

AUTISM GUERNSEY

LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy Statement

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff or volunteers to work alone, both the individual and managers have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Lone Working Checklist Appendix 1.

Purpose

This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff and volunteers a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

Definition

Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where staff or volunteers in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of service users or in their own home, or may be the only person present in the office.

Security of buildings

- Managers are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.
- There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment.
- If there is any indication that a building has been broken into, staff or volunteers must not enter alone, but must call and wait for back-up.
- In buildings where staff and volunteers may be working with service users in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

Personal safety

Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is sufficient safeguarding in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

Assessment of risk

In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- the environment – location, security, access
- the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
- history – any previous incidents in similar situations
- any other special circumstances

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in any given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

Planning

Staff and volunteers should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself. Plans for responding to individual service users who present a known risk should be regularly reviewed and discussed with the staff team.

Reporting

Should an incident occur, reporting and de-briefing should follow and an Autism Guernsey Incident Form, located in the office, should be completed.

The identified person should debrief in the first instance; if this is not the staff member's line manager, that manager should be informed as soon as practicable, and continue the process.

Personal Safety

'Reasonable precautions' might include:

- checking whether a service user is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them

- ensuring your car, if used, is road-worthy and you are insured to carry clients
- avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas
- planning exit strategies when lone working

When meeting with a client where a risk has been identified, staff and volunteers should check their clothing (tie, scarf, earrings etc). Similarly, they should be aware that pens, pencils, keys or heavy bags may also be used to cause injury.

Monitoring and Review

The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process. Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with their supervisor or with the whole team, as appropriate. The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

Date policy & appendix adopted:

Signature of Chair:

Date policy to be reviewed:

Assessment of risk

Staff and volunteers making an initial visit should have access to available relevant information in order to make a reasoned judgement of any potential risk. However, this may not always be feasible for a charity due to data protection and subject access.

Agencies must be encouraged to share all relevant information when making a referral for a service, and protocols agreed where appropriate.

Personal

- In order to make a complete assessment, any history of challenging behaviour should be investigated.
- Any information regarding known triggers must be recorded.
- Staff and volunteers must be aware of the effect they may have on the situation through their verbal and non-verbal communication, and take steps to avoid provocation.

Sharing Information

- Information should be shared with due regard to issues of confidentiality and data protection.
- Autism Guernsey staff and volunteers should ensure that relevant information concerning violent or abusive service users is flagged up on the case file.
- Where service users may be known to other agencies, staff should inform that agency of incidents and of the specific plan currently being implemented.

Planning

- If visiting a service user where a risk has been identified, always consider a joint visit or an office-based meeting as alternatives.
- Take into consideration the current situation and any previous events which have caused problems.

