

**MODEL**

**LONE WORKING  
POLICY  
&  
PROCEDURES**

**For**

**YOUTH & COMMUNITY  
ORGANISATIONS**

**and other organisations  
working with young people**

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# **Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LONE WORKING POLICY</b>	<b>2</b>
Background	2
Policy Statement	2
Policy	3
Systems & Procedures	3
Suggested Procedures	5
Training for Lone Workers	6
Persons to be affected by these guidelines	6
<b>Group members</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Documents and Policies used</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Suzy Lamplugh Trust</b>	<b>7</b>

## Introduction

In March 2002 the Staff College ran a training day to cover lone working. This was in response to requests from the youth and community work field and took as its starting point the fact that in certain circumstances, workers may be expected to work alone. This could mean meeting someone of whom they had limited knowledge, in an environment that they did not know.

The event was delivered by a trainer from The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, the national charity for personal safety, and was targeted at youth service professionals who need to work with young people and their families on a one-to-one basis.

The day covered practical ways in which youth workers could maximise their personal safety and also organisational issues that are necessary for worker protection.

*“The most important aspect of safety for people working at home or 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.

One of the main issues that emerged from the day was the fact that many youth workers do and are expected to work alone, but this fact is not always acknowledged by the worker's line manager or the organisation's management board. Lone working could arise because the worker considered that this was the most effective way to work with a young person; from unforeseen situations; or from the practical situation that funding was not available for two workers to undertake the tasks required. This could leave the worker in the vulnerable position of undertaking work in potentially difficult or hazardous situations, without the full support of the organisation's management and the necessary systems to ensure their safety.

Examples of such situations are:

- Mentoring sessions
- Home visits, preparing families for group meetings, meeting the extended family
- Transporting young people
- Hostel and supported accommodation situations – often one worker for a period of time

Following from these discussions it was agreed that a working group would be set up to develop a model Lone Working Policy and guidelines that would be of benefit for individual lone workers, their employing organisations and the young people with whom they work.

The membership of this working group is shown at the end of this document.

## **Draft LONE WORKING POLICY**

### **Background**

All youth organisation policy makers and managers should have a clear understanding of the actual working situations of the employees and volunteers who are involved with their organisation. If this entails any periods of lone working for staff or volunteers, it is essential that this is acknowledged and that a Lone Working Policy Statement is accepted and that the Procedures are implemented.

Within each organisation there will be different systems and procedures to ensure that worker and young people safety is maximised. These will vary according to the purpose and nature of the organisation, the working environment, the young people with whom the organisation works etc.

The following is a draft Model Lone Working Policy and Procedures which is intended to be of use to individual organisations looking to devise and implement their own Lone Working Policy.

### **Policy Statement**

The organisation ..... 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 is paramount and .....  
(Org) is committed to minimising the risk of lone working for its employees.

## **Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that within this organisation the necessary systems and working practices are adopted and maintained to provide for the safety of all employees undertaking lone working.

- Management will ensure that systems are adopted, and resources made available to support these systems, which will provide for worker safety
- Training will be provided for all relevant staff members regarding the systems and procedures that have been adopted regarding to lone working
- All Lone Workers will be fully trained in the systems and procedures employed to ensure their safety, as well as training in the practical safety issues related to the content of their work. The training should include initial generic lone working training, induction into the specific role and provision made for ongoing training and supervision.
- Only experienced workers who have completed the relevant training should undertake lone working.

## **Systems & Procedures**

The following are suggestions for measures to enhance lone working safety that can be implemented independently or incorporated into organisations' own working practices.

- At the development/introduction of the Lone Working Policy, the policy makers, managers and practitioners should meet together to review existing systems and working practices with regards to their effectiveness and any requirements for change.
- Future reviews of the Lone Working Procedures should be timetabled into the organisation's meeting cycle.
- A clear statement should be drawn up as to the purpose for the lone working within the organisation and circumstances relating to it.

- Prior to any worker undertaking lone working with a young person, any potential hazards in that particular situation should be identified, recorded and a risk assessment should be completed in conjunction with the worker.
- All relevant information about the young person, including information from referral agencies should be obtained and made available to the worker.
- All initial visits should be undertaken by 2 workers.
- Outreach and detached youth working should be undertaken by more than one youth worker and codes of practice should be developed for these workers.
- Clear records should be kept of all lone working being undertaken within the organisation. Workers should give a name, address and concise relevant information relating to the circumstances of a lone working visit. Time of starting and finishing the visit should be recorded and a system should be developed for the worker to have a contact colleague to log off after every completed visit.
- Procedures should be developed to cover actions to be taken if the worker fails to phone to base at the end of the visit, including time extensions, emergency passwords and ultimate actions of calls to the police. Each organisation should develop its own procedures for emergency situations.
- A record should be kept of any instances that constitute a threat or risk to the worker's safety and any instances of actual harm.
- Systems should be put in place to ensure the recording of all individual work with young people.
- A training programme should be developed and delivered to all staff relating to lone working procedures.

## **Suggested Procedures**

### **Procedure 1 (Lone Workers Check)**

- Background information on family / young person they are to work alongside.
- All first time visits to be done with two workers (this may differ within individual organisations).
- Workers should have some knowledge of the working area & associated risks within that area - e.g. Drugs, criminal activity etc.

### **Procedure 2 (relating to period of lone working)**

Before leaving, the worker should always inform a nominated member of staff of:

- Where they will be going and any risk factors
- Approximately how long the visit will last.
- What time they are expected to return

Procedures need to be in place in the event of no contact from the worker, eg:

- Ring mobile of worker
- Ring home/mobile of place visited
- Ring worker's contact
- Ring senior management
- Ring police

### **Procedure 3 (Self Check)**

- Do a risk assessment, identifying any potential risks.
- Check that mobile phones, personal alarms, torches etc, are fully charged and in good working order.
- Always ensure you have a reliable contact and prearranged password in case of an emergency.
- Always carry an up to date I.D card with picture.
- Always keep timetable up to date - one for personal use and one to be left in office at all times.
- First aid kit to be kept in car.
- Wear appropriate clothing - i.e. flat shoes/boots and clothing that will not restrict worker from making a quick departure.

These details need to form part of the organisational procedures relating to lone working and will vary according to organisational requirements.

Commercial organisations exist that will administer lone working visits, check and emergency systems. These are based on a prearranged list of contact numbers and the regular submission of a timetable of planned visits. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust can be contacted for further information about these options.

### **Training for Lone Workers**

Training is particularly important with lone working, to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. All lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and trained, and understand all risks and procedures before starting to work alone.

#### **Training should heighten staff awareness with regard to-**

1. Up to date Child Protection procedures, emergency duty arrangements and after hours working
2. Workers' being street wise, aware of potential risks of violence, verbal / physical aggression and allegations
3. Maintaining a safe environment for staff and young people at all times, including practical issues such as the use of personal alarms and mobile phones.
4. Action to be taken if staff or young people are put at risk.
5. Worker to be de-briefed immediately.

### **Persons to be affected by these guidelines**

All paid full / part-time staff, voluntary workers & young people.

These guidelines to apply within a varied working context, at all times of day or night. However, within the hours of darkness, two workers should be present at all times, preferably one male & one female.

Lone working has been acknowledged as "necessary" to progress in work with young people, however this work needs to be as secure and as safe as possible at all times.

## **Group members**

These guidelines were developed by a group of youth workers with extensive experience of working in a lone situation with young people, in a variety of settings including mentoring projects and emergency housing.

- Mike Clark, Cardiff Family Group Conference Project
- Anna Ellmes, Senior Support Officer, The Young People's Project, Cardiff
- Gary Thompson, Cardiff Mentoring Project
- Steve McNamara, Cardiff Mentoring Project
- Viv Jones, Cardiff Mentoring Project
- Paul Duffy, Cardiff Mentoring Project
- Phillip Ward, Safer Cardiff
- Mary Nicholls & Michelle Whyatt, Staff College, Wales Youth Agency
- Larry McCready, Community & Youth Workers Union

## **List of Documents and Policies used**

- Working Alone in Safety - Health & Safety Executive
- Stars Project policies
- Stockton Doves (Domestic Violence Empowerment and Support)
- NSPCC (NRG Project - Outreach Procedures)
- Foundation Housing Tai Sylfaen
- Barnardo's

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