

## Loneworking Policy

### 1. Introduction

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.

This document does not form part of a contract of employment and may be changed from time to time in line with current best practice and statutory requirements, and to ensure business needs are met. Staff will be consulted and advised of any changes as far in advance as possible of the change being made, unless the change is required by law.

### 2. Policy Aims

This policy aims to minimise and mitigate risks to loneworkers as much as is reasonably practicable. It will likely be a requirement some staff may need to lonework some of the time. The organisation will aim to minimise this and support those staff who do lonework.

Loneworking includes (but is not limited to) the following situations:

- Homeworking (see Homeworking Policy)
- Travelling to and from appointments with third parties
- Meeting with third parties
- Working alone in an office with no one else within earshot
- Working out with standard office hours including early morning, evening, weekend and bank holidays.
- Working as a guide/communicator

### 3. Responsibilities

#### Staff Responsibilities

All staff who work or perform activities on behalf of an organisation must take responsibility for their own health, safety and wellbeing. Any accidents, incidents, near misses, concerns or issues must be reported to the line manager immediately.

Prior to any loneworking commencing, staff must work with their line manager to carry out a Risk Assessment. Staff should not put themselves or remain within any situation in which they are not comfortable.

#### Manager Responsibilities

Managers must support staff to risk assess any activity involving loneworking prior to it taking place including travelling. Managers will implement any reasonable control measures wherever reasonably practicable.

Where loneworking cannot be avoided, the line manager will ensure regular contact is maintained.

### **Organisation Responsibilities**

To ensure fair, equal, reasonable and consistent treatment of all staff regarding any aspect of the implementation of this policy.

To ensure all those with line management responsibility are reasonably trained in the practical application of this policy.

### **4. Violence & Aggression**

Those who lonework are more at risk of being subject to physical and verbal violence and aggression. Violence includes any incident in which someone is physically or verbally abused, threatened or assaulted in situations relating to their work.

The risk is greater for those supporting people with substance or alcohol misuse, vulnerable persons and when carrying money or equipment such as a laptop or tablet.

The organisation intends to reduce the impact any violence or aggression incident may have on staff by providing training and where necessary, counselling support.

Following any incident or near miss involving violence or aggression, the line manager will meet with staff to discuss the situation, offer support, offer training and ensure staff are fit to return to their normal duties which may include returning to loneworking situations.

### **5. Communication**

Prior to any loneworking taking place, staff should ensure their diary/calendar includes details of the appointment including start and end times and location as well as a contact name and number. The line manager or a "buddy" must make contact with the staff member by either text message, email or phone call preferably before and after the appointment.

In the situation where the staff member has not made contact, the buddy or line manager should attempt direct contact in the first place. If this is not achieved then, they should contact the premises to confirm the staff member arrived safely and ask for them to get in touch prior to departure. In the event they did not arrive at the premises within 30 minutes of the expected time, contact should be made with their emergency contact. Should no contact be possible, it may be necessary to contact the police on 111 to advise they may be missing. When contact is re-established, the police must be advised immediately.

Regular communication between team members such as a text group will ensure all are aware of each other's movements without being intrusive and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of all.

For any staff loneworking within their own home or away from the office for the entire day or longer periods such as when attending training courses or conferences, a check-in at morning and evening is sufficient.

### **6. Assessing Risk Risk Assessments**

Prior to any loneworking taking place, staff should complete a Risk Assessment, with the support of their line manager wherever possible.

The risk assessment will identify as many hazards and risks as can be reasonably considered prior to the loneworking commencing. The risk assessment will provide for control measures to eliminate or reduce the risks to as low as level as is reasonably practicable.

The Risk Assessment will assess:-

- the remoteness of the workplace/location
- potential communication problems
- the likelihood of a criminal attack
- potential for verbal and physical aggression
- whether all equipment, materials, etc can be handled safely by one person
- whether the person is medically fit and suitable to lonework
- how the lone worker will be supervised
- how the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as vehicle breakdown, accident or incident
- whether there is adequate first-aid support.

**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.

**Dynamic Risk Assessments**

A dynamic risk assessment is assessing the hazards and risks of a situation as they unfold. For example, when walking continuously being aware of puddles and potholes and of others within the vicinity such as pedestrians and cyclists dynamically assessing the risk.

Staff who lonework must consider their own health, safety and wellbeing in any given situation and should not put themselves at risk for any reason. If staff do not feel safe, they should take reasonable measures to remove themselves from the situation.

If within another premises or someone's home, keeping closest to the exit will provide a means of escape in the event of feeling at risk.

It is not for line managers or the organisation to assess whether or not a person feels safe at the time of the potential risk.

**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.

## **7. Physical & Mental Wellbeing**

Regular or consistent loneworking can have a detrimental impact on mental wellbeing including stress, anxiety and depression. Lack of interaction can lead to feelings of isolation, abandonment and being disconnected. This can also lead to reduced performance.

Out with the required communication, it is important all loneworking staff have regular contact with colleagues and their line manager by either verbal conversation or video chat. These should not focus on work but consider the social aspect of staff and their general wellbeing.

Staff should also be encouraged to participate in physical exercise, if possible, even if it is only within their home. Walking around their home, up and down stairs (if any) or going out for a walk (if possible) can be very beneficial to support physical and mental wellbeing.

Support should be offered to anyone who experiences any detrimental impact on their physical or mental wellbeing such as being given information to access a counselling service.

## **8. Data Protection Act 2018**

The organisation will treat all personal data in line with obligations under the current data protection regulations.