### Policy 36: Lone Worker’s Policy

Last updated by: SH

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1  Policy 36 Lone Worker’s v1
1. **GENERAL.**

Some of the employees of Age UK York (hereafter referred to as “the organisation”) are expected to work alone from time to time, and for some working alone is the norm. Working alone is not necessarily unsafe, but there are circumstances where it can increase the exposure to risk. This policy has been drawn up to minimise any risks involved. The organisation recognises that it has a duty to make adequate provision for the health and safety of lone workers, and to assess the level of risk involved in the carrying out of job responsibilities.

2. **SCOPE OF POLICY.**

The policy covers all employees in the organisation, for example those that are involved in conducting home visits on their own and shop managers/staff. Managers and supervisors must ensure that they are aware of the terms of this policy and that the terms of it are implemented amongst the employees under their control.

3. **WHO ARE LONE WORKERS?**

A lone worker is anyone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision, and some examples are:

- Befrienders/Carers/Sitters
- Care or Home Helper staff who visit clients in their own homes on a regular basis.
- Staff who drive people home from the hospital.
- Staff who carry out home visits to assess individual clients for service provision or to offer advice and guidance.

**NOTE:** Shops: Employee and volunteer working schedules should be drawn up to endeavour to ensure that there are always at least two people on the premises. If this is not possible, the worker may work alone or close the shop to the public and continue with their duties on the premises.
4. **PROCEDURE.**

a) **Health Assessment.**

All staff and volunteers who undertake duties where they will work alone, are considered for any known medical conditions which may make them unsuitable for working alone.

b) **Training.**

All lone workers will receive appropriate training on what procedures operate to minimise any risks inherent in lone working in the area that they cover. All managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that this procedure is adhered to and any processes are followed. No employee will be allowed to commence lone working until it is considered they are sufficiently experienced and trained.

c) **Supervision.**

Age UK York will ensure that the levels of supervision that operate are commensurate with the level of risks involved and the duration of potential exposure to that risk. This level of supervision may involve:

- Periodic checks on employees, i.e. visual.
- Period contact with employees by telephone.
- Contact with other lone workers.
- Checks that lone workers have returned to the office or home.
- Completion of logs.

5. **HOME VISITS.**

Age UK York staff and volunteers undertake home visits for a variety of services.

Before a home visit is arranged, the employee/volunteer should always ensure that the service users visit has been organised in accordance with organisational procedures relevant to the service area.

Service Organisers/managers should always be aware of all home visits being undertaken on behalf of their service area.
a) **Arranging a Home Visit.**

- Ideally Initial contact should always be made with the customer by letter or telephone to arrange the date and time of the visit.

- The employee/volunteer should arrange with their manager or supervisor an adequate level of monitoring, i.e.
  
  ➢ Advising exact time of visit and estimating how long it will take.
  ➢ Whether the visit requires two staff/volunteers; male staff/volunteers; female staff/volunteers.
  ➢ Whether it is necessary to inform the office staff at the end of the visit.
  ➢ The format of the visit report.

- Details of the proposed visit should be recorded in service documentation.
  
  ➢ Details of your vehicle (if appropriate) make, colour, model and registration.
  
  ➢ Mobile phone number – All staff and volunteers working alone must have a fully charged mobile phone at their disposal. The appropriate emergency number/s must be stored in the “friends and family speed dial” section of the phone.
  
  ➢ Full details of customer/client including address and telephone number.

- If it is the first visit, or the employee/volunteer feels uncertain or unsure about the visit, then they should arrange for their organiser/manager to call them during the visit, i.e.
  
  ➢ The call could be placed at a pre-arranged time, say 10 – 15 minutes after the visit has started.
  
  ➢ It can sound like the office reminding the employee of an appointment so that they can use this as an excuse if they wish to leave and bring the visit to an end.
  
  ➢ If they are happy to continue the visit, they can advise the office when they will be leaving. They should still telephone in at the end of the visit.

- If any home visit presents any kind of problems, i.e.
➢ Other people there that you were not expecting.

➢ Difficult or aggressive customer.

➢ A pet you are not happy or comfortable with.

Then the employee should immediately advise their manager or organiser and, if appropriate, fill out an Incident Report Form from the Violence and Aggression Policy.

• Managers and organisers responsible for monitoring and supervising employees on home visits, must ensure that any monitoring calls agreed are made and logged.

• If an expected call is more than 30 minutes overdue, then the manager or organiser should notify the Deputy Chief Officer or Chief Officer and they will decide what action to take. Action may include:

  ➢ Contacting the employee on their mobile phone.
  ➢ Telephoning the customer on their home phone.
  ➢ Sending other employees to investigate.
  ➢ Contacting the employee’s home phone (without alarming relatives!).
  ➢ Contacting the police.

6. **EMERGENCY LINE SCRIPT**

Age UK York has an emergency mobile telephone, held by the Duty Officer, which can be contacted in the event of an employee or volunteer becoming uncomfortable with the situation that they are in.

The following procedure will be followed:

AUKY Duty Officer answers with “Hello, emergency line”

Worker/Volunteer: “I need to cancel my next visit. I am at Mr/Mrs…….. and it is taking a bit longer than I anticipated. Could you please ring Mr/Mrs …… and let them know that I will be late and make a note in the red/green file that you have done so”.

AUKY: “Do you need assistance?”

Worker/Volunteer: “Yes”
AUKY: “Do you need us to call the police?”

Worker/Volunteer: “Yes/no”

The reference to the red file means call the police immediately and one to the green file means someone come to me.

7. **TRAINING.**

Employees should ensure that they feel adequately trained and have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their job safely and without risks to health and safety. If any employee feels that they need extra training, then they should discuss this with their line manager.
Guidelines for Age UK York Trustees, Staff and Volunteers Working Alone in the Community

For the purposes of the rest of this document Age UK York trustees, staff and volunteers will be defined by the term 'workers'.

PERSONAL SAFETY OF WORKERS

Basic Rules

• Trust your intuition. If something or somebody makes you feel uneasy, take it seriously.
• Be alert
• Avoid taking risks. Plan ahead.
• Get away from danger fast - only defend yourself if escape is impossible.
• Report every incident - not doing so could put other people at risk.

If you are using a vehicle to carry out your duties please ensure it has plenty of fuel and is in good working condition.

Reducing the Risk of Aggression

• Remain polite and calm.
• Speak gently and clearly.
• Do not return verbal abuse or become involved in an argument.
• Avoid aggressive body language: crossed arms, hands on hips, pointing finger.
• Keep your distance and if possible avoid looking down on the aggressor.
• Do not touch somebody who is angry.
• Avoid moving quickly or suddenly.
• Talk your way out of problems - placate don't provoke.
• Remove yourself from the situation as soon as you feel uncomfortable, and particularly if you suspect your presence may be making the situation worse.
• Alert others to your fears as early as possible.

Physical attacks

• Walk away as fast as possible and don't look back. Head for a place where you know there will be people.
• Shout 'Phone the police' - people are more likely to respond to a specific instruction than 'help'
• If you have a personal alarm, use it.
• Use self-defence as a last resort.
• Report the incident promptly.
Personal possessions

Take reasonable care of your own personal possessions. Do not take valuables that you do not need on a visit.

Travelling arrangements

- Take care when walking alone at night and if possible keep to busy and well-lit roads.
- Take care when using public transport alone, especially after dark
- Take sensible precautions when driving alone, especially after dark.

Safety guidelines for visiting workers

- Visit in pairs as needed, according to the information on the referral sheet and client's records.
- Where appropriate leave details of your destination, contact number and expected time of return with a third party or at home.
- On arrival show your identity card and explain who you are and the purpose of your visit.
- Do not enter the house if you have any concerns for your safety, for example if somebody in the house appears to be aggressive or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Do not give your home address or telephone number to clients unless you are entirely happy to do so.
- If you are worried about your personal safety, leave immediately.
- After a home visit, report promptly to the AUKY service organiser or your line manager any incidents or concerns regarding personal safety issues, including harassment.
- Ensure you are aware of exits in a room and position yourself so an exit cannot be blocked by an individual.

Comments & Queries

If you have any comments or queries about this guideline or feel you have training needs which are not being addressed, please do not hesitate to contact your service manager.