

## Home Visit Policy

### **PURPOSE**

In all circumstances where home visits occur, the Directors aims to ensure the safety and security of those who undertake such visits on behalf of SENDS Support CIC.

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocols and procedures that provide people undertaking home visits with a high level of safety and the means to avoid or manage potentially dangerous situations.

This policy applies to staff, and in every circumstance where they are intending to make a home visit.

### **POLICY**

All services, programs and projects run by SENDS Support CIC will be subject to this policy.

All services, programs or projects that propose home visits must document the objectives, procedures and other details of the proposed home visits.

A confidential file must be opened on each person who will be the subject of a home visit, recording at a minimum the name, address, phone numbers, reasons for home visits, and other details relevant to home visiting, including any risk assessment information. Thereafter, place details of each home visit that occurs on the person's confidential file. Files must be kept in accordance with the SENDS Support CIC's Confidentiality and Privacy Policies.

The Directors will establish, maintain and regularly review operational procedures for the conducting of home visits, including their approval, notification of each visit, the itinerary for multiple visits, departure and planned return times, contact details of the person being visited and of the person/s doing the home visit, including their vehicle details.

No home visit will be undertaken unless the details of each visit have been notified in the prescribed manner prior to leaving.

The Directors will establish confidential organisation code words for use when notifying threats or dangers that arise when making home visits.

To avoid unwarranted allegations of impropriety, unaccompanied male staff may not undertake home visits that involve entering the home when the sole adult occupant is female.

All staff will be required to familiarise themselves with the procedures detailed with this policy.

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## Before Leaving

- Undertake a pre-visit risk assessment and complete the Risk Assessment Checklist.
- Do not take confidential files out of the registered address
- Complete the Home Visit Itinerary Form prior to departure.
- Have a mobile phone with good reception capacity and that is fully charged prior to any home visits. Carry the phone and have it turned on at all times. Program appropriate emergency numbers into the phone where they are most readily accessible.
- Be aware of manned police stations in the area you are visiting.
- Don't take large sums of money or other valuables with you
- Confirm and memorise any organisational code words for notifying the office of any threat or dangers that arise during a home visit. Pre-visit Risk Assessment
- Consult the person's file and familiarise yourself with the most up to date information on any risk assessment.
- Comply with any risk assessment recommendations or procedures on the person's file.
- Take into account all other known information about the person and their circumstances, including mental health, drug or alcohol use, relationship circumstances, and family and associates who may be present at the time of a visit.
- If the risk is considered high, or is difficult to determine with any certainty, do not undertake the home visit. Contact the person by telephone to clarify the situation and/or arrange to meet in a safe public place such as a library, a café or similar.
- If there is some risk, but at an acceptable level, consider undertaking the home visit accompanied by a work partner. Always discuss a home visit at this level of risk with your partner.
- If the level of risk is considered minimal, proceed with the home visit, but undertake an on-site risk assessment before entering the home (see below).
- Do not visit any home where the risk of aggression or violence is high.
- Do not visit any home where significant violence has occurred in the recent past and the perpetrator is at the home or is likely to return.
- Do not visit any home where there is significant risk of injury occurring or you feel you may be at risk during the visit. If you are in doubt, consult your partner.

## **The Home Visit**

- Park the car so that it cannot be blocked in, and in a position that facilitates quick exit e.g. park in the street. Always lock the car.
- Do not leave handbags or wallets visible in the car.
- Keep car keys and mobile phone on your person (i.e. not loose or in a bag or hand bag that might be grabbed)
- Prior to entering the home, establish your credentials as a representative of the SENDS Support CIC and/or the service, program or project you represent, and the reason for being there.
- Establish the identity of the person to whom you are speaking.
- Check if the person you are visiting is at home.
- Check if other people are also present.
- Take note of the layout of the home and exit routes.
- Before entering a home, under take a quick on-site risk assessment for any potential threat to personal safety.

Consider whether people are:


- o arguing o using or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- o coherent
- o showing physical or verbal signs of agitation, aggression or other unusual and atypical behaviour
- o armed or with weapons in view

- If you do not feel safe to enter the home, politely make your excuses and leave promptly
- If the home visit proceeds, maintain alertness to any change in atmosphere that signals a possible risk to personal safety. Be prepared to leave quickly if the need arises.
- If your schedule recorded on the Home Visit Itinerary Form is delayed, contact the office and advise them of the new timetable.
- If a medical emergency occurs on a home visit, call 999, or on a mobile phone (not a cordless home phone) you can also call 111, and wait for help to arrive.

## **Home Visiting Policy Dealing With Threatening or Dangerous Situations**

If you become suspicious of danger or are threatened before leaving your vehicle:

- ensure windows are closed and doors locked, and keep the engine idling
- if available and safe to do so, use the mobile phone to report the situation
- if you are unable to drive away, sound the car horn to attract attention

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- if you can drive away proceed to the nearest police station
  - do not leave the car until it is safe to do so

If a threatening or dangerous situation arises during your visit:

- Attempt to defuse the situation, speaking calmly and in a conciliatory manner
- Discontinue the visit, and as soon as practicable, make polite excuses and leave
- If you are unable to leave, suggest that you will call the office to say you will be late. If at all possible, use the agreed organisational code words to alert the House that a threatening or dangerous situation is occurring
- Once you can leave, drive a safe distance then contact the office or the local police and report the incident and request assistance if appropriate.
- Seek medical treatment immediately if you need it.
- If the office is called, the staff member receiving the call should check the address of the home visit, the nature of the situation, if any assistance is required and if necessary instigate action to render assistance.
- Office staff must use initiative if it is apparent that the person on the home visit is unable to speak frankly or answer questions due to the nature of the situation.
- If a person visiting a home does not return at the appointed time or notify a later return, office staff must first ring their mobile, then the home they were last meant to be at, then drive by the location to assess. If unresolved, ring the police.

## **Dogs**

Take a common sense approach when entering a yard. If the house is surrounded by fences and closed gates, then there is a chance that a dog may be contained within the area. If you believe there is a dog or dogs on the property, you should:

- Call out or whistle to attract any dog to the front of the yard before opening the gate
- If a dog appears, and appears unfriendly, call out to the occupant of the house or sound the car horn. If no one responds, don't proceed – contact the person later to arrange a mutually convenient time for the meeting.
- If a threatening dog appears, face the dog and leave the property immediately by slowly walking backwards – don't run.
- Record details about the dog on the persons file as an alert for future home visits.



## Rural and Remote Travel

When travelling to rural and remote parts of the House's community

- Record your expected time of arrival at your destination prior to leaving
- On arrival at your destination, contact the office to advise that you have arrived
- Prior to returning, contact the office to advise that you are leaving and provide an estimated time of return
- If you are staying overnight, include contact details of your accommodation on the Home Visit Itinerary Form.

## On Returning

- Immediately on returning from a home visit, record the time and date of return, complete a report on the details of the visit, including observations, concerns, possible risks and hazards and place the report on the file.
  - If an incident occurs during the home visit, complete the Incident Report Form. File according to incident reporting requirements, but also place a copy on the file of the person who is the subject of the home visit.
  - If an incident or other circumstance of concern occurred, notify your partner and debrief with them
  - If there is continuing concern for anyone's welfare or safety, consult with your partner and if necessary, contact the police or the relevant support service.
  - Request further support and/or counselling if you feel it will assist you.

## Policy adopted by:

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Name	Date