**INSERT ORGANISATION LOGO**

**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LONE WORKING / VOLUNTEERING**

**CROSS VENUE WORKING**

**\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** is responsible for reducing the risk of staff or volunteers carrying out the work of the organisation in office, community, or domestic settings. This policy is supported by the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** Health and Safety Policy, the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** Adult Safeguarding and the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** CYP Safeguarding Policy.

There will be times when your role requires you to be in a venue other than the office. Measures and support are available to protect you as you do this, and it is your responsibility to seek that support and take advantage of these process to ensure you own safety.

We recognise that external working can involve being in situations of high risk of harm.

**\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** will provide you information to reduce the risk of harm and you play a role in using your awareness to reduce risk for yourself and members of the community.

**SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

For the purposes of this policy the word ‘working’ is used to describe any task delivered on behalf of **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** as a staff member or volunteering. This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection to this work.

Lone working includes

* working alone in any of **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\***’s settings either owned or hired
* working alone and visiting another organisation’s business premises or meeting venue
* working alone and making a home visit to an individual or group of two or more people
* working alone from home

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of staff / volunteers to:

**SEEK AND UTILISE INFORMATION**

* Seek and follow advice from your lead / manager.
* Follow all health and safety and safeguarding guidance.
* Check all recorded information on beneficiaries prior to undertaking a home visit. If you feel this information isn’t detailed enough, return to the source / referrer, and ask for more.
* Report any incidents, including threats and potentially dangerous situations to your line manager.

**PERFORM TASKS SAFELY**

* Trust your instincts - if something does not seem right make sure you take precautions to keep yourself safe.
* Ensure that you do not take unnecessary risks.
* Comply with requests for information on whereabouts from leads / managers.
* Ensure that all meeting details are listed in full in an accessible place.
* Try to prevent disclosing personal details about yourself to volunteers (such as your home address etc).
* Ensure any vehicle used for work purposes is well maintained with breakdown cover.

**MAINTAIN SAFE RELATIONSHIPS**

* Keep a professional relationship with team members and volunteers whilst deliver **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** tasks.
* Don’t give or lend money or goods to those accessing **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** services.
* Do not buy things for or those accessing **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** services out of your own pocket.
* Do not accept money from those accessing **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** services and only accept gifts if appropriate.
* Ensure that service users realise that the support you are providing is part of your job and there is no need for tokens of gratitude.

**PERSONAL SAFETY OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

This section is based in part on information from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, the national charity for personal safety. If you find yourself in an immediate high-risk situation, here is some guidance.

**BASIC RULES**

* If something or somebody makes you feel uneasy, take it seriously
* Be alert and appear confident
* Plan and avoid taking risks
* Get away from danger as quick as you can
* Only attempt to defend yourself if escape is impossible
* Report every incident as to not do so may put others at risk

**REDUCING THE RISK OF AGGRESSION**

* Remain polite and calm
* Tell the person who you are and ask their name
* Talk your way out of problems - try and remain calm, placate, don't provoke
* Speak gently and clearly
* Alert others to your fears or concerns as early as possible and remove yourself from the situation as soon as you feel uncomfortable
* Do not return verbal abuse or become involved in an argument
* Avoid body language that could be interpreted as aggressive such as; crossed arms, hands on hips, finger pointing
* Keep your distance and do not touch somebody who is angry
* Avoid moving quickly or suddenly
* Allow the aggressor a way out; make sure that they can leave unimpeded

**PHYSICAL ATTACKS**

* Move away as fast as possible and head for a place where you know there will be people / you will be visible
* Shout 'Phone the police' - people are more likely to respond to a specific instruction than to 'Help'
* If there is a panic button in the room or you have a personal alarm, use it
* Use self-defence only as a last resort
* Report the incident as soon as possible

**TRAVELLING ON FOOT**

* Avoid walking alone at night
* Keep to busy and well-lit roads
* Know where you are going and walk purposefully
* Walk facing oncoming traffic - If you are walking in the same direction as traffic and a car stops, turn, and walk the other way and note the registration number
* If you think you are being followed, cross and recross the road; and head for a busy area or open shop and ask someone to call the police if you’re still being followed
* Be wary of a car parked with its engine running
* Avoid using head or earphones as they can reduce your awareness of what is going on around you

**USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

* Use bus stops in busy well-lit areas
* In an empty bus, or after dark, sit downstairs near the driver and avoid empty train compartments
* Notice where the emergency alarm is
* If you feel threatened, make as much noise as possible to alert the driver or guard, and raise the emergency alarm

**WHEN DRIVING**

* Consider the necessity for the journey in adverse conditions, e.g. Extreme weather.
* Check the condition of your vehicle prior to departure.
* Allow adequate time for the journey so that you are not rushing.
* Drive carefully to avoid incidents of road rage. Keep aware of the latest police recommendations regarding road rage. (e.g. if another driver gets annoyed with you, do not make eye contact or gestures. If you are being followed, get to a location where there are other people around such as a petrol station or police station.)
* Lock your vehicle whilst driving.
* Drive with bags and equipment hidden.
* Refuse to help other motorists in difficulty but choose to drive to a public place to call the appropriate emergency services on their behalf.

**MANAGEMENT**

It is the responsibility of management to:

* Ensure that operational procedures, training and guidance are put in place to minimise general risk.
* Support the team in realistic assessment of risk.
* Take action to eliminate, minimise or transfer risk.
* Support requests for equipment and other resources deemed necessary following risk assessment.

**REVIEW**

**\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** will review the operation of the policy, with adequate consultation of staff / volunteers on a regular basis and make relevant adjustments if necessary.

**LONE WORKER GUIDANCE**

**INTRODUCTION**

A lone worker is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as ‘an employee who works by himself/herself without close or direct supervision’. For the purposes of this policy, **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** will include volunteers in this safety guidance. Most of the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** team will spend at least some time working alone and are therefore at an increased risk of harm.

You may be lone working in a:

* In a fixed establishment / office or at home.
* In remote locations such as community centres or organisation’s offices
* Mobile workers covering a range of venues
* At other employers’ premises.
* At the homes of people using the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** services.

This guidance works alongside the Internal / External Lone Working document (above).

**MANAGEMENT**

All leads / line managers must have a way of being contactable if they have team members delivering in the community (especially out of office hours). This could mean ensuring a **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** mobile is with them and they know when and where their volunteers or colleagues are going. They are also responsible for ensuring the volunteer / staff member knows how to report and check in. The protocol for this is further down this document.

**LONE WORKING AT THE \*INSERT ORGANISATION\* OFFICES**

Before attending a meeting inform a colleague that you may require their help and ensure that you have a way of reaching them if you need help.

If you must meet outside of office hours, ensure that your line manager knows where you are and what time you expect to finish.

Consider your seating arrangements when you are meeting an external person, always place yourself closest to the door should you need to escape.

Panic alarms are situated in all public interview rooms and on reception. Ensure you familiarise yourself to the position and how they work

**LONE WORKING OUTSIDE THE \*INSERT ORGANISATION\* OFFICES**

Working alone in remote locations or visiting beneficiaries’ homes alone is clearly when staff could be most vulnerable. All staff working in ‘lone worker’ teams must be aware of the risks and contribute to minimising them. It is imperative that this guidance is followed:

**THINK BEFORE A HOME VISIT**

Home visits can be ineffective and won’t always help the beneficiary meet the goal of connecting to the community. It can also be of higher risk to the team member. Before home visits are arranged, alternatives should always be considered, such as:

* telephone, digital chat or messaging or email
* the local community venue, café or green space
* exploring options to enable the beneficiary to access a service in another part of the town (for example, friends or relatives of the client, public transport, Community Transport, dial-a-ride services etc.)

Any member of the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** Team must not offer to drive a beneficiary anywhere unless this has been approved by the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** Chief Officer.

**GENERAL RULES**

* Be always aware of your own safety.
* Ensure that you undertake all the training provided for you by the organisation, ask if unsure.
* Be aware that your behaviour can trigger or prevent aggression. Always be polite and respectful when dealing with beneficiaries.
* Visit beneficiaries by appointment only.
* Continually reassess the risks and do not enter any location where you do not feel safe / comfortable.
* List your meeting on your calendar, including locations and estimated timings so your lead / colleagues can check on your wellbeing. Aim to keep your calendar up to date as much as possible.

**BEFORE SETTING OUT**

* Get information on the area you are visiting and make sure you know exactly where to find the property.
* Make sure that you know who you are meeting, and they know you are coming and at what time.
* Gather as much information about the group / beneficiary as you can before your meeting.
* Think about your clothing / presentation, is it likely to create an unwanted reaction?
* Make sure you have the relevant numbers in a phone that is charged and accessible.
* Ensure you have enough fuel to put distance between yourself and the property should you need to.

**AT AN EXTERNAL VENUE**

Use your judgement, ‘go with your gut’, your discretion and sense are vital to reading the situation. This can be in a community or domestic setting. Below is some guidance to consider protecting both parties whilst delivering **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\***’s work:

* In deciding which individual should make a home visit, consideration should be given to issues such as the person's language needs and whether a specific gender is more appropriate.
* Clients should be properly informed of the arrangements for a visit, both as a matter of courtesy and as a safeguard against bogus visitors.
* A first visit should be made by two staff or volunteers. If there is any record of violence, a home visit should not be made
* No staff member should be required to make a home visit on their own if they do not wish to do so. The same principles apply to volunteers (understanding that volunteers have no obligation to do anything given that they are volunteers)
* Park as near as possible to the address to be visited in such a position to be able to drive straight off should you need to.
* Ensure the area is well lit if visiting when dark.
* Assess the situation on approach and be prepared to postpone the visit if in doubt of your safety.
* Stand well clear of the doorway after ringing or knocking. Stand sideways on so that you present a narrow, protected target.
* Show your identity card and explain who you are and the purpose of the visit
* Ensure the person responding to your call is the person who is due to be visited. If not report to the reception or greeter with your name, position and that you are representing **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** (or the relevant project).
* Do not enter a location if you feel uncertain about your safety. Make an excuse not to go in if the person answering the door gives any cause for concern (e.g., is drunk, the beneficiary you were visiting is not in, pets are loose in property).
* The person undertaking the visit must wait to be invited in or ask if they may go in; letting the person you are visiting lead the way. Do not obstruct your exit route.
* You must sit in a position where they can easily reach the exit door not sitting too close to other parties
* Try not turn your back for long periods on the person you are visiting
* Remain aware of the behaviour of all the people in the space.
* Only accept refreshments if you are confident they have not been tampered with – observe, where possible, preparation of refreshment or offer to make your own or politely decline.
* Keep keys where they can be easily found.
* Maintain close contact with personal belongings, taking minimal possessions during the visit.
* Ensure that all parties are satisfied with the interaction that has occurred. If there are problems, make sure that everyone knows what should happen next.

**AFTER THE VISIT**

* If you are running late and do not expect to return at the time stated, contact the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** office to update on your circumstances.
* Similarly, if your plans change, contact someone in the office to inform them.
* If the meeting is out of hours, ensure that you contact by an agreed means the appropriate lead to inform them that you are finished and your status.

**IF AN INCIDENT DOES OCCUR**

* Put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe.
* If you believe that verbally aggressive behaviour is not directed at you but simply someone ‘letting off steam’, allow the person to have their say, calm the person down, and then try to discuss the situation and reach an amicable solution.
* Provide information on the complaints procedure and alternative sources of help, if appropriate.
* Recognise the limits of your own ability to deal with a situation and the time when it becomes prudent to leave.
* Individuals working alone should not use control and restraint.
* Call for assistance from the police or from the **\*INSERT ORGANISATION\*** team, if appropriate.

**If you feel that the situation is a safeguarding concern, or you have been alerted to a safeguarding concern:**

Warrington Borough Council First Response Team - **01925 443322** (Option 2 – Social Care)

The Police - **101**

**FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT**

* Alert your line manager to the situation who will discuss with you any action/safety measures that need to be taken to protect staff in the future.
* Your line manager will inform the Chief Officer who will offer support and guidance as required. Allow yourself time to recover and seek practical support from your colleagues, if appropriate.

**MISSING COLLEAGUE**

* If a team member has not returned to the office, or contacted to explain lateness, 30 minutes after the expected return time, contact them to enquire about their safety. Also inform the Chief Officer.
* If you have an alternate number, such as a landline for the venue, contact that next.
* If there is no reply or the person cannot be found, contact 101, inform of the situation and seek guidance from them.
* Inform the Chief Officer / Police if the person returns.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has the following general advice for anyone working alone:

**P** - Plan to meet first time visitors in a busy public place, rather than your workplace, if possible.

**L** - Log in your visitors with a buddy and phone after to let someone know you are safe.

**A** - Avoid situations which could be difficult or high risk

**N** - Never assume it won't happen to you