Lone Working: Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidance

1. Policy Statement

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and managers have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

2. Purpose

SENDS Support CIC takes seriously its responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees who work alone either from home or out in the community without close or direct support or supervision. We are committed to reducing the risks to employees and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place to reduce the risks of lone working as far as is reasonably possible and practicable. This policy applies to all employees who are undertaking activities on behalf of SENDS Support CIC.

This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

4. Context

Lone workers face the same risks as anyone else, as well as those directly related to their work. Within SENDS Support CIC overall policy relating to safer working practices, support for lone workers is an essential part, and the same principles apply, particularly:

• a commitment to supporting staff and managers both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices

• recognising and reducing risk

• a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff a clear understanding of responsibilities

• the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff

• Equipment such as mobile phones, personal alarms and torches will be made available as appropriate.

5. Definitions

A lone worker is an employee who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision. Such staff may be exposed to risk because there is no-one to assist them and so a risk assessment may be required.

6. Mandatory Procedures

Personal Safety

• Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

• Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

• Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager

• Staff must inform each other when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.

• Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.

• Staff such as Home support workers, who work to a pre-planned programme of visits, must inform each other if they deviate from the programme.

• If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.

• Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to take into account include:

o staffing levels and availability

o the identified risks

o measures in place to reduce those risks

• Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

• Staff working in the community are issued with a mobile phone; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider. Personal alarms may also be provided.

Assessment of risk

• In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

o the environment – location, security, access

o the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances

o the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk history – any previous incidents in similar situations

o any other special circumstances

• All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary

• Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

• While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

Planning

• Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.

• Communication, checking-in and fall back arrangements must be in place.

• The Directors are responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.

Reporting

• Should an incident occur, the reporting and de-briefing should follow standard company guidance.

• The identified person should debrief in the first instance.

Lone worker devices

• It is the Director's duty to ensure that each member of the team is issued with a lone worker device, if appropriate.

• The Director should ensure that device users receive adequate training and are competent in the use of their devices.

• Directors are responsible for overall monitoring of lone worker device usage.

• Employees are responsible for keeping their devices in good working order, reporting any problems with devices and for ensuring that device batteries are fully charged before working alone.

7.   **Known Risks and Procedures**

Working from home

If working from home employees should:

• Take reasonable precautions to ensure that their personal addresses and telephone numbers remain confidential. All numbers including ex-directory and mobile numbers can show up on caller display and retrieved on 1471. To avoid access to landline numbers dial 141 before dialling the number. To avoid mobile numbers being available please check the mobile phone's instruction manual

• Remain in regular contact with your partner

Working alone away from the office or from home

Before working alone away from the office or home you should:

• Leave details with your partner of where you plan to go, approximate times of when you expect to be there, details of any meetings you have arranged, including the name of the person you are meeting

• Ensure you have an appropriate means of communication

• If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving

• Take and use any other personal protective equipment provided or identified in service specific risk assessments

• Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated location, adverse weather conditions for driving). If there are, discuss them with your partner before setting off

• Contact the office, or other person, to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule

• Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this

• Return to or contact your partner, or other person as agreed, when you have safely completed your activities

Travelling by car

This might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night.

• Plan your route and take appropriate maps\Sat Nav system

• Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather

• Keep valuables out of sight; female staff should not leave obvious signs that the driver is female (handbags, coats etc) on the seats

• Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit; when Returning to the vehicle, check the back seat

• Carry a mobile phone for emergency use

• Do not pick up hitchhikers

• Carry a torch at night

• If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help

• If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened

Aggression or violence

This includes aggressive or inappropriate physical contact which may or may not result in pain and/or injury or offence and other non-physical abuse including verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset.

• Carry a personal alarm, if you have been provided with one, and ensure that you know how to use it

• Consider the safety of others and protect yourself before protecting the property of SENDS Support CIC

• Contact your partner immediately after the incident

Procedure for alerting to personal danger

For extreme situations, establish a "trigger phrase" for use when calling in to the office. This would alert the office without alarming the antagonist. It is essential that all staff are familiar with this phrase.

In the event of the trigger phrase being used, or a "home safe" call not being made when expected, checks should be made by the agreed office contact to establish the well-being of the employee.

If an employee finds themselves in danger and unable to speak freely, they should emphasise to the antagonist that they are expected to call in to the office or a central point at a pre-determined time, and that if they don't, the alarm will be raised. On telephoning, they should say:

"Hello, this is ...., may I speak to Steve or Simon?" Which is the trigger phrase.

This is the signal that all is not well.

The office will immediately call the police and direct them to where the individual has indicated in their schedule they have gone

Dealing with Animals

• If there is a known problem with animals at a particular address or location, the occupants should be contacted and requested to remove or secure the animals before arrival.

• If a Lone Worker is confronted by an aggressive animal on a first visit to a service user's address, they should not put themselves at risk. If necessary they should abandon the visit and report the incident at the earliest opportunity.

• If a Lone Worker feels uneasy with animals being present, they should politely request that they be removed. However, a request of this nature may provoke a negative reaction. All possible efforts should be made to ensure that the situation is managed, should hostility become evident. If this is not possible then alternative arrangements should be made to carry out the visit; such as rescheduling so that the Lone Worker can be accompanied or asking a colleague, more at ease with animals, to assist them.

8. Monitoring and Review

• The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process.

• Lone working and risk assessment will be regular agenda items for team meetings.

• Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with the whole team, as appropriate.

• The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

9. Support – Internal and External

• **Suzy Lamplugh Trust**

A leading charitable authority on personal safety. The Trust are a registered charity, and a leading authority on personal safety: http://suzylamplugh.org

• **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

The HSE has published a range of guidance and support materials to help employers manage the risk of work-related violence to staff. This includes a set of case studies demonstrating good practice in managing the risks to Lone Workers. These are all available on the HSE website at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence

Policy adopted by:

_____   _____   _____

Signature   Name   Date

_____   _____   _____

Signature   Name   Date