

Policy

Lone Worker Policy and Procedure

1 Sanctuary Trust responsibilities

- 1.1. The Sanctuary Trust has an obligation under the **Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974 (HSW Act)** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW Regulations)** to provide a safe, secure environment for every member of staff. This includes the risk of staff working alone. Employers are also under a duty to provide facilities for first aid under the **Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981**.
- 1.2. These guidelines relate to all staff that are working or travelling alone within the Sanctuary Trust premises or the community. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any risks associated with working in isolation are identified and action is taken to remove or reduce those risks.
- 1.3. Staff should bear in mind that although it is the legal responsibility of the organisation to provide safe systems of work, individuals have a responsibility to follow safe working practices. In the community where individuals work alone, or in small groups, they do need to remain alert to their own safety and that of their colleagues. To do this staff should:
 - 1.3.1. Ensure they do not take unnecessary risks (See Guidelines attached)
 - 1.3.2. Make their managers aware of any medical conditions that might have developed
 - 1.3.3. Seek and follow advice from their manager
 - 1.3.4. Follow all health and safety procedures
 - 1.3.5. Comply with requests for information on their whereabouts from managers
 - 1.3.6. Report any incidents including threats and potentially dangerous situations using the Incident Reporting form. These forms can be found in all Sanctuary Trust premises and on the Management Console Risk Assessment.

2 Who are lone workers and what jobs do they do?

- 2.1. Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision such as Resettlement and Floating Support workers. They are found in a wide range of situations where:
 - 2.1.1. Only one person works on the premises
 - 2.1.2. People work outside office hours
 - 2.1.3. People work separately from others.

3 Can people legally work alone?

- 3.1. Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the HSW Act and the MHSW Regulations still apply. Establishing

safe working practices for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees, except that lone workers do face particular problems.

4 Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?

4.1. Lone workers should not be more at risk than other employees. This may require extra risk-control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Managers should ask questions such as:

- 4.1.1. Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- 4.1.2. Is there a safe entrance and exit?
- 4.1.3. If equipment is involved, can one person safely handle the work?
- 4.1.4. If the work involves handling/lifting objects, is it too much for one person working alone?
- 4.1.5. Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- 4.1.6. Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- 4.1.7. Are men especially at risk if they work alone?

5 What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?

5.1. Training is especially important where there is limited supervision. Training may be critical to:

- 5.1.1. Help avoid panic reactions in unusual situations
- 5.1.2. Ensure that lone workers are sufficiently experienced to understand any risks and precautions fully.
- 5.1.3. That staff are competent to deal with new or unusual circumstances or where incidents occur that go beyond the scope of the training. Under such circumstances staff should be instructed to stop work and seek advice from their supervisor/manager.

6 How will the person be supervised?

6.1. Although lone workers cannot be constantly supervised it is still the line manager's duty to ensure their health and safety at work protected. This could be done through:

- 6.1.1. Regular contact between the lone worker and another member of staff by telephone
- 6.1.2. Checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of their task.

7 What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?

7.1. A risk assessment should identify foreseeable emergencies. The line manager/Project Manager should then ensure that:

- 7.1.1. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them
- 7.1.2. Information about a dangerous situations/areas should be given to lone workers
- 7.1.3. Staff should have access to first aid facilities

- 7.1.4. Mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries
- 7.1.5. The risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid
- 7.1.6. The risk assessment may also conclude that lone workers require other items of equipment such as torches, personal alarms or a mobile phone.

7.2. To minimise risks Sanctuary Trust will:

- 7.2.1. Ensure that operational policies, systems and guidance are put in place to minimise general risk
- 7.2.2. Inform all staff, other involved parties and the Sanctuary Trust Risk Manager of any potential risk
- 7.2.3. Ensure that staff leave a daily or weekly programme giving their whereabouts and contact number with an appropriate member of staff. Managers should also be able to access this information should the need arise
- 7.2.4. Support staff in the realistic assessment of risk
- 7.2.5. Take action to eliminate, minimise or transfer the risk
- 7.2.6. Ensure that in a difficult situation staff may be accompanied by another member of staff
- 7.2.7. Talk to employees and their safety representatives to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen. (Consultation with employees and their representatives on health and safety matters is a legal duty);
- 7.2.8. Put control measures in place including instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment etc. Managers should take steps to ensure that control measures are used and review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure that it is still adequate.

8 *Staff guidelines (These guidelines are not exhaustive but provide examples of the types of actions which contribute towards a safe working environment).*

8.1. On Site

- 8.1.1. When dealing with awkward and difficult, even aggressive customers, the aggression being physical, verbal or both, an appeasing, placating or tempering course of action or procedure must be called upon.
- 8.1.2. Always stay safe by keeping residents at a distance and in the view of other people to avoid abuse allegations. (ACP training must be followed)
- 8.1.3. The staff member must immediately assess the risk of danger to him or herself.
- 8.1.4. Avoid putting yourself in danger wherever possible, constantly reviewing the situation as it changes and making new assessments, being prepared to quickly change any course of action made in dealing with the incident.
- 8.1.5. Simultaneously an assessment must be made of any danger or impending danger to other persons in the immediate vicinity.
- 8.1.6. To sum up, an employed worker, volunteer or manager dealing with a volatile or potentially volatile situation where there is the potential for

physical or verbal violence or abuse or alleged abuse must assess the danger and review the situation consistently and constantly.

- 8.1.7. After the initial risk assessment, if the situation is considered too dangerous to get involved, it is necessary to follow self-preservation procedures and techniques, especially on single cover.
- 8.1.8. A safe place must be sought such as an office or the kitchen where the doors are lockable and there is access to a telephone and the alarm sounded to summon help (personal attack or panic alarm).
- 8.1.9. A panic alarm system is in use in all projects that calls the police through a call centre. For all other incidents that are not defused by sounding a personal attack or panic alarm or other means the police must be called using the emergency number 999 if it is felt this is necessary.
- 8.1.10. Staff and volunteers must avoid approaching dangerous situations alone.
- 8.1.11. It is necessary to summon the help of another staff member or official volunteer. If time allows it is important to have a period of consultation with another work colleague on how to approach the situation.
- 8.1.12. The person on call must be contacted if time allows.
- 8.1.13. It is imperative that staff only get involved if the situation can be confidently managed safely. Experience should carry some bearing in this.
- 8.1.14. The help of a resident must not be called upon unless it is inhumane not to do so, (a case of life or death).
- 8.1.15. If a public-spirited person offers assistance it is not necessary to refuse the offer of help but a confident level of command and control of the situation must be kept as much as possible.
- 8.1.16. (Proverbs 15. verse 1). Staff and volunteers must remember to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.
- 8.1.17. A calm conduct must be maintained at all times, however, it may be necessary to use firm verbal commands to uphold authority.
- 8.1.18. It is important that this is done without being threatening, tempering the authoritarian approach as the situation calms.
- 8.1.19. Time should be taken at first if necessary to attain composure and maintain that composition.
- 8.1.20. It is imperative that staff are aware of their own and the residents' frustration that may lead to a loss of temper resulting in shouting or raising of the voice excessively as working at such a high stress levels can put staff and volunteers at risk by losing composure and self control and aggravating the situation.
- 8.1.21. In the decision making process, all other options must be exhausted to be certain that this course of action is necessary such as:

- restraining a person because the situation could escalate and it is in the interest and safety of others
 - not restraining would increase the risk of harm or damage
- 8.1.22. Such action would be at the discretion of the staff member, However, this course of action will almost certainly increase the risk for the staff member who should be considering his/her safety at all times, especially when on single cover.

8.2. Off Site

- 8.2.1. Before setting out be aware of the weather forecast and do not risk being caught up in bad weather conditions
- 8.2.2. Ensure that the vehicle has sufficient petrol and is well maintained
- 8.2.3. Allow yourself sufficient time for your journey so that you are not rushing
- 8.2.4. Make sure that you have all the equipment required for the procedures that you are to carry out
- 8.2.5. Drive with bags, client notes and equipment hidden so that you are not seen hiding them as you park
- 8.2.6. Maintain a weekly diary at base of all proposed visits
- 8.2.7. Ensure that colleagues can make contact with you if there are concerns. *(It is essential that if you change the programme you notify that 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)*
- 8.2.8. 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
- 8.2.9. Obtain as much information as possible about clients and their families before the visit
- 8.2.10. If there is a known history of violence, threatened or actual, staff should discuss with their Manager whether they should see the client at the Sanctuary Head office or whether they should visit with a colleague
- 8.2.11. **ALWAYS** inform other colleagues of possible dangers
- 8.2.12. Ensure that a friend, relative or colleague is aware of the diary/log book held at their base.
- 8.2.13. Whilst travelling, do not display “on call” stickers or similar which will in any way identify you as a Support worker
- 8.2.14. Lock your door whilst driving
- 8.2.15. If you are followed try to get to a location where other people will be around, for example a petrol station.
- 8.2.16. For home visits, get information on the area to be visited and make sure you know where you are going

- 8.2.17. Park as near as possible to the address to be visited
- 8.2.18. At night, park in a lighted area
- 8.2.19. Avoid as far as possible waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, especially at night
- 8.2.20. At night, ask the client to leave a prominent light burning to help you safely locate the house
- 8.2.21. If possible, schedule visits to problem areas for particular times of the day, such as the morning when parents are around taking children to school, and when drug activity and drunkenness should be minimised
- 8.2.22. 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
- 8.2.23. Stand well clear of the doorway after ringing or knocking. Stand sideways so that you present a narrow, protected target
- 8.2.24. Do not enter the house if the person answering the door gives any cause for alarm i.e. if the client is not there, if a potentially dangerous relative is present, if they are drunk.
- 8.2.25. Always follow the occupants into a building
- 8.2.26. Maintain an escape route i.e. do not let the client get between you and the door
- 8.2.27. Ensure that any dogs are safely in another room before you enter
- 8.2.28. Treat clients courteously, remembering that you are a visitor in their home
- 8.2.29. If possible do not schedule a home visit for the last session of the day.
- 8.2.30. If an incident occurs put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. Professional codes of conduct do not require you to jeopardise your own safety: it is better to leave and find an alternative way of providing support for the client
- 8.2.31. If the client 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
- 8.2.32. Should a relative become agitated whilst you are visiting the client, divert attention, e.g. try suggesting they make a cup of tea.
- 8.2.33. Do not be confrontational
- 8.2.34. Ensure that you have attended the “Dealing with Aggression Training” and “Breakaway Technique Training”. These provide information on how to handle difficult and threatening situations
- 8.2.35. Never use control and restraint techniques when working alone
- 8.2.36. Use a panic alarm only in situations where there is a clear escape route, and for surprise only
- 8.2.37. Call for assistance from the police or your team, as appropriate.

9 The Sanctuary Trust should ensure that procedures/guidelines, appropriate to the nature of the workforce, are put in place for responding to incidents.

- 9.1. After an 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
- 9.2. Contact the police if appropriate and ask for debriefing and for further counselling if the post-trauma condition continues
- 9.3. Share information with others who might visit and report the incident through the H&S procedures. Your manager may wish to investigate the incident further and may also wish to modify safety procedures for you and other staff for 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.
- 9.4. Staff are reminded that any change in personal details e.g. address: telephone number must be reported to their Manager.

10 General

10.1. Advice on stress is available to staff through:

- Staff members own GP
- Counsellor (referrals can be made through Sanctuary Management if required)

11 Training

11.1. Any member of staff who may work alone should attend training and seek regular updates in safety procedures to include (This is not an exhaustive list. Refer to your line manager and induction pack for available courses):

- Managing aggression and personal safety
- Breakaway techniques
- Health and safety awareness
- Annual fire safety course
- Moving and handling training
- 1st Aid at Work

12 Helpful policies and procedures

- Health and Safety policy
- Violence procedures
- Bullying and harassment policy
- Equal opportunities guidance re harassment from service users
- On Call Procedures

13 Helpful leaflets

HSE Working Alone in Safety <http://www.hsebooks.co.uk/>

Working Alone – Unison Guidance <http://www.unison.org.uk/>

14 Conclusion

It is important that the manager talks to staff and their Health & safety officer, as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen and that as far as it is reasonably practicable, a safe working environment is provided for staff.