

## **POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR LONE WORKERS**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

**1.0** DRH has a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to provide a safe, secure environment for every member of staff. DRH recognises that working alone can bring additional risks to a work activity and has developed policies and procedures to control the risks and protect employees. All staff working on their own should understand and follow these guidelines.

### **DEFINITION OF "LONE WORKER"**

**2.0** The term "working alone" is used to define any working practice which involves an employee undertaking duties not in the presence of or easily accessible to other employees. This can also apply to a small group of employees when they are working within isolated locations and when carrying out known high risk activities such as:

- Working with service users who have known risks, e.g. violence and/or aggression
- Carrying significant cash or banking
- Travelling between sites
- Carrying medication, equipment or valuables

### **GUIDELINES**

**3.0** Staff who are likely to be working alone should ensure that:

- They have the knowledge and competencies to undertake their duties safely
- They have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the hazards and risks to which they may be exposed.
- That they know what to do if something goes wrong
- Someone else knows their whereabouts, what he or she is doing and when they should be expected back to their normal working base

**3.1** Staff should bear in mind that although it is the legal responsibility of the employer to provide safe systems of work, individual staff have a responsibility to follow safe working practices.

***If an employee has any concerns whatsoever about working alone in a particular situation, they should discuss them with their team leader/ line manager***

**2.3** Staff who are required to work alone should:

- Ensure that they do not take unnecessary risks.
- Make their managers aware of any medical conditions that may have developed which could increase the risks of lone working.
- Follow all health and safety procedures including good practice in personal safety and awareness
- Ensure that a colleague is aware of their location in any potentially high dangerous situations
- Report promptly any threats or potentially dangerous situations
  
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## **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

**4.0** Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty upon employers to ensure that employees are given sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to work with a minimum of risk to health and safety. Lone workers may be at greater risk and therefore particular care must be taken to ensure that a safe system of work has been devised and that the worker fully understands the relevant safety arrangements.

## **EMPLOYEES**

**5.0** Lone workers should not be at any greater risk than other employees. Precautions should take account of known situations and potential risks.

**5.1** A lone worker should be able to function without risk and with confidence and to facilitate this he/she will need to understand:

- The hazards and risks associated with the intended activity
- The steps that have been taken to reduce risks to the lowest extent reasonably practicable
- Any written instructions for the task, including contingency measures for foreseeable problems and the employees duty to follow procedures
- The steps to be taken when a problem is encountered.
- Where appropriate, steps to minimise the risk of violence, such as when working late at night, handling cash, working in isolated areas or when accompanying service users alone in vehicles.
- Emergency arrangements for illness or injury.
- The location of the immediate supervisor, manager or responsible person who will understand the situation and can offer assistance
- Details of DRH on-call system

## **MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS**

### **6.0** Managers and Supervisors must understand:

- the importance of ensuring that hazards and risks are correctly evaluated
- how to obtain professional advice and assistance when problems arise
- DRH Policy/Guidelines and how it should be implemented
- the legal implications of lone working

## **TRAINING**

**7.0** Where there is limited supervision to guide and help staff during work, training & guidance is particularly important. Lone workers need to be competent and have sufficient experience to understand any risks that may arise and the precautions they need to take. Managers must ensure that staff working on their own or with service users are trained and competent to carry out the work activity. Keeping up to date with DRH core training requirements is very important as this includes essential information such as Crisis Intervention, Manual Handling, CPR and First Aid.

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

**8.0** Risk Assessment is an essential feature of DRH Policy and is universally recognised as one of the cornerstones of safe services. Skilled Risk Assessments reduce the risks to staff and the service users that they care for and are especially critical for staff working on their own.

**8.1** It is the Manager's responsibility to ensure that all risk assessments are up to date and are reviewed when any change takes place or at least annually. Any changes to risk assessments should be recorded and made available to staff carrying out work activities.

**8.2** When carrying out risk assessments the following should always be considered:

- Is the member of staff working alone competent to carry out the task
- Is he/she medically fit to do the task
- Is he/she aware of the risks
- Is he/she able to cope and know how to get assistance if a crisis occurs
- Is cash being handled or will he/she be at risk of violence
- Is he/she known to be reliable and seek help when reaching the limit of their knowledge or experience.
- Has he/she any concerns about carrying out the task
- Is there a need to carry a mobile 'phone or alarm
- Is training up to date.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

**9.0** To minimise potential risk, Managers should ensure that:

- Local operational policies, systems and guidance are in place and followed.

- Staff are informed of any potential risk.
- Staff leave a daily or weekly programme giving their whereabouts and a contact number with an appropriate member of staff.
- Staff are supported in the realistic assessment of risk.
- Staff are accompanied by a colleague to any potentially difficult situation
- Staff are adequately trained (e.g. Personal Safety and Awareness Training)
- Incident reporting systems are fully utilised as part of a risk management process

## **LONE WORKER CHECKLIST**

**10.0** *This checklist is not exhaustive but provide examples of the types of actions which contribute towards a safe working environment).*

### **i). Before setting out:**

- Before setting out be aware of the weather forecast and do not risk being caught up in bad weather conditions;
- Ensure that your vehicle has sufficient petrol and is well maintained;
- Allow yourself sufficient time for your journey so that you are not rushing;
- Make sure that you have all the equipment required for the treatment or procedures that you are to carry out;
- Drive with any bags, records and equipment hidden so that you are not seen hiding them as you park;
- Maintain a weekly diary at base of all proposed visits;
- Ensure that colleagues can make contact with you if there are concerns. *(It is essential that if you change your programme you notify a colleague. A system must be in place whereby should a member of staff not arrive back within a reasonable time, and if they cannot be contacted, that their Manager is notified and the Police contacted if that is deemed the appropriate action);*
- Make sure that any personal safety alarms, mobile phones are in working order and that you have your base number (or other as is appropriate) set up so that it can be rung by pressing one button;
- **ALWAYS** inform other colleagues of possible dangers;
- Ensure that a friend, relative or colleague is aware of the diary/log book held at their base.

### **ii) Whilst travelling:**

- Lock your door whilst driving;
- Do not use mobile phone

### **iii) Home visits:**

- Park as near as possible to the address to be visited;
- At night, park in a lighted area;
- Avoid as far as possible waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, especially at night;
- Assess the situation as you approach. If you are in any way unhappy be prepared to abandon or postpone the visit. Do not compromise your own safety;
- Do not enter the house if the person answering the door gives any cause for alarm i.e. if the service user is not there, if a potentially dangerous relative is present, if they are drunk;
- Always follow the occupants into a building;
- Treat service users courteously, remembering that you are a visitor in their home;
- If possible do not schedule a home visit for the last session of the day.

### **iv) If an incident occurs:**

- Put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. No-one is required to jeopardise their own safety: it is better to leave and find an alternative way of providing support to the service user;
- If the service user is aggressive, but the aggression is not directed at you personally, allow them to "let off steam", then calm them and help them to think of ways of resolving their problems;
- Do not be confrontational;
- Apply what you have learnt from Crisis Prevention training. This will provide information on how to handle difficult and threatening situations;
- Use a panic alarm only in situations where there is a clear escape route, and for surprise only;
- Call for assistance from the police or your team, as appropriate. DRH should ensure that local procedures/guidelines, appropriate to the nature of the workforce, are put in place for responding to incidents.

### **v) After the incident has occurred:**

- Contact your manager and return to base;

- Allow yourself time to recover and if necessary seek practical support from colleagues;
- Even after minor incidents your feelings might be difficult to control. This is a perfectly natural reaction. If necessary – take time off;
- Contact the police if appropriate;
- Ask for debriefing and for further counselling if the post-trauma condition continues;
- Share information with others who might visit;
- Report the incident through the Adverse Incident Reporting procedures. Your manager may wish to investigate the incident further: may also wish to modify safety procedures for you and other staff in the future. It is also necessary to record any incident, so that you have a more secure basis for any legal redress relating to the incident.

## **ASSOCIATED POLICIES**

POLICY No. 22 (General Policy Book) **SECURITY**

POLICY No. 2 (Health & Safety Policy Book) **RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES**

POLICY No.18 (General Policy Book) **PREVENTION & RESPONSE TO AGGRESSION & VIOLENCE**

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