

Lone and Remote Working Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy is designed to alert staff and volunteers to the risks presented by remote and/or lone working, with or without service users, to identify the responsibilities of each person in these situations, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks.

2. Definitions

2.1 **Lone Working** - Lone Working' in the context of this policy means any employee, (or Contractor's employee), volunteer or trustee required to work alone (i.e. not with an appropriately trained and experienced colleague) in the following circumstances:

- During visits to clients at their homes or other premises.
- Work with service users in the Community.
- Working alone in offices buildings in any circumstances.

2.2 **Remote Working** - 'Remote working' is used to describe employees who work away from New Mills and District volunteer Centre's Office. This may be working from home or another organisations shared office space.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 **Centre Manager** - To ensure, through monitoring and auditing, that this policy is strictly adhered to. To provide guidance to staff to support them with their responsibilities.

3.2 **Project Coordinators** – To ensure that the policy has been communicated to all volunteers and the policy is adhered to as far as reasonably practicable.

3.3 **Employees, Volunteers, Visitors** - Have a duty to ensure that they comply with the Lone and Remote Working policy and any associated rules and instructions.

4. Requirements of Centre Manager, Staff, Coordinators, Volunteers and Trustees

The Centre Manager and project coordinators must ensure, that:

4.1 All requirements for remote/lone working are subject to an appropriate risk assessment and agreement of the relevant Line Manager or Named Workers – see appendix B in the **Remote and Lone Working Procedure** for risk assessment template.

4.2 Where the risk to the individual employee is high, then remote/lone working is not to be undertaken, unless precautions can be implemented which will adequately manage the risk, such as conducting appointments alongside another member of staff.

4.3 New employees/volunteers do not undertake remote/lone working with service users without prior training and support.

4.4 Staff members must ensure that they adequately risk assess each client and home environment, and that this assessment is available to anyone undertaking further home visits or lone working with that client. This includes other staff or volunteers.

4.5 Staff and volunteers are required to provide feedback to the Centre Manager or project coordinator, to ensure that risk assessments can be updated appropriately and any high-risk concerns may be shared with relevant people.

5. Security of Buildings

- 5.1 All staff are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.
- 5.2 Alarm systems must be tested regularly.
- 5.3 Staff working alone must be fully familiar with the exits, alarms and fire evacuation procedures for the site from which they are working.
- 5.4 Where possible, there should be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working remotely/alone.
- 5.5 If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, a staff member must not enter alone, but must contact and wait for the Police.
- 5.6 Where staff may be working with service users in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency (e.g. a lone working solutions alarm/device).

6. Personal Safety

- 6.1 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone, lone work solution and a back-up plan is sufficient to provide safeguarding in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
- 6.2 Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.
- 6.3 The procedure for lone/remote working has undergone process mapping. Staff must follow this mapped procedure at all times. If for any reason this is impractical then staff must inform the Centre Manager or other identified person of this deviation and agree and document alternative **one off** procedures. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.
- 6.4 The Centre Manager must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.
- 6.5 Staff who undertake a program of multi home visits, (one after another on the same day), must inform the Centre Manager or other staff member if they deviate from the appointments diarised in their Outlook Calendars.
- 6.6 If a member of staff does not report in as expected, the **Responding to no Contact Plan** (Lone working Procedure) should be put into operation immediately, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.

- 6.7 Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, the Centre Manager must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the possible negative effects of working in isolation.
- 6.8 Staff working alone in the community should have a mobile phone; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, in working order and that there is a communications signal available in any area they are visiting.
- 6.9 Personal alarms will be provided as determined by a risk assessment of the hazards.
- 6.10 Staff/Volunteers should not transport service users in their own cars unless this has previously been agreed and a risk assessment has been carried out.

7. Risk Assessments

- 7.1 Section 1 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees/volunteers, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes minimising the risks of lone working.
- 7.2 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 extend this general duty. This requires the employer to:
- Assess the risks employees may be exposed to at work, including lone/remote working.
 - Identify and implement measures that should be taken to remove or reduce them.
- 7.3 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.
- 7.4 In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered according to the circumstances:
- The environment – location, security, and access
 - The context – the nature of the task, any special circumstances (e.g. safeguarding of children or adults)
 - The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
 - History – any previous incidents in similar situations
 - Any other special circumstances, e.g. other people who may be present on the premises at the time of the home visit; aggressive dogs or other animals; a service user who smokes during visits; or multi occupancy where an employee/volunteer is visiting a service user and there are other services users residing within the building, who are known to the organisation, but not necessarily to the individual employee undertaking the specific home visit.
 - Any pre-existing medical conditions which could affect an employee's ability to handle a problem
 - Where the risk assessment identifies the need for a second person to be in attendance or available. This may require the second person to be an operational staff member

- When working on the premises of third parties the employee must comply with local procedures for lone/remote working except where third party's system is more prescriptive – when this should take precedence
- Suitable alerting systems must be provided in all cases (e.g. mobile phones or remotely operating emergency alerting systems).

7.5 Any clients with high-risk concerns must have this risk logged on the central Risk Register, after being added to the client's own Charity Log profile (in the risk assessment tab).

8. Home Visits to Service Users

- 8.1 Home (and other similar) visits will not be undertaken by staff or volunteers before the service user has been interviewed and risk assessed.
- 8.2 Risk assessments must be reviewed if information is received which could materially change the basis of the original agreement. Lone visits **must not** be undertaken until the risk assessment has been reviewed and any necessary protective mechanisms put in place.
- 8.3 Wherever possible, home (and other similar) visits will be undertaken within normal office hours and during the hours of daylight. Where visits outside these times are necessary, this must be authorised by the Centre Manager and taken into account in the overall risk assessment.
- 8.4 Local knowledge obtained by other partnering organisation employees, as well as New Mills and District Volunteer Centre's employees, should be shared and taken into consideration when planning visits.
- 8.5 All home (and other similar) visits must be logged before the visit, together with the anticipated time of completion. The employee(s) undertaking the visits must inform an identified nominated person when each visit has been completed or when planned arrangements are changed. If the visit is outside normal office hours the identified contact point should, where possible be the Centre Manager.

9. Lone Working in Office

- 9.1 Lone working (with service users) must be assessed against the general risk criteria noted above. Where the risk is considered to be "moderate" or "high" (e.g. in some circumstances of evening, night or weekend work) then the work must not be undertaken by a lone employee unless additional control measures have been put in place to reduce the overall risk to low.
- 9.2 Completion of out of hours work should be reported to a relevant nominated person.
- 9.3 Lone working in offices, not with service users, carries significantly less risk and whilst no special measures are required over and above the normal workplace/task risk assessment, it should be discouraged. Where it is necessary, it should be undertaken with the agreement of the Centre Manager who must be satisfied that there are no immediate health and safety reasons why the individual should not be working alone.

10. Audit Plan

The Lone and Remote Working policy will be updated annually.

There must also be regular audits of the policy and procedures, to ensure that all staff are undertaking their respective responsibilities. There are a number of ways this can be achieved:

1. Through regular discussions of lone and remote working during staff supervisions.
2. Management must also undertake regular spot checks of the following:
 - a. Use of staff diaries and the shared Home Visit calendar
 - b. Completion of risk assessments, and ensuring they are logged in the correct place
 - c. Feedback of additional risk and ensuring it is noted and the risk assessments updated.

11. Additional Considerations

- 11.1 Employees undertaking lone/remote working with service users must be properly trained and informed of the hazards likely to be encountered. Due account must be taken of local conditions, access availability, adverse weather conditions etc. Employees must always be instructed to withdraw from a potentially violent situation.
- 11.2 Special circumstances may include recent experience of the service user any indication of alcohol or substance use, the presence of a dog, or any other factor specific to the situation which might affect the assessment.
- 11.3 Outside of normal office hours the identified person would normally be the Centre Manager.
- 11.4 Some of the work carried out by New Mills and District Volunteer Centre may result in an increase in community based working, Managers must check when considering and using any third party premises whether each premise is also used for childrens/nursery activities. A review of the suitability of such premises and/or further safeguards may be required in such situations, given the potential for service users to turn up at such premises on the wrong occasion and the adverse consequences that may follow.

12. Legislation

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following legislative regulations and guidance:

- Health and safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- 6.2 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- 6.3 First Aid at Work Regulations
- 6.4 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- 6.5 Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations