

# Lone Working Policy

This document is relevant to:	
Trustees	✓
Staff	✓
Volunteers	✓

## Purpose

The aim of this policy is to underline safety issues and contribute to the provision of a safer working environment for staff, Trustees and volunteers working alone.

## Policy

### Definition of Lone Working

Any paid member of staff, Trustee or volunteer who carries out their work in a location away from the office base and or in isolation from colleagues, or who is travelling between work locations on Dorset Mind business, or who is working alone in the office, or one to one in the community with a Service Participant or is working from home. This may be on a regular or occasional basis.

### Legal Context

Dorset Mind aims to comply with its obligations under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA '74) to maintain a safe working environment for all staff. Under this Act the employer is under a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all volunteers and employees are safeguarded (s.2 HASAWA '74).

Employees and volunteers in turn have a duty to ensure that by their own acts and omissions, they do not put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others. They must also co-operate with their employer to enable all statutory duties to be met (s.7 HASAWA '74).

Regulation 12 of the Management and Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 requires all employees to act in accordance with information and training given. Employees must inform their employer of any shortcomings in the health and safety arrangements.

This policy is also grounded in employment law under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This gives protection (for example against dismissal or disciplinary action) in defined circumstances to employees who disclose information to a third party about an alleged wrong doing.

### Arrangements for Securing the Health and Safety of Lone Workers

Consideration of the risk factors involved in working with participants is built into the assessment and support planning processes of the organisation. Individuals are expected to use these

systems to make a sensible judgement as to whether they consider it safe to work alone with a participant (or group of participants) in any given setting, including a re-appraisal of the risks when the situation changes. These risk assessments include:

- Role risk assessment for Staff or Volunteers
- Regular Activity Risk Assessments
- Annual premises Risk Assessments
- Annual premises checks
- Service Participants Risk Assessments

All individuals must familiarise themselves with the principle of Dynamic Risk Assessment and this process should be practiced whenever an individual is lone working to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken in order to avoid danger. All individuals should make safety plans for any lone working activity and all trustees, staff and volunteers likely to be lone working will be joined into the Lone Working duty system.

Where individuals work alone they need to remain alert to their own safety and that of their colleagues. To do this they should:

- ensure they do not take unnecessary risks
- seek and follow advice from Dorset Mind
- follow all health and safety procedures
- comply with requests for information on their whereabouts from Dorset Mind
- report any incidents including threats and potentially dangerous situations
- make Dorset Mind aware of any relevant medical conditions
- familiarise themselves with the risk assessments and lone working procedures

In cases where staff are regularly and routinely working alone, the line manager for the individual staff member will undertake an individual role risk assessment on an annual basis. Safeguards may be put in place to counter the effects of working in isolation. (See also Lone Working Duty Procedure)

Staff who regularly work alone off-site will be issued with mobile phones and personal panic alarms and will be required to use the Lone Working Duty System (please see Lone Working Duty System Procedure). They will be responsible for ensuring that the phone is in working order, charged and with sufficient credit; that the personal alarm is also in full working order, they have sufficient petrol and car insurance (if using car for business purposes).

Staff should not ordinarily be carrying participants in their own cars. There may be occasions where Befriending Volunteers are required to but this is subject to Lone Working Risk Assessment, Participant Risk Assessment and will be documented in the Befriending Contract. If car travelling is unavoidable then staff will be expected to undertake risk assessments and put appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the participants' and their own safety. (Please see Role Risk Assessment, Service User/Participant Risk Assessment)

Dorset Mind will maintain a record containing lone working password protected log containing description, mobile phone number, vehicle type and registration number, home address and mobile number, next of kin. This and the following relevant information will be shared with the Lone Working Duty system and Befriending Volunteers and staff are required to inform Live Operators of ; expected start and end times, locations and emergency contact information of nominated persons (See Lone Working Duty System Procedure). This information can be used to assist in tracing the worker should this be necessary and will be stored securely, and will be available to the Service Delivery Manager, DMYH Manager, Chief Executive via the live operator online portal both in and out of office hours. It will be the responsibility of each lone worker to report changes in their

personal information to the Service Delivery Manager/ Service Coordinator or line manager who will amend the record. In addition, the record will be checked and updated regularly by the Service Delivery Manager.

Where a significant risk to personal safety is identified, lone working should not continue until safe working practice has been discussed and agreed upon by the worker, the volunteer and their line manager. Individuals are NEVER expected to undertake a visit where there is a known serious, unmanaged or unassessed risk to their personal safety.

Any incidents of hazard, threat, violence or 'near miss;' whilst lone working must be reported by the individual concerned to their line manager by the next working day, or as soon as possible thereafter using a critical incident and challenging behaviour reporting form Dorset Mind will offer support to the individual and examine whether the existing lone working procedures need to be amended in any way.

### **Risk Assessment**

Before working alone, an assessment of the risks should be undertaken or discussed by the individual with Service Coordinator/facilitator or line manager. Where a lone working situation arises unexpectedly in the course of working, the individual will need to assess the risks in the light of the changed situation and exit the situation if the risks cannot be adequately managed. (See Dynamic Risk Assessment in Appendix A).

The assessment of risk should consider all relevant information to make a reasoned judgement about risk, including the following issues:

- the participants concerned: mental state, mood, medication, past and recent history of challenging behaviour, known triggers for this
- the nature of the task: size of the group, sensitivity of the task, activities with access to tools/potential weapons, special circumstances or history of problems associated with the activity (e.g. participants arriving under the influence of drugs or alcohol)
- the environment: location, isolation, security, access and exits, any risks the building itself poses, e.g. faulty lighting and heating systems
- communication: reliability of the technology provided eg mobile phone, alarm systems and ability of worker to manage the risks.
- transport: that a lone worker can manage transport arrangements of self and for participants where required. No volunteer or member of staff should be providing lifts for participants without a role and participant risk assessment and written contract having taken place and without express permission from a Service Coordinator or manager. All Staff or volunteers who have been permitted and risk assessed to provide transportation must adhere to Dorset Mind's Lone Working Duty System Procedure.

Once the potential hazard(s) and degree of risk have been identified, a judgement needs to be made whether the risks can be managed or reduced to an acceptable level. If the outcome of the assessment is that safe working practice cannot be sustained, the lone worker should cease until agreed adequate safeguards can be put in place. In the meantime, support arrangements may need to be put in place for users until the service can be resumed.

Decisions not to proceed with working alone should at all times be based on a role and participant assessment which identifies that safe practice cannot be undertaken. The decision should wherever possible be made in conjunction with the individual's line manager or Service Coordinator. However, where this is not possible, individuals are NEVER expected to proceed where there is a perceived risk to their safety.

### **Lone Working Duty System**

Lone workers must alert the Lone Working Duty System Live Operator using an 'amber alert' which involves stating they will be working alone, the exact location of where they will be working and with which participant and for how long. The mobile will be tracked using GPS tracking. Please see Lone Working Duty system procedure.

If something happens which escalates the risks the Staff or Volunteer MUST alert the Lone Working Duty System using the 'Red Alert'. The numbers for the Amber and Red alert will be entered the Dorset Mind Mobile of the person who is lone working. The live operator will then try to contact the volunteer or staff member. If contact is not established with the staff or volunteer, then the staff or volunteer's nominated emergency person will be contacted. In cases where contact isn't established with a person's emergency person a Dorset Mind Manager will be contacted to escalate the risk assessment Lone Working duty plan. Please see Lone working Duty System Procedure.

### **Information Sharing and Recording**

Staff have a duty of care for each other and must promptly communicate any risk from participants to their line manager/ service coordinator and or Safeguarding Officer. A Participant risk-assessment must be undertaken following being made aware of risks to, from or by a Participant. The line manager (or other senior colleague) will consider what action needs to be taken in response to this risk and will ensure that the staff and volunteers are informed promptly and appropriately and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Staff will be expected to routinely share information about participants and incidents with other relevant staff using a participant risk assessment and the Safeguarding lead where it is relevant and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Lone workers must report incidents such as accidents and near misses, including all incidents where they feel threatened, in writing using a critical incident and challenging behaviour reporting form (normally via email) to the Service Delivery Manager, or Safeguarding Manager with a copy to their line manager/ service coordinator. The Service Delivery Manager and Safeguarding lead will ensure these details are entered the Dorset Mind Participants file, facilitators file and Incident Log.

### **Monitoring and Review**

Lone Working Practice will be monitored through the supervision process, at team meetings, management meetings and at other times as required, for example when an incident occurs and learning needs to take place.

Individual practice will be appraised through the staff appraisal system.

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review, and certainly not less than once every 2 years.

### **Responsibilities**

The **Executive Committee** is responsible for:

- ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working
- providing resources for putting the policy into practice
- ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed.

**Managers and Health and Safety Representatives** are responsible for:

- ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy
- taking all possible steps to ensure that lone workers are at no greater risk than other employees
- ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly
- putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone
- ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updating and refreshing this training as necessary
- managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigations and recording incidents
- ensuring that appropriate support is given to individuals involved in any incident
- providing a mobile phone, and other personal safety equipment, where this is felt to be desirable.

**Employees, individual Trustees and volunteers** are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions
- following guidance and procedures designed for safe working
- reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate
- taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy
- reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

## **Associated Policies and Procedures**

- Lone Working Duty System Procedure.
- Safeguarding Adult and Young People Policy and Procedure.
- Adult and Young Person Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.
- Health and Safety Procedure.
- Service Operational Procedure.

***The equality impact of this policy has been considered and Dorset Mind believes that it complies with its commitment to equality as stated in its Equality Policy***

## Policy Ownership

Policy Name	Version	Doc ref
Lone Working Policy	1.0	Lone Working Policy

<b>Policy Owner</b>	Chair of Trustees
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## Approval Status

<b>Date adopted by Trustees</b>	February 2016		
<b>Date published</b>	February 2016	<b>Date for next review</b>	February 2018

*Consult the Dorset Mind website for the latest version of this policy.*

## Document Control

### Reviewers

Name	Position
Chris Price	Chair of Trustees
Mandy Nicholson	Staff
Jane Kilpatrick	Trustee

## Change History

Issue	Date	Author	Reason
1.0	Feb 16	Chris Price	New policy

## Appendix A – Dynamic Risk Assessment

