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**“Working to Empower the Community”
in Lancashire and Cumbria**

Pamela Beswick - Chief Executive Officer



Help Point

LONE WORKING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Health and Safety Legislation imposes a general duty on all employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst at work and anyone else who may be affected by the work activities. This requirement includes the need to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place whilst employees are working alone.

It is the policy of Signposts to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health, safety and welfare.

These measures will be extended where appropriate, to include contractors and anyone else who may be involved in lone working for Signposts.

PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES WHO MAY BE REQUIRED TO WORK ALONE AND/OR OUTSIDE NORMAL WORKING HOURS

It is the responsibility of managers to assess the potential risks of lone working to employees and to ensure that arrangements are in place to reduce these risks to the lowest possible level in accordance with other policies and procedures. Managers must also ensure that all employees have received appropriate information, instruction and training relating to lone working and provide them with opportunities to raise any concerns.

It is the responsibility of employees to follow these arrangements and to raise any additional concerns, changes in working practices or situations etc. with their line manager as soon as they arise.

RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR LONE WORKING

The undertaking of risk assessments, which identify and control the hazards and risks associated with lone working, are a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. These will assist in identifying whether work maybe carried out safely by one, unaccompanied person. Risk Assessments should include the identification of hazards from; access and/or egress, environmental factors, personal factors, violence, etc. and should be carried out in association with the employees who will be undertaking the duties to ensure that their experiences, concerns etc are taken account of.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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IDENTIFICATION OF RISK

Line managers should establish clear procedures to set limits of what activities can and cannot be carried out whilst working alone. It is not possible to list all possible scenarios within the policy however, examples may include visiting a service user known to have violent tendencies, visiting a new, service user unknown to Signposts with limited information about them, working alone in an office outside of standard working hours.

Lone working may expose employees and others in particular hazards, which may not be apparent in normal circumstances. Signposts aim is to eliminate these hazards completely or, where this is not possible, to reduce them to an acceptable level.

In carrying out a Lone Working Risk Assessment particular consideration should be given to:

- a) Task/activity to be carried out
 - 1. Timing and whether or not it is appropriate for the task to be carried out alone.
 - 2. Level of risk
 - 3. Staff/police response time
 - 4. Complexity of task
 - 5. Training requirements
 - 6. Additional information

- b) The ability of employees
 - 1. Training provision/requirements
 - 2. Relevant qualifications and experience
 - 3. Medical fitness
 - 4. Competence for task including supervision issues for new employees

- c) The remoteness or isolation of workplaces
 - 1. Means of communication
 - 2. Means of raising an alarm
 - 3. Time required for help to arrive
 - 4. Access and egress routes
 - 5. Transport arrangements

- d) The risk of injury, violence or criminal activity etc
 - 1. Awareness of the contents of Service User risk assessments, care plans etc.
 - 2. Awareness of known associates and/or relatives of the Service User.
 - 3. Information relating to previous visits, social worker concerns etc.
 - 4. Awareness of medication, alcohol and/or drugs issues.
 - 5. Presence of family pets etc, which may pose a threat or intimidate

- e) Service users' individual requirements
 - 1. As for d) above
 - 2. Gender, race and/or culture issues

- f) Means of communication
 - 1. Mobile phone
 - 2. Landline telephone
 - 3. Personal Alarm
 - 4. Buddy system
 - 5. Lone Worker System

- g) Emergency and accident procedures, e.g.:
 - 1. Means of summoning assistance
 - 2. Means of raising the alarm
 - 3. Reporting of accidents, incidents, injuries etc

- h) The nature of any potential injury or damage and anticipated “worst case” scenario
 - 1. Control measures for dealing with the situation
 - 2. Procedures to be followed in an emergency
 - 3. Contact points, including those for “out of hours” working

- i) Backup/supports contacts
 - 1. Line manager
 - 2. Emergency Duty Team
 - 3. Emergency services – police, fire, ambulance
 - 4. Property Group
 - 5. Health and Safety

Local rules, arrangements and risk assessments should be developed and documented to cover these issues where appropriate and should also take account of any operational guidelines, which may be available.

INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Employees must be provided with appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to carry out their duties in a safe manner and to identify hazards and risks associated with lone working. Employees must follow safe systems of work where they are in operation and report any shortcomings or concerns in the employer’s arrangements for health and safety to their line manager as soon as possible.

Managers must identify training requirements of their employees during supervision sessions and give employees the opportunity to have input into this process. Managers must then ensure that relevant training courses are identified and that employees are given the opportunity to attend them. This process should be reviewed during further supervision sessions.

SUMMARY

Working alone may bring additional risks to a work activity. Signposts provides appropriate information to enable managers to develop local arrangements to control these risks and to protect employees.

Important things to consider are that:

- (I) The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he or she may be exposed and that they feel capable of carrying out the task/activity in this situation.

- (II) The lone worker is aware of the procedures to follow in the event that something untoward happens, is aware of their own personal limitations and does not exceed them.

- (III) An appropriate manager is aware of the whereabouts of all lone workers under their supervision and what activities they are involved in.

- (IV) Procedures are in place to allow lone workers to report back following completion of their task/activities.

PROTECTION OF CONTRACTORS WHO MAY BE REQUIRED TO CARRY OUT WORK FOR SIGNPOSTS ALONE/OR WORK OUTSIDE STANDARD ESTABLISHMENT HOURS

The general requirement to ensure the health, safety and welfare of contractors carrying work on behalf of signposts rests with their direct employers.

There may be occasions when contract work must be carried out before/after standard establishment working hours or in isolation. In such cases the action required by the manager is the same as that required at any other time. The manager of the establishment/office must liaise with the contractor prior to work commencing, to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place which take the isolation factor into consideration and provide appropriate information to enable the contractor to carry out the work safely, i.e. security measures, fire escape routes, details of hazards and risks which may affect the work being carried out.

Where there is any doubt as to the feasibility of the work being carried out, the appropriate building surveyor should be contacted for advice.

If you have any comments, concerns or queries relating to the content of this policy or the issue of lone working, please contact your line manager in the first instance.

Project Director
April 2005 _____

Revised September 2007 _____

Procedures for home visits including risk assessment

Home visit is defined as any contact with clients outside of Signposts buildings.

Home Visit Check List

This is part of the lone working policy and it is vital that you adhere to these procedures.

- Ensure that you have a named base contact – you must contact **this** person when you have finished. (office duty or strategic, NOT apprentice!)
- Make sure your mobile phone is 'at hand' during your home visit – do not have it in your bag.
- You must ring in after **ALL** home visits – even when you finish earlier than planned, or the client is not in. It is NOT acceptable to not ring in

**If you do not ring in and we cannot contact you,
we WILL contact the police.**

Risk assessment of each visit (Guidelines from CVS)

1. How well do you know the client?
Safest – known to you; information from another agency.
Riskiest – not known at all; first visit; no history from another agency.
2. What gender are they in relation to you?
Safest – same gender
Riskiest – opposite gender, particularly female staff to male client.
3. Time of day.
Safest - daytime
Riskiest – night time
4. Location
Safest – public place,
Riskiest – bedroom in B and B, lone visit to flat

Number of riskiest factors:

- 4 – Visit at Signposts
- 3 – Take a colleague
- 2 – Consider taking a colleague or a safer location i.e. café
- 1 – Proceed with care

Procedures for planned visits

1. Contact person on office duty at Signposts to let them know;
 - Where you are going.
 - What time you expect to return.

2. If the person on office duty is unavailable, contact the strategic cover to let them know;
 - Where you are going.
 - What time you expect to return.
3. If no one is available cancel the visit. Do not use the apprentice!
4. Office duty or strategic worker should phone worker if not returned by time stated;
 - If worker answers to confirm everything OK – arrange another time for return.
 - Worker doesn't answer - try texting and ringing again. Ring the clients home phone.
 - If no contact can be made with worker or client call police.

There is a responsibility on the office duty/strategic cover to ensure they are aware of what time to call workers. The worker is responsible for making sure they ring into the office at the stated time or that they can be contacted.

Personal safety training for staff

- Knowledge of above risk assessment and procedures for visits.
- General personal safety issues including travelling to and from visits; prevention of infection; 'Get out' strategies.

Continual risk assessment whilst working

- Cancel visit if you suspect the client has been using alcohol or drugs
- Cancel visit if client has visitors that are not known to you.
- Use 'Get out' strategy if client receives visitors whilst you are there.
- Be aware of any change of mood.
- If you feel at all uncomfortable during your visit use a 'get out' strategy. Your safety is more important, home visits can be rearranged.

Practical

- ID cards and mobile phones for all workers attending home visits.
- Reporting of incidents
- Protocols between agencies

Code words

If you are contacted during a home visit or need to call for help, please use the following 'code words'. This ensures that you do not raise suspicion and are able to call for help without the client's knowledge.

- 'I'm running late so can you cancel my appointment with Pam please.'

Revised December 2009 _____

Appendix - Emergency Cover and On Call Phone

The following information is extremely important for all the team – if you are unsure of any of the procedures outlined please discuss with your line manager – as the organisation gets busier we need to be clear when contact needs to be made – contact in some instances is essential, in others it is not – we need to be clear which is which.

The person with the Emergency On Call phone has the ability to provide advice and guidance at any time – whether within office hours or outside of normal office hours. Your first point of contact within normal office hours should be your immediate line manager, but if they are unavailable or cannot answer the query then this will be passed to the Strategic Manager who has the phone who will then deal with the enquiry – this goes across the whole organisation and can be about anything that cannot be dealt with within normal practice and procedures.

Enquiries outside of office hours should follow the following procedure:

There are several areas to consider in terms of emergency and on Call cover outside of normal office hours:

- **1:1 lone working** (e.g. Family Support, Young Carers casework, detached work) – people should adhere to the lone working policy and have a named base contact who should have the location of the visit and an estimated time of finishing.
- **Detached workers** need to book in and out of sessions with the emergency on call phone so the person knows when they have left and when they have returned safely.
- **Home Visits which begin within office hours** but end outside of office hours should be booked in within normal practice – but agree with the person who is taking the role of base contact to ensure they know and can take this role.
- **Home Visits outside of normal office hours** can ask the emergency on call phone holder to be base contact, but you must get a response from them that they know you are out.
- **lone working in a building** a base contact is needed if the person has made appointments to see people, or if they meet with someone in the building (other than a member of the team). If the lone working is within office hours – then normal procedures should be followed.
- **Regular groups** (e.g. Activ8, Young Carers, Access to Leisure) – these are groups that are regularly held on site or where a worker is attending a group with a client (therefore not lone working). In this case workers do not have to check in and out of sessions. They only need to contact the emergency cover if there are issues around child protection, injury or health and safety.
- **Off site activities** (e.g. residentials, trips to theme parks) – these are regular groups that go off site for trips or residentials. In this case a base contact must be in place and they must have contact details for everyone on the activity and have a session plan. Workers should check in at the beginning of the session to say how many people are on the activity and at the end of the session once everyone has left.

You need to be clear who the base contact is – if your line manager is not available then this will be the emergency on call phone and they will have the full information of the visit including all the people involved.

See table below

Activity	Who to contact	Action required
Home visiting within the working hours of 9.30-4.30pm including visits that start within these times	line manager	must check in and out
home visiting outside of office hours (<u>starting</u> before 9.30am or after 4.30pm)	Emergency / on call phone	must check in and out
regular groups that meet on site outside working hours that involve transporting the participants	Emergency / on call phone	must check in and out
regular groups that meet on site outside of working hours that do not transport the participants	Emergency / on call phone	do not need to check in and out
regular groups that meet on site during working hours that involve transporting the participants	line manager	must check in and out
regular groups that meet on site during of working hours that do not involve transporting participants	line manager	do not need to check in and out
detached work that takes place in and out of working hours	Emergency / on call phone	must check in and out & emergency / on call phone must have route
Residential activities involving overnight stays	line manager	must check in and out, line manager must have full details and emergency / on call phone to have full details
offsite activities that take place during working hours	line manager	must check in and out, line manager must have full details and emergency / on call phone to have full details
offsite activities that take place outside working hours	Emergency/on call phone	must check in and out, line manager must have full details
Child protection and health safety issues that arise either in or out of working hours	Emergency/on call phone	

Emergency cover will be provided by SMT on a rota basis with one mobile number being used (07825 207059) which all workers will be made aware of. The location sheet will provide information on who is out and where they are, so the emergency cover is aware of when calls may come in.

It is very important that you receive an acknowledgement from the Emergency On Call Phone that they have received your text – if they do not respond then you cannot assume they have – you should then call them – and again if they do not respond – contact your line manager.

These procedures have been developed by the Strategic and Operational Management Teams based on practice and experience.

This document should be read in conjunction with Signposts Working Alone Policy.

Pamela Beswick
Chief Executive
November 2009