

Deafblind Scotland vision – “A society in which deafblind people have the permanent support and recognition necessary to be equal citizens”

Deafblind Scotland Policy on Lone Working

What do we mean by Lone Working?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves often remotely. The role of most of Deafblind Scotland staff, but in the main the **guide/communicator**, is to encourage and enable deafblind people to lead active independent lives, **Guide/communicators** by providing the necessary support in the areas of communication, information and mobility. This role means staff including the guide/communicator are often in the situation of lone working.

Policy Statement

Deafblind Scotland is committed to promoting and maintaining safe methods of working for employees.

Introduction

While staff members may occasionally work in the office alone outside of normal working hours. The nature of guide/communicating is such that lone working is an integral part of the role. However, there are particular risks associated with lone working that need to be managed so that the risks can be minimised. It is important to remember that it will not always be possible to eliminate risk entirely, but consideration should be given as to how it can be minimised to an ‘acceptable’ level.

Responsibilities

Service-users will be made aware of the lone-working monitoring arrangements as detailed within this Policy.

Procedures

Procedures with regard to lone working are set out in the Policy Responding to Challenging Behaviour for Guide/Communicators and are explained during H&S induction training. Guide/communicators should be aware of safe working methods as laid out in Deafblind Scotland’s Health and Safety policy.

General Personal Safety

1. It is important to remember there is no substitute for constant awareness of the service users environment or individuals in order to anticipate and thereby reduce or avoid risk.
2. Guide/communicators should keep their mobile phones switched on and ensure they are sufficiently charged during their working hours.

New members/service users

Where a person becomes known to Deafblind Scotland via a referring agency eg. Social Work, the person arranging the initial visit should ask questions regarding any potential risks.

Risk factors might include:

- Location of the person's homes
- Family members
- Aggressive behaviour
- Unruly dogs
- Wrongful accusations
- Mental health difficulties
- Mobility problems
- Health problems
- Physical environment
- Service-user's ability to interpret meaning and purpose

Where no potential risk is identified then the initial visit may be carried out by a lone guide/communicator. As most of our members are elderly care must be taken not to cause alarm.

Where any risk is considered unacceptable or where no information can be gleaned then two guide/communicators should make the initial visit, where a risk assessment could be carried out.

It is also important that staff members working within the office environment do not meet persons unknown to them while no other staff members are present.

Deafblind Scotland Procedure for Lone Working

Aim of procedure

This procedure provides a framework, which if followed, will ensure that Deafblind Scotland's policy on Lone Working is followed, implemented and appropriately monitored.

When should the lone-working procedure be used?

It should be used when there is an identified risk that cannot be avoided in any other way.

Ways of avoiding risk would include:

- Working with other people present
- Working with another guide
- Working with a supervisor
- Working at a safer time of day
- Working in a safer place
- Making the family/person aware of our personal safety needs before a commitment is given.

Procedure for lone working in the community where risk has been identified:

1. Notify supervisor of:
 - Date, time, place and duration of assignment
 - Time of close of assignment
 - The specific time when the identified colleague should phone if they have not received a phone call from the lone worker
 - Phone number of nearest police stations (999 or 101)
 - All contact telephone numbers
2. Immediately prior to meeting the service user, contact the identified colleague and confirm the above details.
3. Ensure that for the duration of the meeting their mobile phone is charged, switched on and receiving a signal.
4. Immediately after the meeting is finished, contact their colleague and confirm that the meeting is finished.

The identified colleague should:

1. Retain written information on the location, duration and specific contact times for the period of lone working
2. Ensure that for the duration of that period their mobile phone is charged, switched on and receiving a signal.

Pseudo-emergency

This is where, for any one of a number of reasons an emergency appears to be occurring but actually is not. This is by far the most likely of all the emergency situations.

The situation where this might occur would be where the lone worker's mobile is not reachable (because its battery is low, it is switched off or there is no signal).

Where a lone worker is aware that they are unable, for any reason, to use their mobile they should contact their colleague from a landline. At the very latest, this should be immediately upon arriving home

Procedure for an unsafe situation

The lone worker makes a call indicating they are in an unsafe situation?

Codes: *Did I leave my house keys there?*

Or

Did I leave my folder there?

Supervisor: Shall I phone the police?

If reply is 'yes'?

Supervisor should confirm the locations then telephone 999 and give the Police the location of lone worker who is in an unsafe situation.

If reply is 'no'?

Supervisor should say:

"Leave now and phone me in 10 minutes."

Lone worker should reply:

"I have to get them, I'll cut short my time here, I'll phone you in a few minutes to make arrangements to get them from you."

Supervisor should say:

"Pretend to switch off your mobile but leave it on, keep it in your hand and I'll listen until you leave the house. Speak to me as soon as you feel safe to do so."

It is imperative that if a Lone Worker Procedure is in place then the supervisor remains on hand until the lone worker is in a safe situation.

Lone work monitoring procedure

Monitoring of lone working will be undertaken in several ways:

- All service users will be made aware of the comments and complaints procedure when they begin to use the service.

- The annual review will be an opportunity for Service Users to raise concerns.
- Lone-working risk assessment should take into consideration a service user's ability to interpret the comments and actions of the team member. (Specifically, if the Service User is known to have a history of making allegations against guide/communicators or other service providers which have been properly investigated and judged to have been unfounded. A risk assessment should be undertaken to develop safe ways of working which protect both the Service User and the guide/communicator).
- Service users' views will be sought as to their preference for a male or female guide/communicator. In certain circumstances it will be acceptable for a male guide/communicator to provide support to a female service-user who is in agreement.
- Guide/communicator should identify where support can be undertaken in Deafblind Scotland's offices in preference to a service user's home.
- Guide/communicators will have regular managerial and non-managerial support and supervision, which is an opportunity to discuss good practice with regard to boundaries generally and with reference to specific service users.
- The Service Manager will manage a programme of unannounced visits to the location of support activities.