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**LONE WORKING POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

# Policy Statement

1. Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member, volunteer and their Line Manager have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.
2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety and Safeguarding policies including, where relevant, those of partnership organisations.

# Purpose

1. This policy sets out the responsibilities of the organisation to protect staff and volunteers both physically and mentally from any risks that arise from lone working.
2. This policy is designed to alert staff and volunteers to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe the procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff and volunteers a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

# Scope

1. This policy applies to all staff and volunteers who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

# Context

1. With a move to homeworking, we acknowledge that the employer remains responsible for the health and safety of staff who are working from home and may be on their own for long periods without direct supervision.
2. We are committed to safe working practices for our staff and volunteers, the key principles to achieve this are:

* A commitment to supporting staff and managers in establishing and maintaining safe working practices.
* Recognising and reducing risk
* A commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff and volunteers
* A clear understanding of responsibilities
* A priority placed on the safety of the individual over property.
* A commitment to providing appropriate training for staff and volunteers.

# Definition

‘Lone working’ refers to situations where people representing PSPA in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of individuals, their own homes or they may be the only staff member or volunteer present in an office/centre or other establishment.

**Procedures for Lone Working**

## Security of main PSPA office in Milton Keynes

1. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building and that emergency exists are accessible.
2. Key codes for access to the office should be changed from time to time, and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected.
3. Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the exits and alarms.
4. There must be access to a telephone and first aid for staff working alone.
5. If there is an indication that the office has been broken into, a staff member must not enter alone but must wait for back up.
6. Office doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone.

## Working alone in another building/location

Line managers and employees must ensure:

1. They have familiarised themselves with a building if it is a new venue.
2. All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building/room and emergency exists are accessible.
3. They are familiar with the fire and, if applicable, intruder alarms procedure and know the location of both exits and alarms.
4. When making a booking at a venue there will be somebody else present in the building (i.e. Building manager/caretaker) and that this person can be contacted in the event of an emergency.
5. There is access to a telephone and first aid kit.
6. Wherever possible that they park in a well-lit and busy area.
7. When visiting someone’s home the staff member or volunteer must complete the home visit risk assessment.

## Staff working at home.

1. Staff working from their own homes should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential.
2. Staff working from home for long periods should be in regular contact with their line manager or other designated person.
3. Line managers should take care to be in regular contact with someone working alone at home to ensure they are managing their stress and maintaining good mental health.
4. Anyone working at home on a long-term basis should complete the on-line training for DSE workstation assessment and carry out an assessment on their workstation set up. This should be shared with their line manager to ensure all the appropriate equipment and guidance has been provided to prevent long term impacts of poor workstation set up.
5. Managers should be particularly aware of the importance of such arrangements for staff that live alone.
6. Staff working from home should be aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on caller display and can be retrieved by 1471. To prevent the person, you call accessing your number dial 141 before their number or check instructions on your mobile phone.

# Personal safety

1. Staff and volunteers must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard. The priority is to assess the situation and plan for a reduction of risks identified.
2. Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.
3. Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager.
4. Staff and volunteers must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone outside of their home or office, giving accurate details of their location, and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member or volunteer expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.
5. Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for virtually signing in and out, and that staff use it.
6. If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.
7. Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the type of work. Issues to consider include.

* Staffing levels and availability
* The identified risks
* Measures in place to reduce those risks.

# Assessment of risk

In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

1. The environment – locations, security, access.
2. The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
3. The individuals concerned – indicators of actual or potential risk.
4. History – any previous incidents in similar situations.
5. All available information should be considered and checked or updated as necessary.
6. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in each situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

# Planning

1. Staff and volunteers should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.
2. Plans for how to communicate with individual service users who present a known risk should be regularly reviewed and discussed with the staff team.
3. Communication, checking in and out arrangements must be in place.
4. The line manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions of the service.

# Reporting

1. Should an incident occur, members of staff should follow the reporting procedure.
2. An identified person should debrief in the first instance, if this is not the line manager, the manager should be informed as soon as practicably possible.
3. After an incident, staff support should encompass the following four principles to good practice whilst recognising that individuals may react differently to the same circumstances and managers need to be available to:

* Allow – Time for staff and volunteers to process and cope with the experience, thoughts and feelings that might arise.
* Listen – Provide staff with a private space to talk, use active listening skills; affirming and validating what is said.
* Answer – Verify and make clear the facts as known, avoid speculation and provide what information is possible.

1. Support

Discuss what may be needed and offer further aftercare. Signpost the member of staff to the Employee Assistance Programme where they can access confidential free advice and counselling.

## Personal Safety

‘Reasonable precautions’ might include;

1. Checking directions for the destination.
2. Checking whether the person is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them (should we be working with them if they pose a risk?
3. Ensuring your car, if used, is road-worthy and has break-down cover.
4. Avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas.
5. Taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night.
6. Ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly.
7. The agreed plan for contact or emergency response may be a standard one for the team or a specific to the individual situation. It should be recorded and readily accessible by the identified person. It may be appropriate to agree a code word or phrase to indicate that assistance is required.
8. Managers should be particularly aware of the importance of such arrangements for staff and volunteers who work alone.
9. Further advice can be gained from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust <http://www.suzylamplugh.org/personal-safety-tips/free-personal-safety-tips/working-alone/>

# Monitoring and review

1. The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process.
2. Any member of staff or volunteer with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with their line manager or with the whole team, as appropriate.
3. The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review