

# Lone Working Guidance

**Note: If printed, this document is for immediate reference only. Do not file it, as it will go out-of-date over time and be replaced by newer versions on-line.**

This guidance has been developed in order to support staff including social workers and their managers when lone working is required. The roles and responsibilities are defined in this section and any practical steps that need to be taken for staff to keep themselves safe and for line managers to ensure that their staff are safe. This guidance should be followed to carry out council business when lone working in order to minimise the risk of harm to staff as and when required. Please also refer to Croydon's guidance and personal safety tips which is intended to compliment this guidance. The guidance referred to can be found here:

<http://im.croydon.net/collaboration/id/hs/Documents/Lone%20Working%20Guidance.docx>

## **Consideration should be given as to the following when lone working:**

- Is there a risk of verbal and physical violence to the member of staff?
- Are female workers more at risk of harm if lone working?
- Is the member of staff medically fit to be working alone?
- What happens if the member of staff becomes ill or has an accident whilst lone working?
- What happens when staff are working alone in the office after hours?

For the purpose of this guidance, a lone worker can be defined as adult social care staff employed by Croydon Council (including through an agency such as a locum social worker) who carry out tasks in order to ensure that the public, residing within the borough, health and social care needs are met. A lone worker can be defined as someone carrying out council responsibilities, who at a time, is required to carry out work related activities without direct or close supervision from line management.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Management Responsibilities**

There is no specific legislation that applies to lone working but the principles of health and safety law apply and hazards need to be identified, risk assessments need to be completed and measures put in place in order to mitigate or minimise the potential risks.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

Employees must also take responsibility for their own health and safety so should:

- follow council procedures in place
- report any safety concerns as they arise
- take care of their own safety and that of other people
- inform their line manager of any health condition they have

## **LAS**

It is the responsibility of social care staff and his/her manager to check LAS in order to establish whether the service user or anyone else living at the address or associated with the address poses a risk or a threat of harm to the member of staff visiting. There may be a warning on LAS to indicate this in the form of a red warning. . If it becomes apparent to you that a hazard warning needs to be put on LAS, please discuss with your line manager and put on LAS. If a file needs to be made a red file please follow the process on the intranet.

## **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment should be undertaken by the member of staff proposing to visit, together with his/her line manager, in order to assess the risk of harm. The risk assessment should take the following into account:

- Violence
- Risk of member of staff falling ill whilst on a visit
- The risk of staff having an accident and not being able to call for help

A risk assessment should address any risks associated with lone working and when it is not safe to do so.

## **Outlook Calendar**

Prior to a visit the member of staff should ensure that their calendar has been updated with details of the visit. This includes the name of the service user as well as his or her address or if required for confidentiality, use an LAS number instead of personal details in Outlook.

## **Mobile Telephones**

The member of staff visiting and line manager needs to ensure that they have each other's number to keep in contact if required. When early morning and late evening visits are being undertaken, it is the responsibility of the line manager and the worker to agree a time acceptable to both to make contact in order to ensure safety.

## **Joint Visits**

If the risk assessment highlights that there may be a risk of harm to the worker visiting alone, if possible a joint visit should be done with line management or with any other professionals involved with the adult.

### **Venue of Visits**

It may not always be possible to carry out visits to the home address for safety reasons or if lone working cannot be avoided at all. In such instances, an alternative venue may need to be sought in order to ensure the safety of the worker and adult concerned i.e. conducting business at the office instead of at the home address or carrying out the visit at the GP surgery etc.

### **Positioning of Self**

When visiting off site for a meeting whether it is held at a service user's property or not, always ensure that you position yourself nearest a door so that you are able to exit the property should a potentially threatening situation occur.

### **Joint Working with Police**

If undertaking a visit and it is believed, upon arrival at the property, that it is not safe to enter the property, or there is no reply when a visit had been prearranged and it is believed the subject of the visit is at risk of harm, the police should be contacted. They may need to force entry into the property in order to establish the welfare of the individual. The member of staff should not enter the property with the police but should wait outside in order to establish the outcome of the visit. There may be instances when it will be necessary to do joint visits with the police where a case may be open to the worker but a visit cannot take place at an alternative address. Consider the role police intelligence can play in our own risk assessments. As such we may ask Police colleagues to check a name or address to see if there is a risk that we are not aware of.

### **Training**

Managers must ensure that staff have had training in the following areas:

- Dealing with risk
- Personal safety
- Local procedures to be followed in order to get emergency help if required
- Procedures in checking in with the office should be followed.