

## Swindon City of Sanctuary

# Lone Working: Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidance

### 1. Policy Statement

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff or volunteers to work alone, both the individual staff member, volunteers, managers and trustees have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

### 2. Purpose

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 procedures which will minimise such risks.

### 3. Scope

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

### 4. Context

Lone workers face the same risks as anyone else, as well as those directly related to their work. Within Swindon City of Sanctuary overall policy relating to safer working practices, support for lone workers is an essential part, and the same principles apply, particularly:

- a commitment to supporting staff, volunteers and trustees both 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
- the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property
- a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff and volunteers
- Equipment such as mobile phones, personal alarms and torches will be made available as appropriate.

### 5. Definitions

A lone worker is an employee or volunteer who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision. Such people may be exposed to risk because there is no-one to assist them and so a risk assessment may be required.

### 6. Mandatory Procedures

#### Personal Safety

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- Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
- Staff and volunteers should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.
- Before working alone, a mental assessment of the risks to staff and volunteers by management must be considered. A general risk assessment for home-visits & support work meetings will be documented for both staff and volunteers.
- Staff and volunteers must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, 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 expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base. – This can be done through an agreed process using a lone working text message system.
- Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.
- Staff and volunteers such as hosting support workers, who work to a pre-planned programme of visits, must inform their line manager if they deviate from the programme.
- If a member of staff or volunteer 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.
- Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team.

Issues to take into account include:

- staffing levels and availability
- the identified risks
- measures in place to reduce those risks
- Where staff or volunteers work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.
- Staff or volunteers working in the community should have access to a mobile phone; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider. Personal alarms may also be provided.

**Assessment of risk**

- In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:
  - the environment–location, security, access
  - the context–nature of the task, any special circumstances
  - the individuals concerned–indicators of potential or actual risk history – any previous incidents in similar situations
  - any other special circumstances
- All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary
- Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.
- While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

**Planning**

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- Staff and volunteers should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.
- Communication, checking-in and fall back arrangements must be in place.
- The team manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.

### **Reporting**

- Should an incident occur, the reporting and de-briefing should follow standard charity guidance, which can be found in our Safeguarding policy.
- The identified person should debrief in the first instance; if this is not the staff member's line manager, that manager should be informed as soon as practicable, and continue the process.

### **7. Known Risks and Procedures**

Known risks and procedures that should be followed in such circumstances.

#### **Visiting a potential Host in their home:**

- When visiting a potential Hosts home, it will eliminate the risk if two people attend the meeting. Where this is not possible it is vital that texts are used to inform your line manager of the appointment, time scale, any relevant details of location, when you have arrived and when you have left.

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#### **Meeting 1:1 as a support worker or mentor**

- When meeting someone you are supporting through one of our projects you must always ensure this is at a neutral setting and in a public place. For your own safety please use the text system to let your line manager know when you are meeting and all relevant details as mentioned above.

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