Likely weather conditions
- Access to telephones or provision of mobile phones and alarms
- Emergency contact arrangements
- Medical conditions which might make a person unsuitable for lone working
- Providing and implementing safe systems of work
- Agreeing arrangements for the provision and use of work equipment
- Assessment of manual handling activities and suitable training
- Agreeing a lone working system which enables every lone worker to have a named member of staff who is aware of their anticipated work pattern

Staff and volunteers new to the job may need to be accompanied during their 'induction' period since it is likely that they will be required to make decisions on site without reference to their Line Manager or deal with situations which are new to them and may present special risks.

It is the responsibility of individual line managers to monitor the tasks being carried out by staff or volunteers. In particular, they are responsible for ensuring that if the nature of the tasks changes in any way a new risk assessment is carried out. Line managers must ensure that any lone worker follows good working practices and safe systems of work.

Control measures will be identified by risk assessment and will include:

- First aid kits will be distributed on a risk management basis of assessment
- All staff and volunteers working alone are to carry and use a mobile phone
- Managers must ensure a list of lone workers' emergency contact details is available and up to date.

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

*The following points are listed as basic precautions to observe:*

### **Interviews at the office**

- Where possible work to an appointment system
- Look after yourself as first priority – it may be necessary to leave the room
- Avoid keeping people waiting but, if unavoidable, keep them informed of the situation
- Make sure the area is welcoming and friendly and invite people to sit down
- Keep between the participant/interviewee and the exit door
- If persons to be interviewed appear drunk, angry or exceptionally agitated do not conduct the interview, if possible make an alternative date
- Interview rooms must be vacated if members of the public use threatening or violent behaviour
- Note any problems you have had on the file after an interview

### **Working Outside Core Hours**

Some staff and volunteers may need to work outside core office hours. If you work alone late in the evening or at weekends out of core office hours you must:

- Tell your line manager the hours you intend to work.
- Ensure you tell a family member what time you expect to return home if you will be working unusual hours. If you live alone have a nominated person who you will contact.
- Staff: record visits on the Outlook calendar including the client initials and Charitylog number.
- Volunteers: inform your line manager/named member of staff of the client visit (this will be added to the on-call rota).
- Have emergency contact numbers on your phone.

If you are working alone in buildings:

- Ensure all windows and doors are secured to prevent unauthorised access.
- Make sure fire escape routes are available to you and not locked. Should the fire alarm activate whilst you are in the office alone you must leave the building immediately by the nearest fire exit.
- Check to ensure there are no colleagues in the building before setting the alarm.
- Ensure that there is adequate illumination available to be able to leave the building safely and leave the building by the front door.

- Park as close to the building as possible in a well lit area – move your car closer to the front door if necessary, to minimise the risks of leaving the building on your own.

At any time in any circumstances where you feel threatened or unsafe, you should call for assistance. You should be mindful of your own safety.

## **Lone Visits**

### **Before the visit**

- Risk assessments, either by phone or in person, should be carried out prior to a member of staff or volunteer visiting any client. Concerns should be referred to your line manager.
- If there are any concerns prior to a visit then the member of staff or volunteer should not make a lone visit but should arrange to be accompanied by a colleague.
- Ensure that you have the correct address for the person you intend to visit.
- Ensure that identification is available and have a mobile phone containing emergency contact numbers within easy reach.
- Ensure that your phone is fully charged.
- If you are delayed and no longer on schedule, advise your line manager/named member of staff accordingly.
- In case of emergency, make sure that your emergency contact is notified under the heading ICE (In Case of Emergency) on your mobile phone contact list.

### **During the visit**

- A dynamic risk assessment should be made on all visits.
- If on arriving the member of staff or volunteer has any concerns whatsoever about entering the property, then the member of staff or volunteer should cancel the appointment using their mobile phone or call their line manager/named staff member and give them the telephone number to cancel the appointment.
- If the client does not answer the door after several rings, try phoning their number, check with neighbours or look through windows if safe to do so.
- If you have emergency contact details for the client, call them. If you still get no response call the office or named member of staff.
- If this is a regular client and you have a keysafe number, alert your named member of staff before going in and keep the phone line open.
- When the door is answered, show your ID and look at the individual for any signs of aggression or indication that they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, say you have had an urgent call you need to deal with and leave. Call your named member of staff immediately.
- If the client has a pet that is known to be excitable or dangerous, ask for it to be put into another room or secured during the visit.

- Put yourself in an alert frame of mind, do not discuss personal matters, do not get over familiar, be friendly but always professional, let the client go into each room ahead of you and, where possible, keep yourself between the door and the client.

**Please remember if in doubt do not make the visit**

**After the visit**

- Carry your keys in your hand
- Carry a torch at night
- Check the interior of your car, particularly behind the front seats before getting in
- DO NOT hang around making notes etc, drive off and stop later in a busy place
- Car alarms are effective as a warning mechanism
- Belong to a national breakdown organisation or have arrangements with local garages in the event of a breakdown
- Do not stop if flagged down at the scene of an accident; telephone the emergency services and check that it has been reported

**Safety in your car**

- Staff and volunteers who transport clients must ensure they have the necessary level of insurance
- Always park in the direction that you need to leave
- If you think you are being followed, go directly to the nearest Police station or another 'safe haven', e.g. shop, GP surgery or straight back to base if you are sure someone will be there
- Keep car doors locked when driving around
- Whenever possible keep to well-lit main roads – do not take short cuts down poorly lit roads unless necessary
- Where possible avoid parking in deserted, poorly lit locations or in a confined space that you may get blocked into
- Secure the vehicle when you leave it, do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle

**Emergencies at the client home**

- If faced with a medical emergency, then dial 999 and follow the instructions given. If unsure if it is an emergency, then dial 111 and ask for advice.
- If your client is unwell and unable to call the doctor, ask if they wish you to do so or whether they would like you to contact a family member. If they say no and you are concerned about them, contact your Line Manager or named member of staff or the on-call number.
- If you smell gas, are aware of an electrical problem, or there is flooding, telephone the appropriate emergency number and follow the instructions given.

## **Emergency system for staff and volunteers**

- There may be no prior warning signs and on entering the house the member of staff or volunteer may feel uncomfortable.
- If, at any time during the visit, you feel vulnerable, or a potentially violent or aggressive situation is developing, leave and notify your line manager or named member of staff.
- If you are unable to leave and are able to make a call then a call should be made to your Line Manager or named member of staff to alert them of the situation by using the agreed code word. This should be done by the member of staff or volunteer apologising to the client saying that they should have called the office with some information: "Tell Mrs Figgins I am running late!!!!"
- The person taking the call needs to know where the member of staff or volunteer is and when to ring, so the message should continue along the lines of "I understand that you need to deal with this urgently, so if you need to speak to me further I am with **Mr/Mrs/Miss Name, of address** for the next **fifteen minutes**". If you wish the call to be made sooner than fifteen minutes then say you will be there for 5/10 minutes or whatever.
- The line manager/named member of staff will call after the interval given to see if everything is all right. If you leave the client's home before the time indicated please telephone your line manager/named member of staff before you drive off, and advise that you are all right and everything is fine.

### **If a member of staff/volunteer is missing**

If a member of staff/volunteer has not returned to the office at an agreed time, the line manager/named member of staff will try to contact the member of staff/volunteer on their mobile phone. If the phone is not answered, an urgent message to make contact will be left.

If the member of staff/volunteer has not returned home at the agreed time and their partner/nominated person has not been successful in contacting them the partner/nominated person should call the office or on-call number.

If the member of staff/volunteer cannot be contacted, the line manager/named member of staff will view the Outlook calendar and contact the client from their last visit to ascertain their whereabouts.

If the member of staff/volunteer is no longer with the client, the line manager/named member of staff will ascertain what time they left and how much time they would need to either return to work or return home. If the member of staff/volunteer is missing for over 2 hours, the line manager/named member of staff will ring 101 and report the circumstances of the missing member of staff/volunteer to the police. The police should be provided with the name, address, phone numbers, car registration, details of last visit, time last seen and emergency contact details.

### **Review**

This guide will be reviewed every three years.