

Lone Working / Home Visits Policy

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Definition

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.

Introduction

Many members of staff and volunteers are required to work on their own as part of their job. Keira’s Kingdom 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.

Responsibilities of staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers must identify and inform a named ‘buddy’ for home visits. The buddy must be another member of the Keira’s Kingdom team and must be able to access details of the location of the visit if required in order to be able to deal with any emergency situations that may arise. All members of staff and volunteers must comply with any advice, procedures or working practice introduced to minimise the risks identified regarding working alone.

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. If in any doubt the volunteer or staff member should consult with either the Chairperson (Michelle Conway) or the Secretary (Hannah Stedham) before proceeding

Summary

Working alone can bring additional risks to a work activity. Keira's Kingdom has therefore 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

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 deal with situations which are new to them and may present special risks.

It is the responsibility of the Chairperson 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
- The Chairperson 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.

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 the Chairperson.
- 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 'buddy'/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 key safe 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, 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

Safety in your car

- Staff and volunteers who transport clients must ensure they have the necessary level of insurance
- 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
- 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

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 'buddy' 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 Trudi 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 'buddy'/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 informed their buddy that they are safe and that the visit is complete by an agreed time, the 'buddy'/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 'buddy'/nominated person has not been successful in contacting them the

'buddy'/nominated person should call the Chairperson or the Secretary. If the member of staff/volunteer is missing for over 2 hours, the Chair Person or the Secretary 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.

Document control

- Version 0.1 — 16 July 2019 — First issue