

LONE WORKER POLICY

REFERENCE:

OWNERSHIP: The Patch Project

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Working Alone or One to One Policy and Procedures

Introduction

This policy has been developed in response to The Patch Project moving beyond school premises and towards One to One Mentoring. The policy is designed to maximise the personal safety of staff, which in the course of their work may have to meet up with a young person on a one to one basis. It is also designed to ensure the safety of the young person.

Commenting on Lone Working, the National charity for Personal Safety, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust states:

“The most important aspect of safety for people working on any project, is to ensure that they let other people know who they are meeting, when and where, so that someone is looking after their welfare”

Diana Lamplugh, Director, The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

It should be noted that this policy is relevant in the following situations:

- One to One Mentoring Sessions
- Home Visits / Family visits
- Transporting young people

Policy Statement

The Patch Project recognises that during the course of their work, it may be essential for employees to work alone. This may occur as a regular part of an employee's working practice or may occur on an occasional basis. In either situation it will arise from the understanding that this is the most appropriate and effective way of working with a particular young person.

The safety of both young people and workers paramount and The Patch Project is committed to minimising the risk of lone working for its employees.

Policy

There are some important aspects to this policy:

- That operations will ensure that The Patch Project working practices are adopted and maintained to provide for the safety of all workers undertaking lone working
- That staff training will be provided for all relevant staff (Senior Managers and Workers) regarding the systems and procedures that have been adopted regarding Lone Working
- That only experienced workers who have completed the relevant training should undertake Lone Working

Systems and Procedures

All relevant information about a young person, including information from referral agencies and information gained within The Patch Project should be obtained and made available to the worker.

The initial engagement with the young person should not be a lone meeting, but should have been undertaken with more than one worker. The initial referral meeting with stakeholders would be an example of this.

Prior to any worker undertaking lone work any potential hazards or relevant information should be identified and recorded in conjunction with the worker.

Clear records should be kept of all lone working being undertaken within the organisation. Workers should give a name, address or place and concise relevant information relating to circumstances of the lone working intervention. The start and finish time of the engagement should be recorded on the relevant report sheet, along with details of the activities undertaken.

The worker should contact a colleague when meeting a young person or their family and contact the colleague when they have finished meeting the young person.

Procedure 1 (Lone Workers Check)

- Background information on young person /family they are working alongside
- First engagement with young person should not have been the lone visit but done in a group setting with other stakeholders or more than one staff member
- Workers should be street wise and have some knowledge of the working area and associated risks – e.g. false allegations, drugs, gangs, criminal activity etc.

Procedure 2 (Lone Working Engagement)

Before undertaking an engagement ring or speak to a Contact Person who could be your line manager or a team member stating:

- Where you will be meeting and any risk factors
- Approximately how long the meeting will last

When you have finished the engagement ring the same person and let them know

Procedure 3 (Self Check)

- Do risk assessment, identify potential risks
- Check your mobile phone is fully charged and if possible keep it on during the engagement
- Do take a panic alarm if you feel this is appropriate
- Make sure you have a reliable contact in case of emergency
- Always keep your timetabled records up to date, leaving one copy in the office and keeping one yourself
- Wear appropriate clothing – i.e. flat shoes / and clothing that will not restrict you in case of a need for a quick departure
- We would advise you to keep a First Aid kit in the car

Emergency Procedure (Lone Worker)

The Emergency Procedure is designed that if your first action is ineffective then you escalate to the next action

If an incident occurs or you feel your safety is compromised:

- Try to bring calm to the situation
- Ring your designated contact person
- Ring your Line Manager

If you feel in immediate danger

1. Finish the meeting and make a quick exit
2. If you can't exit, then do ring the Police!
3. Follow your instinct on approach - If it doesn't feel right, don't enter the building.

Emergency Procedure (Contact Person)

If you do not hear back from the Lone Worker

1. Try texting or ringing them to ask if the meeting has finished
2. Ring Line Manager
3. Ring a Senior Manager / Director
4. Notify the Police

If an Emergency has taken place then the Lone worker should write a report detailing what happened and what action was taken, and give it to their Line Manager within 12 hours of the incident taking place.

CORPORATE ADVICE

Definition of violence

The definition of violence and intimidation to staff will include the commission of any deliberate or reckless act by any person towards an employee which arises out of the employee's work whether on duty or not and could include the following which may or may not leave the employee emotionally or psychologically distressed:

- Personal physical attacks upon the person whether or not causing injury including threatening behaviour
- Verbal threats with or without a weapon
- Threats in writing addressed to or about a named employee
- Gestures and/or foul and abusive language whether by personal confrontation or over the phone
- Harassment which makes a person feel threatened, humiliated or distressed on account of their race, culture, racial origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age or former convictions.
- Damage to personal and/or corporate property, equipment etc.

Use of violence to defend yourself

The Patch Project recommend that you attempt to retreat from violent situations if at all possible. If this is not possible (e.g. if you are locked in an aggressor's home, surrounded by a group of people etc.) you are, of course, entitled to use reasonable force to defend yourself.

'Reasonable force' means what is reasonable for the circumstances, and this is really no more than common sense.

So, if a person attacks you, you can take whatever action is necessary in self defence to stop them punching you e.g. grapple with them, punch them back, block their punch with a piece of furniture etc.

What you cannot do is something completely unreasonable, such as to use force which is unrelated to the force used against you e.g. to hit someone with a heavy object who simply pushes at you with no intention of doing more than that. The force must be related to the threat, and the aim of the force must be self- defence, not, for example, revenge.

So, if a person assaults you and then backs off and you continue to attack them after they have ceased to present a threat, this will not necessarily be self defence and you may be charged with assault.

The basic point is to try and do no more than is necessary to stop the attack and to retreat at the earliest opportunity.

In plain terms, use your common sense and DEFEND – DON'T ATTACK!

Visiting clients in their homes

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to:

- Make employees aware of the hazards (the potential to cause harm) when visiting people in their own homes
- Identify the control measures to reduce the risks (the likelihood of potential harm from the hazard being realised) to the lowest levels that are reasonably practicable

Under health and safety legislation, employers have a duty:

- To assess risks to their employees whilst at work
- To ensure the health and safety of their employees at work, so far as is reasonably practicable
- To provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision

Employees also have duties under health and safety legislation to:

- Take reasonable care of their own safety at work
- Co-operate with the employer and others so far as is necessary to enable their employer to comply with statutory duties for health and safety
- Take reasonable care of the safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions at work, and should:
- Notify the employer of any shortcomings in the arrangements for health and

safety HAZARDS

- Personal physical attacks upon the person whether or not causing injury including threatening behaviour
- Verbal threats with or without a weapon
- Harassment which makes a person feel threatened, humiliated or distressed on account of their race, culture, racial origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age or former convictions.

CONTROL MEASURES

Training

- Suitable training should be provided 'in house' (e.g. carrying out home visits with an experienced employee) before employees are expected to carry out home visits for the first time on their own.

Planning and preparation

- Employees should obtain all relevant information about the person to be visited prior to

the visit as far as is practicable

- Employees should be aware of the person's history and the trigger points for violent behaviour –

e.g. family stress, substance abuse etc. The more that is known about the person the better equipped the employee will be able to deal with any situation which may arise

- Consideration should be given to visiting in pairs or carrying out the interview at the office e.g. if there the customer has a history of violent behaviour (consult Line Manager)
- Leave details (preferably in an easily seen place such as an in/out board) at the base office during normal working hours, if working outside normal working hours. Details should include the address of the visit/s, the expected time of return, the registration number of the employee's vehicle (where applicable), the employee's contact number (e.g. mobile phone number) N.B. A responsible person should be appointed to monitor the board and take appropriate action should the estimated return time be exceeded
- Employees should carry their identity cards at all times when making home visits
- Employees should not give their home address or telephone number to clients.
- Avoid visits during hours of darkness unless absolutely necessary
- The Line Manager's approval should be sought for visits outside normal working hours
- Wear sensible clothing and where feasible, avoid carrying handbags, large sums of money or other valuable items to avoid theft.
- Employees must follow the guidance as regards drugs and alcohol

What to take with you

- the address of the customer and phone number (if available)
- Identity card
- A-Z map
- Mobile phone and use discretely to avoid attempted theft
- Contact phone numbers
- Necessary paperwork (but keep this to a minimum)
- Torch
- Personal attack alarm (N.B. this will need testing on a regular basis)

Driver

Employees should have a current, valid driving licence

Vehicle

Employees should ensure:

- The vehicle is roadworthy and maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- The vehicle is taxed and insured for business use
- There is sufficient fuel for the journey
- Nothing of value is on view in the vehicle – such items should be locked away in the boot

Getting there

- Avoid being late for appointments – phone ahead if you are delayed and likely to be late
- Take care when parking
- Park facing the direction in which you will drive away, particularly in cul-de-sacs
- Park in well-lit areas, as close as possible to the building, and away from potential hiding

places

- When walking, choose the safest route, which may not always be the shortest route
 - Avoid poorly lit areas or little used underpasses, where possible
 - Ensure your vehicle is locked and windows closed
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When you arrive

- Say who you are, state the reason for the visit and show your identity card
- Do not enter if the person you wish to see is not there, unless it is a responsible adult acting on their behalf
- You may decide not to enter e.g. if the person is drunk, aggressive or in a state of undress
- Ask for any dogs or other animals to be put into another room
- Let the customer lead the way and check as you go in how the door is locked behind you. If the

customer locks the door and removes the key, you may wish to ask for it to be unlocked, saying that it makes you feel threatened. You may wish to leave in a hurry!

- Do not conduct interviews in bedrooms, on balconies or stairways, or in kitchens
- Try to sit nearest the door to enable a rapid escape if necessary without being hampered
- Do not spread your belongings/paperwork etc around. You may wish to leave in a hurry!
- Avoid sitting back in easy chairs/settees.
- If sat at a table, sit sideways so you can leave easily in an emergency.

If faced with violent behaviour

- Be aware of the early warning signs by reading body language. e.g. irrational behaviour, hostility and aggression
- Try to diffuse the situation
- Be assertive and dispel any confusion (not aggressive)
- Avoid an aggressive stance e.g. crossed arms, hands on hips, wagging/pointing fingers, raised arm etc.
- Keep your distance – do not invade their personal space (N.B. a greater amount of personal space is required as tension rises)
- React in a professional manner
- Keep calm, relaxed and polite
- Speak gently, slowly and clearly
- Engage interpersonal/counselling skills to identify tension and its root cause
- Avoid confrontation – avoid an aggressive stance such as crossed arms, hands on hips and pointing or wagging a finger or raising an arm
- Avoid challenging the person
- Avoid being enticed into an argument
- Do not put a hand on someone who is angry
- Give customers a chance to explain or express themselves providing this does not place you at unnecessary risk

Know when to close the interview and leave

- Follow your instincts. If tension grows and calming measures have no effect, be courteous,

make an excuse to leave and then leave – fast!

- Use your mobile phone (dial 999) in cases of potential violence and other emergency situations
 - After the last visit, do not go straight home without reporting in to the base office.
 - Leaving a potential violent situation is not a reflection on abilities or skills
 - The Line Manager should be informed of any interview which is ended prematurely
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In the event of physical attack

- Keep away from the assailant
- If violence is imminent, dangerous places should be avoided such as stairs or restricted spaces e.g. lifts
- Look out for potential escape routes and keep between the assailant and the door to avoid being trapped
- Summon help, where practicable e.g. by shouting *Call the Police!*
- Use the personal attack alarm

At the end of the visit

- If delayed, contact the base office (if out of normal office hours)
- If there is cause for concern, the Line Manager/or deputy will take appropriate action, which could involve calling the police.

Reporting

Report all incidents/accidents to your Line Manager. Complete the appropriate form i.e. the Personal Accident Report form for accidents or Violent Incident Report form for incidents of *violence (see definition)

Debriefing

Your Line Manager is available to provide further support and to discuss any situation giving you cause for concern.

Feedback

In cases of violent incidents, Line Managers should ensure the victim is kept informed of action taken. Line Managers should consider consulting the victim prior to action being taken.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Change Summary	Author/Reviewer	Approved by:
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1	OCT 2025	Initial	Hazel Goodier	
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