PERSONAL SAFETY &

LONE WORKING GUIDANCE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW DUE: November 2024

SCOPE

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Professional Supervision](#) procedure.

Please also read in conjunction with the PGN CF0512 Using the G24 "Pooled" Lone Working Devices [LINK](#) Please note, this device is available to Safeguarding Teams only. All other staff see option for utilising their safety call options on their mobile phones.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Please also see the HCC [Health and Safety Violence and Aggression at Work Policy](#) on the Intranet in relation to the duty of HCC to prevent, manage and respond to work related violence.

AMENDMENTS

This chapter was reviewed in November 2021 to reflect current practice and should be reread in full.

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Personal Safety and Lone Working Guidance (V2)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Corporate Health and Safety - Personal Safety and Loneworking Guidance.

Hertfordshire Children's Services are committed to ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, the personal safety of its employees. It should be clearly understood by all concerned that in any situation, the reduction of risk and avoidance of untoward incidents is of paramount importance.

Staff are entitled to do their job without feeling threatened and cannot always do it well when they do not feel safe. Therefore, as part of any CS staff induction programme Personal Safety and Lone Working must be included.

Staff and members of the public need to be clear that any violent or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. Violence and threatening behaviour from service users must never be seen as an inevitable part of the job.

This document applies to lone working which result from the duties and activities of Hertfordshire Children's Services staff.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- Ensure early recognition and assessment of the risks to lone working;
- Establish a risk assessment for lone workers as part of management arrangements i.e. in individual supervision and group team meetings;
- Take steps to ensure risks are removed where possible, or putting in place control measures;
- Review risk assessments periodically or when there has been a significant change in working practice, so lessons can be learnt.

3.0 SITUATIONS OF POTENTIAL RISK

3.1 There is potential risk when lone working in the community and visiting clients in their own homes, the following are some occasions when potential risk may be heightened:

- Accommodating children into Local Authority care;
- Having to refuse financial help;
- Transporting children from one place to another when they are unwilling to go;
- Informing a parent their child maybe/is subject to a child protection plan;
- Residential care staff where they have to deal with emotionally charged interpersonal situations (and there are Codes of Practice which provide guidance);
- When abuse, including all types of discriminatory abuse, any verbal or physical threats is being directed towards you staff;

- Working outside normal office hours;
- Working from home;
- Issues of location (out of area working).

Note: Any potential assessed risk to staff must be recorded on the service user's record. It is important to let the service user know that a record has been made giving the reason why.

4.0   RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1   Line Managers

Line managers are responsible for implementing this policy and monitoring its effectiveness and must ensure that:

- Identify cases of potential or known risks/concerns and be alert to the possibility of risk situations.

- Cases of potential or known concern are discussed in 1 to 1 (supervision meetings).

- Identify lone working staff and evaluate their capacity to undertake lone working e.g. pregnant, having a disability.

- Staff understanding all relevant policies and procedures relating to personal safety and lone working through induction, supervision, PMD and standing agenda items in team meetings. Refresher training to be undertaken every 3 years.

- Risk assessments are undertaken, and control measures are in place to ensure the safety of lone workers, any measures taken should be proportionate to the level of risk and appropriate record kept.

- Staff are given management direction / guidance and training on keeping themselves safe when undertaking visits though induction, supervision, PMD and standing agenda items in team meetings. Teams can have a WhatsApp group to inform of arrival and end of visit and have the facility to use the 'pool' Guardian 24 personal safety device.

- Where an incident, (verbal or physical attack), has occurred, the worker must immediately inform their line manager, or another manager if their manager is unavailable. The violent incident form will need to be completed within 24 hours. The form is held in the H&S AIRS (accident recording system) which is fully secure and meets GDPR. Once completed by the worker, the manager is automatically emailed to do the investigation and complete the form. H&S review all incident forms. Link for guidance and forms: H&S Reporting an Accident, Incident, Violent Incident or Near Miss - HCC (hertfordshire.gov.uk)

- Where a colleague has been assaulted, they must receive immediate medical attention where necessary and given the time to debrief; the incident must be fully documented in the Violent Incident Form outlined above and appropriate post incident support is offered e.g. Employee Assistance Programme [Employee Assistance Programme - HCC (hertfordshire.gov.uk)](#)

- Following an incident a further risk assessment is carried out as alternative arrangements may be required if further visits and or services are to be provided.

- Where Staff do not wish to have an incident documented and reported the line manager may consider it necessary to do so.

- Your work mobile phones remain switched on until staff have confirmed that they have left the visit.

4.2 Staff at Risk

Staff must ensure that they:

- Do all they can to ensure their own safety and that of colleagues.

- Attend training related to lone working.

- Keep electronic calendar up to date with the LCS number and child's initials for visit and start a case note with the full details of the visit so it may be referenced if an emergency situation occurs. (See also 6.1 for more details).

- Familiarise themselves with current policy and procedures and actively seek advice and guidance from their line manager and colleagues.

- Conduct an appropriate risk assessment prior to a lone visit and share it with a line manager.

- Report all incidents even where they consider it to be a minor (see the [HCC Guidance](#) for more information).

- Develop skills through training/ or team discussions in dealing with service users anger and unpredictable behaviour (Personal safety training can be delivered on request by the Health and Safety Team and all relevant staff should also complete the Personal Safety and Lone Working iLearn module).

- Remain alert to their own behaviour e.g. body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, stay calm and be able to listen.

5.0	Lone Visits / Meetings

5.1 Meetings/interviews can often be held at an office, school or an alternative venue. However there are home visits which are necessary as part of our duties including seeing a child and family in their home environment. Normally there will be no risks when making such visits.

In some cases workers may be at risk and it is important to consider whether another work colleague or colleague from a partner agency should join the visit. If the decision is for another colleague to accompany you, the following still applies.

Equally if you are aware of another colleague (including colleagues from partner agencies) who may be conducting lone visits where there may be a potential risk present, it is essential to alert them to the potential risks.

5.2 If threats or possible violence are anticipated, then you MUST discuss the visit with your line manager. So in some circumstances the Police may also need to be involved in the visit.

If making a visit alone where there is evidence or suspected concerns regarding your safety, you must adhere to these guidelines.

Note: Giving and sharing information with other agencies and staff should be on a 'need to know' basis and an individual's right to confidentiality must be balanced against other people's right to safety. If in any doubt staff should speak to their line manager - more information is available on HCC Intranet.

6.0	PRIOR TO A VISIT WHERE THERE ARE SAFETY CONCERNS

6.1
- Conduct a risk assessment by checking for any concerns or risks related to family members, visitors, the home and any animals/pets on LCS. If there any concerns, then discuss with a line manager.

- If the decision is for the visit to take place, ensure that you are aware of whom you should contact in case of an emergency.

- Ensure that details of appointments are recorded. For data protection purposes practitioners must only enter initials and LCS /EHM numbers into Outlook. All other details about the visit (name, address, home/contact telephone number and location of visit) should be available on LCS/EHM (best practice is to start a case note and add the details of the visit) so that the whereabouts of lone workers are known to a manager and their team/colleagues.

- Take your charged work mobile phone and ensure your manager/office know your number and you have theirs.

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- Ensure the office has your out of office hours contact details if your visit is likely to go beyond core working hours (this should a include your car registration, make and model details).

- You should ensure your partner/family has your office/mangers contact details in the unlikely event that they are concerned about your whereabouts following a difficult visit.

- Inform your manager/office when you are going on the visit and expected return time from visit.

- Check all relevant CS IT Systems (i.e. LCS/EHM) for any hazard flags against the household.

- Use a 'check in' system which requires you contacting the manager/office or the manager/office contacting you at an agreed/expected time.

- Check to see if obtaining a Guardian 24 device for use during the visit will be suitable.

- Inform them of your return following the visit.

- On an iPhone you can set up Emergency SOS, which initially calls 999 then sends a message with location to next of kin. On Android phones in 'Advanced Features' select 'Send SOS Messages' for you location to be sent to your emergency contact (or similarly depending on model of mobile phone).

6.2   **Note:** At the doorstep check of your phone is receiving a signal so you are able to make a call if necessary and if you are concerned about your safety– do not go in and immediately inform the line manager who will give a management direction on the next course of action.

7.0   DURING THE VISIT

7.1   • Introduce yourself and show your ID badge.

- Check who is in the house, think about where you sit, and if necessary, how you can leave quickly if necessary.

- **It is essential that you telephone your line manager/office at the agreed 'check in' time, whether or not you have finished the meeting. If further time is needed for the meeting, inform your line manager/office of how long you expect this to last. If your line manager /office do not receive a call from you at the expected time, they will in the first instance contact you, if there is no reply, they will make a decision on contacting the police.**

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- If you feel unsafe at any time during the meeting, inform the client that you need to leave and do so immediately and at the earliest and safe opportunity contact your line manager/office.

- If you are unable to leave safely and you are concerned about your safety telephone the police (999).

8.0 FOLLOWING THE VISIT

8.1
- Inform manager (or relevant contact) of your return.

- Record the risks on LCS, inform your line manager and the service user if you are placing a Red Flag against their record (the red flag will alert other colleagues to the risks).
- If a red flag is placed a review date should be set to ascertain if the flag is to remain or is to be taken off.

9.0 DEALING WITH WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

9.1 In accordance with the HCC Health and Safety Violence and Aggression Policy, HCC define work-related violence as:

Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment.

Abuse includes the use of offensive language, writing or gestures against a person as well as causing intentional harm to an employee's property.

Threats include behavioural, verbal or written intimidation, with or without a weapon.

An assault is any act by which a person intentionally or recklessly causes another to fear immediate and unlawful personal violence.

9.2 In addition to following the guidelines within this Personal Safety and Lone Working Guidance document, where a practitioner experiences work-related violence, whether at the office, lone working in the community or from online abuse, in line with the H&S Violence and Aggression at Work Policy :

Practitioners should:

- Dial 999 in the event you feel there is a risk of immediate harm and make a police report.
- Report all incidences of violence, threats, or abuse to your line manager

Managers should:

- Treat all reports of work related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.

- Record details of the incident and give employees involved in the incident full support during the whole process.

- Set a positive example by reporting all incidents of violence and abuse to staff via the H&S Reporting an Accident, Incident, Violent Incident or Near Miss LINK and ensure that a proportionate investigation is carried out.

- Respond to any suggestion made by staff about ways that will help to improve violence prevention and management, provide feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether it will be taken forward and if not, outline the reasons why this was not felt to be reasonable and practical.

- Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and where significant risks are identified review relevant risk assessments and initiate appropriate action if additional control measures are needed.

- In the event of a police investigation provide full assistance to help with their enquiries.

10.0 TOPS TIPS FOR LONE WORKING AND RISK REDUCTION

10.1 <u>Employers:</u>

- ✓ Support – Ensure staff have good access to support and have the necessary resources e.g. work mobile phone.

10.2 <u>Line Managers and Lone Workers:</u>

- ✓ Good communication – As staff are working from home more frequently and have less contact with teams in the office, when working from home or remotely, good communication with line managers and colleagues is essential for maintaining safety and emotional well-being.

- ✓ Plan ahead - Make sure someone knows where you are and where you are going.

- ✓ Risk assess - Undertake a risk assessment ahead of your visit.

- ✓ Eliminate Lone Working - If you feel it is a high-risk situation takes someone else.

- ✓ Travel safely - Consider your journey for example transport, parking, time of day, minimise security concerns where possible.

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- ✓ Be alert - Don't become complacent always be aware of your surroundings and other people and look out for warning signs.

- ✓ Don't inflame the situation - Prior to any lone working visits consider any cultural or personal circumstances and act accordingly.

- ✓ Regularly check forms of contact - Ensure your communication devices such as mobile phones are in working order, fully charged, have a signal, easily accessible and discreet.

- ✓ Cut it short - If you feel unsafe make your apologies and leave immediately.

- ✓ Report Incidents - If an incident occurs make sure you report it in line with this policy so future occurrences' can be avoided.