

This sample document is for an organisation to adapt or develop to meet its needs

Volunteer Personal Safety and Lone Working – Policy, procedure and guidance

'Name of organisation' takes seriously its responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all volunteers who work alone either from home or out in the community without close or direct support or supervision.

We are committed to reducing the risks to volunteers and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place to reduce the risks of lone working as far as is reasonably possible and practicable.

This policy applies to all volunteers who are undertaking activities on behalf of *'Name of organisation'*. The purpose is to help you think about and improve your personal safety, be aware of risks and to take steps to reduce and adapt strategies to keep you safe.

Definition

A lone worker is anyone who works away from other volunteers or paid workers without direct support or supervision. This may include volunteers undertaking roles such as:

- befriender
- fundraiser
- buddy
- community worker
- events assistant

Responsibilities

Volunteers and *'Name of organisation'* share responsibility for health and safety matters.

'Name of organisation' is responsible for:

- assessing the potential risks volunteers may face in their role and reduce these as much as is practically possible
- implementing procedures that help ensure health, safety and well being of volunteers

It is the responsibility of the **Board of Trustees** to:

- regularly monitor and review policy and procedures

It is the responsibility of the **Chief Executive** to:

- ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place and implemented to ensure the health and safety of volunteers

The project manager or volunteer's supervisor is responsible for:

- making risk assessments
- maintaining contact with volunteers working alone either internally or externally
- ensuring systems are in place to identify volunteers who do not report back or return at the expected time
- raising an appropriate level of alarm if volunteer can not be contacted or does not return within 2 hours of expected contact or return
- contacting the police if volunteer can not be located
- ensuring all volunteers are aware of this policy and providing appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working

Volunteers are expected to:

- take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others
- comply with any personal safety procedures detailed by '*Name of organisation*'
- raise any concerns with their supervisor immediately
- report any accidents, incidents, injuries or 'near misses'
- report any safety practices that need to be improved or risks not otherwise identified

Reasonable precautions might include:

- checking directions for destination
- ensuring a vehicle is roadworthy and has breakdown cover
- ensuring someone knows where they are going and when they are expected home
- avoiding poorly lit or deserted areas
- taking care when leaving or entering empty buildings especially at night
- ensuring that equipment such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly

Risk Assessment

Risk assessments will be carried out for all activities undertaken by volunteers and recommendations to eliminate or reduce any identified risk will be made and implemented wherever possible. Written records of assessments will be maintained and regularly reviewed.

Factors that will be considered as appropriate to the circumstances are:

- The environment – location, security, access
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- The individuals concerns – indicators of potential or actual risk
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations
- Any special circumstances

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration will be given to sending 2 volunteers or making other arrangements to undertake the task.

Guidance on Lone Working

This guidance applies to volunteers whose roles require them to work alone without direct support or supervision. Depending on the actual volunteering role, only some of this guidance will be applicable. Volunteer supervisors will ensure that volunteers are aware of what applies to them.

Working from home

If working from home volunteers should:

- Take reasonable precautions to ensure that their personal addresses and telephone numbers remain confidential.
All numbers including ex-directory and mobile numbers can show up on caller display and retrieved on 1471. To avoid access to landline numbers dial 141 before dialling the number. To avoid mobile numbers being available please check the mobile phone's instruction manual
- Remain in regular contact with your supervisor

Working alone away from the office or from home

Before working alone away from the office or home you should:

- Leave details with your supervisor of where you plan to go, approximate times of when you expect to be there, details of any meetings you have arranged, including the name of the person you are meeting
- Ensure you have an appropriate means of communication
- If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving
- Take and use any other personal protective equipment provided or identified in service specific risk assessments

- Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated location, adverse weather conditions for driving). If there are, discuss them with your supervisor or chief executive before setting off
- Contact the office, or other person, to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule
- Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this
- Return to or contact your supervisor, or other person as agreed, when you have safely completed your activities

Meeting with clients away from the office

- Arrange the meeting to take place in a public place such as a cafe
- Leave details with your supervisor of where you plan to go, approximate times of when you expect to be there, details of any meetings you have arranged, including the name of the person you are meeting
- Ensure you have an appropriate means of communication
- If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving
- Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated location, adverse weather conditions for driving). If there are, discuss them with your supervisor or chief executive before setting off
- Contact the office, or other person, to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule
- Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this
- Return to or contact your supervisor, or other person as agreed, when you have safely completed your activities
- Tell your supervisor about any incidents which arose during the meeting.

Travelling by car

This might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night.

- Plan your route and take appropriate maps
- Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather
- Keep valuables out of sight; female staff should not leave obvious signs that the driver is female (handbags, coats etc) on the seats
- Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit; when Returning to the vehicle, check the back seat
- Carry a mobile phone for emergency use
- Do not pick up hitchhikers
- Carry a torch at night

- If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help
- If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened

Road rage

Unfortunately, this type of incident is becoming more common. If at any time you are confronted by this situation, it is important that you do nothing to escalate it further.

- Do not stop to confront the third party.
- If a car pulls in front of you and you are approached, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and windows closed; keep the engine running and drive away as soon as possible.
- If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash lights etc. To gain others' attention.
- If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until you reach a busy area such as. A 24 hour garage
- If you are stationary and have a mobile phone, ring the emergency services

If you breakdown on a motorway or dual carriageway

- Park as near as possible to an emergency phone
- If you have to walk, wear high visibility clothing if possible
- Leave your car by the passenger door
- When making an emergency call, face oncoming traffic, so you can see if another vehicle is approaching
- Tell the operator if you are a lone female
- Never cross the carriageway
- Wait behind the barrier, beside your vehicle if this is safe
- Ask for id from uniformed persons to ensure they are bona fide

Travelling by public transport

- Plan your route (outward and return) in advance
- Try to avoid travelling alone late at night
- Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits
- Have your fare/ticket ready and separate from other valuables
- Try to keep one hand free
- Sit downstairs on double-decker buses
- Try to avoid falling asleep

Travelling on foot

- Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings
- Keep one hand free if possible
- Avoid short-cuts, underpasses or poorly lit areas
- Walk facing on-coming traffic
- Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers
- Keep valuables out of site and avoid areas where groups may gather e.g. Clubs, pubs etc.
- Avoid wearing personal stereos
- If you carry a personal alarm, ensure that it works and that you can quickly access it

Dog attack

- Do not enter premises where an unfamiliar dog is loose
- If, when talking to a client, their dog causes you to feel uncomfortable, politely ask them to remove it

If your role requires you are out alone at night

- Let your supervisor or someone at home know your intended whereabouts - where you are going, whom you are meeting, and keep them informed of last minute changes.
- Carry a mobile phone, keep it charged and make sure the office has a record of the number
- Carry a personal alarm, if you have been provided with one
- Arrange that you will check in with a named contact, either when you return to the office or call in on returning home
- If you make a visit out of office hours, arrange to contact someone when you return home. This may be a family member or flatmate if you are returning home. If there will be nobody at home make arrangements to check in with someone else. Again, make sure this contact knows: where you are going and who you are meeting, has an estimated time of arrival home and knows where to call to raise the alarm if you do not check in
- If you anticipate problems for any reason, let the office know in advance and discuss it with your supervisor. It may be possible to arrange for someone else to accompany you
- If you are at a meeting at night, do not hesitate to ask someone from the meeting to escort you to your car at the end

Aggression or violence

This includes aggressive or inappropriate physical contact which may or may not result in pain and/or injury or offence and other non-physical abuse including verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset.

- Carry a personal alarm, if you have been provided with one, and ensure that you know how to use it
- Consider the safety of others and protect yourself before protecting the property of '*Name of organisation*'
- Contact your supervisor immediately after the incident

Procedure for alerting to personal danger

For extreme situations, establish a "trigger phrase" for use when calling in to the office. This would alert the office without alarming the antagonist. It is essential that all volunteers and staff are familiar with this phrase.

In the event of the trigger phrase being used, or a "home safe" call not being made when expected, checks should be made by the agreed office contact to establish the well-being of the volunteer.

If a volunteer finds themselves in danger and unable to speak freely, they should emphasise to the antagonist that they are expected to call in to the office or a central point at a pre-determined time, and that if they don't, the alarm will be raised.

On telephoning, they should say

"Hello, this is, may I speak to xxxxx?"

And then pass on an innocuous message or use the trigger phrase.

This is the signal that all is not well.

The office will immediately call the police and direct them to where the individual has indicated in their schedule they have gone

Disclaimer

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