

West Riding Masonic Charities Ltd (WRMCL)

Care & Support Officer Lone Working Policy

Revision Date: 21st May 2018

As a responsible employer WRMCL are committed to providing the safest possible working environment for all its Care and Support Officers.

When a Care & Support Officer visits a Client in their own home they may be at risk through health and safety hazards in and around Client's homes. There may also be a risk of physical or verbal assaults and hostility from Clients, relatives and the general public.

As part of the induction process the responsible Director(s) must satisfy themselves that each WRMCL Care and Support Officer is competent and safe to work alone, and that they are clear about how to act in ways that will maximise their own safety and about what to do in an emergency situation.

Policy Statement

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require Care & Support Officers to work alone, there is a duty of care to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

This policy aims to ensure:

The lone worker has knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he/she is being exposed.

The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.

Someone can locate the whereabouts of the lone worker, identify what they are doing and implement an agreed emergency response as necessary.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all WRMCL Care & Support Officers who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

Working alone does not contravene the law, but it can bring additional risks to a work activity. WRMCL will, so far as is reasonably practicable, employ controls to reduce the exposure to those risks.

Policy Definitions

WRMCL define a lone worker as an employee who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision. Such staff, usually a Care & Support Officer, may be exposed to risk because there is no-one close by to assist them.

WRMCL recognises that Care & Support Officers working alone in potentially isolated conditions have no immediate back up or support and so are at a greater risk of injury through aggression or violence directed towards them from Clients, relatives, carers or the general public.

WRMCL also recognises that staff working alone need to rely on their own judgement and initiative and may be at a greater risk of making mistakes or errors.

WRMCL believes that training is particularly important for lone workers, and research shows that adequate training is the single most critical factor in avoiding panic reactions in unusual situations. In particular lone workers need to be deemed competent to work alone, to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions required.

WRMCL understands its duty as an employer to ensure its Care & Support Officers are competent to deal not only with the day to day facets of their work but with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training, for example, if threatened with aggression and violence.

Training

It is the responsibility of the individual and the responsible Director(s) to identify any training needs and to ensure that these are facilitated, for example:

Corporate Induction

Lone working arrangements

Personal Safety

Use of equipment e.g. mobile phone, personal alarm etc.

At WRMCL:

- New Client referrals should involve a discussion with the Lodge Almoner or area Assistant Almoner to identify and mitigate any known risks.
- Lone workers should carry the provided personal safety device(s) and preferably a Mobile telephone so that they can summon help quickly.
- In a situation where a lone worker feels under immediate threat of their physical safety they should activate their personal safety device which will connect to the central monitoring centre.

Care & Support Officers must:

Ensure they have all the necessary information, instruction and training to recognise the hazards and risks involved with working alone.

Comply with policy and related procedures and co-operate with WRMCL Directors on all health and safety matters.

Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

Advise the responsible Director(s) of any concerns or risks.

Report all incidents of violence and aggression.

Attend appropriate training as and when required.

Support colleagues who have been the victim of a violent incident or a witness to it.

Co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation of an incident.

Follow safe working procedures including the use of safety/ communications equipment.

Know what to do if something goes wrong.

Incident Management

All incidents must be reported to the responsible WRMCL Director(s) at the earliest opportunity.

For the purposes of this policy the responsible Directors are:

Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Mandatory Procedures

Personal Safety

- Care & Support Officers working in the community will be issued with a Peoplesafe 'Microguard' personal safety device; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, and is in working order.
- Care & Support Officers must not assume that having a personal safety device is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is always to plan for a reduction of risk.
- Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team.

Identification of risk factors

Consideration should be given to the identification of hazards; for example, means of access and/or egress, equipment, substances, environment, travel/route planning, communication, activity, individuals etc.

Particular consideration should be given to: -

Individual Risk Factors

Is the Client facing high levels of stress, likely to be drunk or on drugs?

Does the Client have a history of violence?

Does the Client suffer from a medical condition which may result in a loss of self control?

Environmental Risk Factors

Is the remoteness or isolation of the workplace a factor?

Are there any problems with communication?

Is there a possibility of interference, such as violence or criminal activity from other persons?

Is there a possibility of an animal attack?

Are there offensive weapons present?

Supplementary considerations

Has the Client verbally abused anyone in the past?

Has the Client threatened anyone with violence in the past?

Has the Client attacked or attempted to attack anyone in the past?

Does the Client perceive a Care & Support Officer as a threat to his/her children, their own liberty or themselves?

Does the Client have unrealistic expectations of what can be done for them?

Assessment of risk

When considering the above it should be possible to identify lone working risk areas or activities. The emphasis should be to reduce the risk to as low as is reasonably practicable.

- In considering an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

the environment - location, security, access

the context - nature of the task, any special circumstances

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

any other special circumstances

- 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 Care & Support Officer or making other arrangements to complete the task.

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

Lone worker emergency communication devices

The responsible Director(s) will work with the Care & Support Officers to establish a system of communicating the whereabouts of individuals, and an emergency response system will be agreed. All Care & Support Officers must use the system once established.

When Suzy Lamplugh, the Estate Agent went missing, the biggest problem the Police had was that they had no idea where she had gone, who she had gone to see and her colleagues had no idea when she should have been back.

In order to mitigate this risk...

- Each WRMCL Care & Support Officer will be issued with a Peoplesafe 'Microguard' GPS enabled emergency personal safety device incorporating a two way communication system.

- The responsible Director(s) will ensure that safety device users receive adequate training and are competent in the use of their devices.

- Care & Support Officers are responsible for keeping their safety devices in good working order, reporting any problems with the devices, and for ensuring that device batteries are fully charged before working alone.

- Any concerns about the operation of safety devices must be reported to the responsible Director(s) immediately so the device can be serviced

- 'Microguard' Safety devices must be tested on a regular basis in accordance with recommendations from Peoplesafe.

Monitoring and Review

WRMCL Directors will ensure that lone working procedures and safe systems of work are subject to regular monitoring and reviewing to ensure effectiveness. This may take the form of both informal monitoring on a day to-day basis and more formally via safety inspections/audits.

Staff are responsible for adhering to procedures and should always report any incidents or concerns relating to the safety and effectiveness of the working arrangements to the responsible Director(s).

- Any member of staff with a concern regarding lone working should ensure that it is discussed with the responsible Director(s).
- The policy will be reviewed annually as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

Further information and advice relevant to WRMCL Lone Worker policy

Additional Resources On Lone Working

- Suzy Lamplugh Trust

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

Known Risks and Procedures

Consideration should be given to known risks and procedures and what action should be taken in such circumstances.

Here is ONE example, can you think of more?

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 Care & Support Officer is confronted by an aggressive animal on a first visit to a Client'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 Care & Support Officer 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 Care & Support Officer can be accompanied or asking a colleague, more at ease with animals, to assist them.*

Home Visits

Before Leaving Checklist

Is this to be your first visit to the Client?

Will changing the time of the visit reduce risks? Consider arranging visits for particular times of day such as mornings when parents are taking children to school are around and when anti-social or illegal activity should be minimal.

Have you the knowledge that will allow you to recognise when a situation is becoming dangerous?

Have you the communication skills to resolve the situation if safe to do so?

Do you know when to leave and seek assistance?

Have you read through the Client's notes and records to acquaint yourself with relevant information including possible risks?

Are you providing cover for another member of staff? If so, whenever possible ensure your colleague briefs you on and potential difficulties.

Is a joint visit necessary?

On Arrival

BE ALERT, BE AWARE, BE SAFE

Park with care, in such a way as to ensure a quick getaway.

Be aware of your attitude, body language.

Keep clear of the doorway after ringing and stand sideways on so you present a narrow, non-threatening but protected stance.

Introduce yourself and the reason for your visit.

Always show your WRMCL ID card.

Do not enter if the person you are calling to visit is not available.

Do not enter if met with aggression at the front door or the person appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Only enter when you are invited and you feel safe to do so.

Follow the occupants in when entering.

Ask for dogs to be put in another room before you go in.

Check how the door locks as you go in.

Be aware of your surroundings and exits.

Try to sit nearest the door.

Remain aware of the behaviour of all persons in the house, watching for changes in mood, movements or expressions that may indicate a problem.

If another person enters the room, reassess, if uncomfortable terminate the visit and leave.

Never give your home telephone number or address.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU FEEL YOUR SAFETY IS AT RISK, OR VIOLENCE IS THREATENED LEAVE IMMEDIATELY AND SEEK HELP. If this is not possible activate your safety device.

On Return

If something has happened during your visit which has caused you concern or has caused you to feel threatened. Inform the responsible Director(s) and discuss further action.

You will be provided with Support and asked to provide a Post Incident Analysis.

Higher Risk Visits / Locations

Visits assessed as higher risks should only be undertaken if considered essential. More stringent control measures need to be considered. It may be appropriate to call a colleague immediately before and immediately after some visits, joint visits or an escort may be necessary.

Accompanied visit

For visits to higher risk locations (*for example, areas with high-crime rates, isolated rural areas etc*) an assessment of the situation and needs should be made before leaving and any additional checks that may be required should be made. If you have any doubts regarding the location:

Double check the address, telephone number and consider ringing back to confirm the validity of the location.

Ask Client to be visible at house window or door as you arrive and to leave light on/curtains drawn back at night.

Vehicles

It is strongly advised that staff carry in their cars the absolute minimum amount of equipment and that they always park their car in a well lit, public place if at all possible. Thefts from cars are a major area of concern and muggings of care staff are a real threat, especially in high crime areas. If on foot then care staff should avoid dark, unlit, isolated routes to work.

In cases where a home visit is to be provided in a high crime area or to a Client with a known history of aggression or violence associated with them, then a full risk assessment should be completed by the Care & Support Officer prior to any visit taking place.

Where there is significant risk then the support plan should be altered accordingly, either by reviewing the case with the relevant responsible Director(s) or by arranging for Care and Support Officers to attend in pairs.

Severe Weather Conditions

If weather conditions are severe and roads are unsafe, do not put yourself at unnecessary risk.

Emergencies in the Client's Home

If staff identify an emergency situation in a Client's home then contact the appropriate emergency service as soon as possible, let the experts deal with it.

Car Safety

By keeping your motor vehicle in good working order, reporting any faults and carrying out regular servicing you will limit the risk of breaking down. Simple pre driving checks will also help, such things as:

Plenty of fuel in tank

Oil level to correct level

Water in radiator

Spare tyre is inflated

Horn & lights working

Water in washer bottle and washers work

Do you have details of breakdown/rescue organisations?

If Your Car Breaks Down

The best advice is to call a rescue/breakdown organization and let the experts deal with it. However, the following advice may prove useful...

Turn on your hazard warning lights

Try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car, or to get out, take account of how isolated you are and the time of day.

If you stay inside, sit in the passenger seat to give the impression you are not alone.

Display a “help” notice if you stay in the car.

Keep your doors locked and the window open no more than 1.5 inches, if someone stops to offer help, ask him or her to telephone the police or a colleague. Do not let people who offer to help get into your car.

If you leave the car, lock it and note its location, take your personal safety device with you and keep it in your hand. If it is dark, or will be soon, take a torch.

If you have a warning triangle, place it in the direction of on-coming traffic, 30 metres from your car and on the same side of the road.

Personal Safety Whilst in Your Car

Make sure you carry your mobile phone with battery fully charged or coins/phone card for an emergency. Where a personal safety device has been provided ensure this is fully charged and is working correctly.

Plan your route before setting off, when you have the choice use main roads.

Have the directions and maps in the car so you do not have to stop to ask.

Try to travel on main well-lit roads.

Keep aware of the latest police recommendations regarding road rage. For example, if another driver gets annoyed with you. Do not make eye contact or make gestures.

Do not have valuables visible in the car when driving.

Stay in the car as much as you can. Keep the doors locked and windows closed, especially in towns where you will be stopping at junctions.

Keep handbags, briefcases and mobile phones out of reach of open windows in case of snatch thieves.

When you leave the car, lock personal belongings in the boot, not on display.

Lock your car, even if you are only going to pay for petrol on a garage forecourt.

When parking in daylight, consider what the area will be like in the dark.

At night, park in a place, which is well lit, and if possible busy. Try to avoid car parks or areas where you and your vehicle are not clearly visible

Have the keys ready before you get into the car, check the back seat.

If you see an incident or accident, or someone tries to flag you down seek assistance, ask yourself if it is genuine and if you could really help - it might be best to phone for help or drive to the nearest Police station.

If a car pulls up in front of you and you have to stop, keep the engine running. Stay calm and ensure all the doors and windows are locked. If the driver leaves the car to approach you, reverse as far as you can while sounding the horn and activating the hazard lights.

If you think you are being followed, try to alert other drivers with your lights and horn. Phone or pretend to phone the Police and make an obvious note of the car registration number. Keep driving until you reach a busy area or a police/fire or ambulance station or even a garage.

Never give lifts to strangers.

Road traffic accidents are one of the most frequent causes of occupational accidents in home care workers and the most important cause of fatal accidents. Such hazard and risk can be minimised by, for example: wearing a seatbelt, checking tyres for wear and tear, attending to vehicle maintenance, reducing speed and distractions, being particularly cautious at intersections, not driving while sleepy or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Personal Safety On Foot

Avoid wearing clothing or accessories that could be used to harm you e.g. scarves, ties, heavy necklaces.

You are more likely to escape danger wearing clothes you can move in easily and shoes that are comfortable; walking quickly is usually safer than trying to run.

Valuables, such as wallets should be kept in an inside pocket and secured, or use a body belt or “bum bag”, try to keep both hands free.

To carry things, use a small bag slung across your body under a jacket or coat, or a shoulder bag with a short strap and secure fastenings, make sure it sits close to your body with the fastening innermost.

Carry in your pocket coins/phone card and the telephone number to stop all your cheque cards and your keys.

Whenever possible, avoid walking alone at night or near groups of rowdy people.

Keep to busy, well-lit roads.

Do not take short cuts, unless you know they are as safe as the longer route.

Avoid poorly lit or little used underpasses, waste ground and isolated pathways especially at night.

Carry a torch.

Walk facing oncoming traffic.

At night or in bad weather conditions where visibility is poor ensure you wear a high visibility jacket.

Have your personal alarm device readily at hand.

The Physical Environment Outside The Client's Home

Similarly, the physical environment may present hazards; slips, trips and falls inside and outside the home are frequent causes of accidents to home care workers. Pavements, particularly uneven ones, steps, wooden ramps covered with water, ice, snow, leaves, or moss, items left on pavements and pathways and poor lighting represent other hazards that may be responsible for accidents outside the home.