



## **LONE WORKING PROCEDURE – SELF REFERRALS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Work within Homemaker involves contact with a wide range of people, and caseworkers make regular visits to people's homes, usually alone.

The work therefore carries with it a risk of threat to personal safety or of facing compromising situations. It is essential that all staff are aware of the potential risks to personal safety or of being compromised. Although threatening behaviour can be influenced by drug/alcohol misuse or by mental health problems, staff should be aware of the potential risk of violent or aggressive behaviour in every situation whether the person is known or unknown. It should be remembered that the majority of assaults are carried out by someone known to their victim.

In the context of these guidelines, 'risk' can be defined as the probability of facing an aggressive or violent or compromising situation.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Risk assessment and risk management should be central to the provision of our services. They allow appropriate levels of freedom and independence for service delivery within a context of safety for both service users and staff.

Staff should therefore follow agreed procedures in all situations.

These guidelines focus on:-

- (1) Risk assessment before contact with the client
- (2) Visits to clients in their homes
- (3) Travelling alone
- (4) Transporting clients/children/animals
- (5) Recording incidents and accidents
- (6) Reviewing procedures

Other issues of health and safety are covered separately within the Health and Safety policy.

With each situation, it is necessary to:-

- Assess the risk (Step 1)
- Minimise the risk (Step 2)
- Manage the risk (Step 3)
- After any incident, it is necessary to:-
- Record the incident (Step 4)
- Review procedures (Step 5)

# PROCEDURE FOR LONE WORKING/HOME VISITS

## **1. RISK ASSESSMENT BEFORE CONTACT WITH THE CLIENT**

All casework staff will look at the issues of risk assessment with their manager in supervision. This will include a look at potential hazards in a home visit and how to handle potentially difficult situations, if they arise.

### **Assess the Risk:**

- What could go wrong?
- What are the chances of things going wrong?
- Is client misusing drugs/alcohol?
- Is there a known history of violent or aggressive behaviour?

### **Minimise the risk:**

Prior to Client visit you must check:

- The location of the property to be visited
- If there is a risk assessment for the client
- That your Personal Alarm (where applicable) and mobile phone are working
- That your mobile phone is fully charged and switched on
- That the time of day planned for the visit minimises risk
- If you should be accompanied by a colleague
- When undertaking a visit jointly with another colleague you should always meet up with the colleague prior to reaching the property. Do not arrange to meet outside or at the property in case the colleague is delayed.

Unless otherwise identified, all first appointments with clients who have self-referred will be given an initial “B2” risk rating and Enhanced tracking procedures will apply. **(In accordance with the Client Risk Assessment Criteria and Flow Chart)**

An electronic copy of the Initial Assessment form should be printed off, and put in the client’s paper file. Any risks known to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party referrer will be documented here. As part of the first client visit, a Client Risk Assessment Form (CRAF) must be completed, and any specific risk issues identified will be recorded in “social issues” in the client’s case on Advice Pro. This ensures that any relevant risk information is available to any tracker at any time.

## **2. MEETING WITH CLIENTS AWAY FROM THE OFFICE -TRACKING**

Tracking is the means by which Homemaker is able to monitor (i.e. “track”) the whereabouts and by extension, personal safety of any caseworkers who are meeting with clients away from the office base. The process is used to ensure that any potential risks to caseworkers are identified and minimized as far as possible in advance of any appointment.

**There are 2 types of tracking that all caseworkers need to familiarise themselves with:**

**Standard tracking** – where the worker has already met the client and is satisfied that there are no potential/actual risk issues that need to be considered when seeing the client (and the client is therefore assessed as “low-risk”)

**Enhanced tracking** – where the worker is meeting a **new client** for the first time **and/or** has concerns about possible risk issues relating to an ongoing client.

**Caseworkers must take a mobile phone with them on every visit, ensure it is fully charged and switched on at all times. Caseworkers should also ensure that their mobiles are switched on immediately they leave home if they are going direct to a client appointment.**

**Before *any* client appointment takes place, the following must be detailed in the caseworker's Outlook calendar:**

- The exact time of the appointment
- An approximated finish time for the appointment
- The name, address and telephone numbers (landline AND mobile if known) of the person being visited
- The Degree of Risk anticipated
- The name of the Tracker

### **3. STANDARD TRACKING PROCEDURE**

<b>NO TRACKER = NO VISIT</b>
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- 3.1 On arrival at the client's home;** the caseworker must contact the office to advise that they have arrived safely at their destination. The caseworker **must speak directly** to someone at the office and not simply leave a message on the voice-mail. Unless and until this happens, the caseworker **must not** enter the premises.
- 3.2** The person taking the call should note that the caseworker has reached their destination. If the caseworker has difficulty reaching someone on the main office landline, they should instead try alternative direct lines or failing that, staff mobiles.
- 3.3** When the caseworker first contacts the office to confirm their arrival, they should also agree who they will speak to upon departure. It may not necessarily be the same staff member, depending on availability, **but the caseworker should have a named person ("tracker") to contact when they've finished their visit.** It may be necessary to contact the tracker on their mobile if, for example, they will not be in the office. **The name of the Tracker should be noted on the Outlook calendar entry**
- 3.4** The caseworker should also give the tracker an approximate time that they expect to finish their visit. Should the caseworker then fail to contact the tracker at the agreed time, then the tracker must contact the caseworker for an update.
- 3.5 Upon departure from the client's home:** the caseworker must again telephone the office/tracker to confirm that they are leaving. As before, the caseworker **must speak directly** to the tracker and not just leave a voice-mail message. The tracker must then note a "D" IN THE Outlook calendar entry.

*To summarise: Whether on a standard or enhanced tracking visit, the caseworker MUST NOT enter the property until such time that they have managed to speak directly to the tracker (or, in their temporary absence, another member of staff) in order to confirm their arrival. Similarly, upon*

*departure from any visit, caseworkers must speak directly to the office/tracker to confirm they have finished.*

- 3.6** If at any stage the tracker or nominated person cannot reach the Caseworker on their mobile because, for example, the caseworker is already using their mobile or if the mobile signal is weak, then the tracker should try to contact the caseworker via the client's mobile or landline.

#### **4. ENHANCED TRACKING PROCEDURE**

In the following circumstances the Enhanced Tracking procedure **must always** be used:

- Meeting any client for the first time
- Meeting any client where specific risk issues have been identified on the initial referral form or CRAF (client risk assessment form)
- Visiting any client where there is a recent history of violent or threatening behaviour
- Visiting any client where the Caseworker believes there to be a potential risk of any kind.

##### **4.1 NOMINATING A TRACKER**

- 4.1.1** Before going on a home visit, the caseworker must arrange with a colleague to be “tracked”. The designated *tracker* must then be available to see the following procedure through, even if this involves ‘cover’ beyond normal working hours. The tracker does not need to be in the office or necessarily a caseworker.
- 4.1.2** Caseworkers must agree who the designated tracker is **prior** to any visit and speak directly to them in advance so as to ensure that they know/are still available to act as a tracker. Ideally this will happen either the day before the visit is due (if it's an early morning visit) or, on the day of the visit itself. It is advisable not to nominate a tracker too far in advance of the visit due to inevitable changes in people's schedules etc.
- 4.1.3** The tracker **must** carry an alarm with them at all times throughout the duration of the “tracking” in order that this can be set to remind them when to contact the caseworker (see below for further details - usually a mobile will have an alarm function). The tracker must also ensure that they can be contacted at any point on the phone number agreed between the tracker and the caseworker.

**REMEMBER:** All caseworkers are responsible for ensuring that they have arranged a tracker in advance of any enhanced tracking visit.

<b>NO TRACKER = NO VISIT</b>
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##### **4.2 Procedure upon Arrival for Enhanced Tracking Visits**

- 4.2.1** All caseworkers must contact the office on arrival at the client's house as above (Standard tracking procedure) to confirm their arrival. ***The name of the Tracker must be noted on the Outlook calendar entry.*** The tracker must then note that the worker has arrived at their destination
- 4.2.2** ***The tracker must then set their alarm to contact the caseworker within 20 minutes of the***

***initial phone call to check upon their welfare. At this point the caseworker must either:***

**a)** Request that the tracker “stand down” (i.e. cease tracking) on the basis that there are no discernible risks from the client or household, **or**

**b)** Where the caseworker has serious or even moderate concerns about the perceived or actual level of risk they may be facing upon entering a client’s property, in which case they should not hesitate to abandon the visit immediately and if necessary, make the appropriate excuses to the client (e.g. *“I’m really sorry, I’ve just had a message from the office calling me back urgently – I’ll contact you to rearrange”*)

**4.2.3** The tracker should then note to confirm that the tracking ‘call-back’ has been done.

## **5. MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE**

All caseworkers are responsible for checking the predicted coverage for their mobile network (currently Vodafone) *in advance of any first visit*. Go to <http://www.vodafone.co.uk/our-network-and-coverage/uk-coverage-map/index.htm> to do this. If coverage appears poor/patchy, then the caseworker *must* alert the tracker to this prior to their departure (see 5.3 below for further guidance when mobile coverage is poor).

**5.1** Where mobile network coverage is known or subsequently discovered (by either the caseworker or the tracker) to be poor, then an alternative procedure must be adhered to as follows:

**5.1.1** Assuming the caseworker has been able to contact the tracker initially (from outside the property) to let them know that they have arrived only for the tracker to discover subsequently that they are unable to make contact with the worker at the critical 20 minute “call-back” stage, then they (the tracker) must continue to try and reach the caseworker by any other means available (eg via client’s mobile/ landline or caseworker’s personal mobile).

**5.1.2** If none of these options are available/work and the *tracker* has still has not made contact *30 minutes after the worker’s initial arrival (i.e. in the next 10 minutes after the attempted 20 minute call-back)*, then they *must alert the duty line manager immediately who will determine the next course of action*.

**5.1.3** Similarly, if the caseworker has not received the expected 20 minute “call-back” from their tracker, *then they must take active steps to contact them so within 30 minutes of their arrival*. This may mean that the caseworker has to leave the property and go to an area (possibly by car) where there is a mobile signal in order to confirm with the tracker that they are safe and no longer require tracking. If however they have *any* concerns about continuing the visit, particularly in light of the lack of phone coverage, then they *must abort the visit as per 4.2.2b above*

**5.2** In order to ensure that communication channels between tracker and caseworker are kept clear during the first 20 minutes of any new appointment (i.e. until the 20 minute “callback” has been made), caseworkers are asked to refrain from making any other (non-urgent ) calls during this period

**5.3** Where it is discovered that mobile coverage is poor/non-existent during a first visit, (and assuming the visit continues), then the caseworker and tracker must have already agreed an end time for the appointment (as per 3.5 above) and the caseworker must take steps to contact the tracker again when they have finished to confirm all is well (and whether the visit

has ended or not in which case a new end time must be agreed). *If the tracker has not heard from the caseworker within 10 minutes of the agreed finish time, then they must alert the duty manager without delay.*

## **6. IN AN EMERGENCY**

- 6.1** If at any stage a caseworker feels in danger and/or previous attempts to defuse a difficult situation have been unsuccessful and they are unable to leave the client's house for whatever reason, then they should contact the office on their mobile using the coded message, i.e. any sentence with **"Mr. Hargreaves"** in it – *e.g. "Did Mr. Hargreaves call for me?"*.
- 6.2** Where no manager is immediately available to consult with, the office staff should call 999 and give details of the caseworker's location, car registration etc. The office should then inform the manager/director without delay.  
Alternatively, if it is possible, the caseworker may decide to phone 999 direct using their own mobile.
- 6.3** Where mobile network coverage is known or subsequently discovered to be poor, then alternative arrangements must be made between the caseworker and the office to maintain contact throughout the duration of a visit. It may be that the use of the client's landline can be negotiated or, where this is not an option, the caseworker may have to leave the property briefly and go to an area where there is a mobile signal to confirm with the office that they are safe and no longer require tracking.
- 6.4** *If a caseworker feels that they need continued tracking but there is no mobile network coverage available to facilitate this, then a decision to abort the visit must be considered. In circumstances such as this, the caseworker is advised to leave the property and contact their line manager to discuss the best course of action. The safety of the worker remains paramount in these situations.*

## **7. WHERE CASEWORKER DOES NOT INTEND TO RETURN TO OFFICE FOLLOWING HOME VISIT**

If a caseworker does not intend to return to the office following an appointment then they **must** follow the departure procedure outlined in 3.5 above and **telephone and speak directly to another member** of staff to confirm they have finished their appointment and to advise them that they will not be returning to the office.

## **8. ACCESS TO STAFF CONTACT DETAILS - IMPORTANT**

- 8.1** Where trackers are not office-based (for example, where a home visit may continue beyond normal office hours and the tracker has since returned home) then they **must** ensure that they ***have access to the full contact details of the client that the caseworker is visiting.***
- 8.2** In addition, all staff are expected to have immediate access to the contact details of their colleagues by ensuring that they ***carry the Staff Contact List on their person at all times, and/or by entering Caseworkers' phone numbers, including their mobile/home/work numbers onto their own mobiles.*** Caseworkers are also strongly advised to ensure that their partners, families or other emergency contact have access to staff contact numbers in case of

an emergency.

- 8.3** Where the family of an employee has any concern for their welfare (for instance, should the caseworker fail to return home at the expected time) then the family member should contact the Manager or Director immediately who will decide on the next course of action.
- 8.4** Caseworkers should always carry a mobile phone which must be left on throughout the duration of any client visit.

## **9. MANAGE THE RISK**

### **➤ Safety during the Home Visit**

- Confirm you have the correct address and right person
- If on arrival at an appointment you have any concerns, do not enter the premises.
- If the client answers the door and is not fully dressed, request that he/she does so and say you will call back later
- Insist on being introduced to any other people that may be present
- Take note of the environment and make sure you know the way out
- If there are any dogs or dangerous pets in the property ask that they are placed in a different room
- Make an excuse and leave if you feel at all uncomfortable. An explanation or apology may be made later
- Keep yourself between the door and the person, particularly on a first visit or until the client is known to them
- Politely leave if anyone present is under the influence of drink or drugs, or appears agitated
- If you need to go upstairs as part of the visit follow the customer upstairs so that you will be closest to the door of any room that you go into. However when going downstairs ensure that you follow the customer again so that you are not in a position to be pushed and also be closest to the door when entering a room that is downstairs.
- If you have any suspicions or evidence that Needles, Syringes etc may be present in the property be very careful when choosing where to sit, and do not put your hands down the sides of cushions.
- Never remain in a client's property on your own e.g. if the client is picking children up from school

## **10. TRAVELLING ALONE**

Nearly all visits to clients will involve Caseworkers travelling alone.

### **10.1 Assess the risk:**

Be aware of your potential vulnerability. Is the location isolated?

Is there a long distance involved?

Can you get a mobile signal?

### **10.2 Minimise the risk**

#### **➤ Safe Parking**

- Park facing your exit route
- Park in a well-lit area
- Park near to your destination but not directly outside

- Be aware that your car could be recognised and the registration number taken by the customer

➤ **Personal Safety in Your Car**

- Never transport a client in your car unless you are insured to do so, and you have made the necessary risk assessments and checks. Ensure your vehicle is insured for business use, and you are allowed to carry passengers.
- Keep your car in good working order, report any faults and ensure it is serviced regularly
- Always ensure you have adequate fuel
- Carry details of the breakdown/rescue organisations in the vehicle
- Plan your route before setting off – when you have the choice use main roads
- Tell someone the route you will be taking
- Have directions and maps in the car so that you do not have to stop to ask
- Do not have valuables visible in the car when driving
- Keep handbags, briefcases and mobile phones out of reach of open windows in case of snatch thieves
- When you leave your car, lock personal belongings in the boot, do not leave them on display
- Lock your car, even if you are only going to pay for petrol on a garage forecourt
- When parking in daylight, consider what the area will be like in the dark

### 10.3 Manage the risk

If you think you are being followed, drive to a police station or other public place.

➤ **If Your Car Breaks Down**

- Turn on your hazard warning lights and, using your mobile phone, summon assistance
- Try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car, or to get out. Take account of how isolated you are and the time of day
- If you stay inside, sit in the passenger seat to give the impression you are not alone
- Keep your doors locked and the window open no more than 1.5 inches. If someone stops to offer help, ask him or her to telephone for assistance, if you haven't already done so.
- If you leave the car lock it. If you have a Personal Alarm keep it readily to hand. If it is dark, or will be soon, take a torch
- If you have a warning triangle, place it 30 metres from the rear of your car and on the same side of the road

➤ **Personal Safety on Foot**

- You are more likely to be able to escape danger wearing clothes you can move in easily and shoes that are comfortable, walking quickly is usually safer than trying to run
- Whenever possible, avoid walking alone at night
- Keep to busy well-lit roads
- Reflective clothing should be considered and always walk towards oncoming traffic
- Do not take short cuts, unless you know they are as safe as the longer route

➤ **Other safety measures**

- Remain alert and keep at least one hand free of baggage
- Avoid carrying/showing valuables
- Carry official identification on every visit
- Carry an alternative means of communication if possible (own mobile? change for a phone box?)



- When working alone, if you have any concerns regarding the safety of a particular home visit you should either take a colleague with you, or re-arrange it for a time when the risks can be minimised
- If in doubt seek advice from your line manager.

## **11. TRANSPORTING CLIENTS/ OTHERS**

From time to time transporting clients in a member of staff's car may be necessary. It is the personal responsibility of every member of staff to ensure they hold appropriate insurance cover and that a full assessment of any potential risks from the client has been carried out in advance

### **11.1 Assess the risk**

If risks are identified, consider alternative transport arrangements.

### **11.2 Minimise the risk**

- Consider any personal items in the car which may identify your address, phone, etc
- Consider the potential for personal items/equipment to be stolen.
- Consider whether any personal items might be used as a weapon.
- Consider whether there is any risk of the passenger seeing identifiable client information whilst in transit, e.g. whether there are any case-files or work diaries.

### **11.3 Manage the risk**

- It is strongly recommended that clients should not be left unattended within a member of staff's car for any reason.
- Discuss what to do in the event of a breakdown.

## **12. RECORDING INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS**

- 12.1** Report any incident to your line manager at the earliest opportunity and record details of this in the Incident and or Accident Book at the earliest opportunity in consultation with the line manager.
- 12.2** If subsequently you feel anxious or worried about Lone Working ensure you advise your line manager. It is a sign of strength, not weakness, to be able to share perfectly understandable reactions to such incidents
- 12.3** Where the incident involves a client, this should also be recorded in the "Client Incident File".
- 12.4** No incident is too minor to be recorded if you feel it involved a personal threat.
- 12.5** Discuss the incident with your line manager as soon as possible, and decide whether any further action is appropriate. Threatened assaults may be reported to the police.
- 12.6** **Major incidents** must be reported to the Police. This will be necessary if legal action is to be taken or it is thought that compensation may be claimed from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

## **13. REVIEWING PROCEDURES**

Policy and procedure must be reviewed by the manager following any incident, major or minor in order to establish the following:

- Are the procedures adequate?
- What went wrong?
- What worked well?
- Are any improvements/alterations needed to the existing procedures?

- Is further training needed in any area?

**IF THE ALARM IS TRIGGERED EVERYONE HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPOND IMMEDIATELY**

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

- ❖ If advisor does not answer their mobile phone(s), call the number(s) we have for the client
- ❖ If the advisor uses the phrase **“Mr Hargreaves”** in their response (*ie: I am still at the address.....I am going to be late.....can you please let Mr Hargreaves know?*) it is because they need the police and or ambulance services called to the address. They are in trouble!

**OR**

- ❖ If at any stage a caseworker feels in danger and/or previous attempts to defuse a difficult situation have been unsuccessful and they are unable to leave the client’s house for whatever reason, then they should contact the office on their mobile using the coded phrase **“Mr. Hargreaves”** in it – *e.g. “Can I speak to Mr. Hargreaves please?”*
- ❖ Where no manager is immediately available to consult with, the office staff should call 999 and give details of the caseworker’s location, car registration etc. The office should then inform the manager/director without delay.
- ❖ Alternatively, if it is possible, the caseworker may decide to phone 999 direct using their own mobile