



Home Visits and Lone Working Policy

Good practice and Health and Safety guidelines

These notes should form part of your introduction to working with us. They are intended:

- to promote good practice and safeguard the health and safety of all concerned
- to offer staff a practical and realistic framework for assessing and reporting risk when working alone on behalf of Total Wellbeing Matters
- to provide guidance on how to prevent and reduce risks associated with situations where a member of staff or volunteer is working alone
- To provide guidance on what action to take in the event of concerns being raised regarding the personal safety of a member of staff or volunteer.

Before you go

- Total Wellbeing Matters only initiates contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Customers will have advance notice of any visit and Initial visits to a new customer will always be arranged with them, in advance.
- The reason for your visit, the customer's home circumstances and an assessment of risk and hazards will be given to you (the home support assistant) wherever possible.
- You should be clear about the limits of your helping relationship following discussion with Total Wellbeing Matters, and before visiting. These limits may be different in different circumstances.
- If you anticipate that a home visit may be difficult, then you should talk it over with Total Wellbeing Matters before going.
- And always remember you are a guest in any customer's home.

If you have reason to be concerned for your own or anyone else's safety, these concerns should be reported as quickly as possible.

What to take with you

- Identification

- Service user's emergency contact information, if known.

Keeping safe

The general rules are:

- Put your own safety first.
- Total Wellbeing Matters will take reasonable steps to assure themselves that it is safe to make a solo visit to a new customer (e.g. talking to referrer; speaking to the customer on the phone etc). If there are any concerns (e.g. referrer tells you that adult social care make joint visits, disclose a violent history or you are wary of severe mental health issues) you must discuss this with Total Wellbeing Matters immediately to mitigate risk.
- If, for any reason, you feel uncertain before entering a property, telephone our office tell them who you are, give them your mobile number and tell them who you are visiting, where you are and how long you expect to be. Then phone them back after you have finished your visit to report that you are safe. If you are very concerned about the visit for any reason then don't do it and speak to Total Wellbeing Matters.
- Park in well-lit areas if dark, don't walk down secluded alleys or across parks in the dark.
- **If, during your visit, you feel uncomfortable for any reason make an excuse and leave (e.g. you've just remembered an urgent call you must make) and follow the above procedure before resuming the visit or aborting it, depending on your judgement of the risk. Do not let politeness override an instinct or concern that you are not safe.**
- Don't carry unnecessary valuables.
- Carry a mobile phone and leave it on; make sure the office have your mobile number.
- Always carry identification and always show it to customers when they come to the door.
- Always make sure that you have told the office about your planned visits for the week detailing where you are going, the times and how long you are likely to be at each visit. Contact the office at the end of each shift to confirm that you are home safely.
- Where it is noted that a member of staff has not contacted the office at a reasonable interval after the expected time, Total Wellbeing Matters will a) try the person's mobile phone b) ring the customer's house and depending on outcome alert the authorities if necessary

- Staff should not in any circumstances undertake any structural, electrical or plumbing repairs or jobs on behalf of users, or use power tools, or work from above floor level without suitable steps.
- No member of staff should enter an unoccupied property unaccompanied. If you have had to do this, let the office know where, when and why (for example, if you have to return to a house to collect someone's purse or coat).
- **Even if you don't feel concerned for your safety during a visit, if anything makes you uncomfortable (e.g. an inappropriate sexual comment) please let the office know at your next opportunity.**

No reply

Sometimes staff make a prearranged visit and cannot get a reply. There is almost always a simple explanation (gone shopping or forgot to let you know). It is important that we are confident that the person is not inside and unable to answer the door.

Give the person plenty of time to respond – they may move slowly or have a hearing impairment and don't always realise that someone is there.

Simple checks would include:

- calling through the letter box
- looking through any accessible windows
- checking around the back
- ringing their phone
- speaking to a neighbour in case they have seen the person leaving
- Calling Total Wellbeing Matters to see if they know anything. They will contact the person's emergency contacts. If there is still no answer, then you will need to discuss what to do next with the office.

When to inform Total Wellbeing Matters

- if you have had to enter an unoccupied property
- if you receive 'no reply' when you visit

- if a customer gives you a gift or money and you have felt unable to refuse (see Offers of Gifts and Legacies Policy)
- if there are any significant changes affecting the customer or their circumstances
- If you are aware of any new or existing risks or hazards in the customer's environment that may cause a risk to the customer, yourself or others.

In an emergency

Occasionally, home visitors may encounter an unexpected risk or hazard e.g. the person is ill, has fallen, is aggressive or distressed. There may be a fire risk or structural neglect.

The general rules are:

- Put your own safety first and leave if necessary.
- If appropriate, inform the customer of the hazard and associated risk; take reasonable steps to protect the customer (e.g. ask them to keep away from any structural damage, not to use an electrical item if you can see it is dangerous (label it), take them out of property altogether in extreme cases etc). Information about the dangerous/faulty item should be reported to the line manager who will decide the appropriate action to take.
- Call emergency services if necessary.
- In each situation, report to Total Wellbeing Matters as quickly as possible.