

**Aberdeen City Council
Social Care and Wellbeing
Lone Working Policy**

Appendix 1

Social work visits conducted 'out of hours' – reporting arrangements:

- Prior to leaving the office for an appointment which will carry on beyond normal office hours staff must make arrangements to ensure that their anticipated completion time and location is recorded on the CM2000 system.
- The attached Flowchart (appendix 2) gives a detailed description of the process, but briefly the arrangements are:
 - Prior to the appointment staff must call a unique telephone number (to be provided) and follow the automated system for recording their anticipated time of completion of the visit and a voicemail message indicating their intended visit location;
 - The staff member will repeat the call process to 'shut-down' the system at the completion of the visit. This will then cancel any follow-up process. Staff should only complete this 'shut-down' process when they safely home and off duty.
 - If a visit is likely to go beyond the originally anticipated finishing time (that recorded on the system), the staff member can re-call the system to shut down the original 'finish time' and re-start a new revised time (and location if needed)
 - In the event of the anticipated finishing time passing without the system having been 'shut-down', an alert message will be sent to a 'designated person' who will co-ordinate any required follow up.
 - The 'designated person' upon receiving this alert that a visit time has passed without the system being shut down will attempt to contact the person to ascertain if they are okay. In the event that this is successful, this will effectively complete the process.
 - If the designated person is unable to make contact with the staff member within a reasonable time-frame, they should escalate the matter to a nominated senior manager. The senior manager will then assess the situation and determine if the police require to be involved. The senior manager will have access at this point to the automated system to retrieve the voicemail message with the destination recorded.

Visits within normal working hours where the member of staff did not return as anticipated:

- **Before Leaving to go on a Home Visit to a Client check:**
 - Care First or Clients Personal File for any known incidents.

- Route and Location be sure how and where to go using well lit travel routes.
- Vehicle and or availability of Public Transport
- **Let others Know:**
 - Team 'logging arrangements' should be adhered to. This may include diary notifications, 'In/Out' Books or Boards. You must note where you are going and how long you will be – including an anticipated time of return.
 - Where appropriate phone in at regular intervals if the visit is taking longer than anticipated.
- **Failure to return as scheduled:**
 - In the event of a failure to notify of extended time on visits, or failure to return at the scheduled time, the administration section monitoring the 'logging' arrangements (including in/out book/ board) will advise the member of staff's direct senior/ line manager in the first instance. If that specific manager is unavailable, the matter should be escalated to either to another available manager or to the Unit/ Team manager on duty.
 - The manager receiving this notification will be responsible for determining a course of action, including directly contacting the staff member via mobile phone and, in instances where that is seen as appropriate, to arrange a visit to the last known visit location of the staff member to ascertain that they are okay.
 - If there is no contact possible (perhaps because the whereabouts are unknown and/ or there is no response to the mobile phone contact) then the manager should give appropriate consideration to notifying the CSWO and/ or Police. This latter decision should be made with due regard to context and circumstances. However, if in doubt, the Police should be contacted for advice.
- **Potential difficult visit :**
 - If out already phone in prior to and after the visit.
 - Telephone or write to make appointments before home visits, ensuring that people know who you are and what your role is. If you are unable to keep the appointment at the agreed time, let the service user know.
 - If possible, schedule visits to for particular times of the day, such as the morning when parents are around taking children to school, and when drug activity and drunkenness should be minimised.

Appendix 3

Minimising Risk Advice:

- This Checklist is intended to give all staff guidance on how to minimise risks when working alone and in particular to prevent incidents of violence and aggression from arising from work activities. The Checklist covers a range of issues from before leaving, travelling by car, en-route to the visit, on arrival, when the visits are complete, Personal Safety, Public Transport, Equipment, During the hours of Darkness, Prevention, Dealing with a Violent Incident in a Clients home, AND Following an Incident.

- **Travelling by Car**

When using your car :

- **DO:**
 - Keep your car in good working order.
 - Plan your Journey and have directions so you don't need to stop and ask. If need be Google the site on line for directions to the location to be visited.
 - Tell your office base of your expected time of arrival and departure from each visit and keep in contact via a mobile phone- particularly if your arrival or departure is delayed, remember, pull over in a safe place to make your call.
 - Park in brightly lit places as close as possible to your destination away from pillars, bushes, etc. When you park in daylight, think what the area will be like at night. If Parking in a multi- storey car park, try to leave your car on the ground floor.
 - Have your keys ready to get in your car.
 - Keep your doors locked.
 - Drive to a Police Station or a busy area if you are sure you are being harassed or followed.
 - If traveling Out of Hours or to a remote or quite location carry extra petrol in a safety approved portable petrol tank.
 - Carry an up to date map.
 - If possible, carry a portable telephone or mobile phone or have a valid telephone card and supply of change .
 - Carry a Police recommended personal alarm during Out of Hours Home visits or visits to potential violent client(s).
 - Be a member of a breakdown/rescue organisation.
- **DO NOT**
 - Give lifts to strangers.
 - Accept lifts from strangers. Have a prepared response to turn offers down, such as 'my partner or colleague has gone for help and will be back shortly' .

- Stop to investigate if you see an incident or accident or someone tries to flag you down unless you are sure it is safe and that you can help. It may be safer and more useful to go for help.
- Turn off the engine if a car pulls up in front of you and you have to stop. You may flood the engine if you try to re-start the engine in a hurry.
- Stop when another driver signals a fault on your car. Keep driving until it is safe to check it yourself.
- Get out of your car if anyone approaches you when you are stationary. Keep the doors locked, windows closed and engine running, if possible. Drive off if you are in any doubt at all; if you can't, make as much noise and fuss as possible.
- Take a short cut when you are busy and in a hurry if it means that you can't be contacted. You would be isolated or would have to drive through an unsafe area. It is better to be late than not arrive at all.
- Change your plans without informing someone else.
- Use force if anyone tries to get into your car. (Phone the Police from your Mobile Phone immediately and inform your Line Manager. An incident form must be completed).
- Forget that you are more likely to be the victim of car theft than a violent incident act.

- **Travelling by Foot**

The following guidelines provide advice on keeping safe on foot :

- **DO**

- Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Try to avoid walking alone at night, particularly Out of Hours.
- Keep to busy, well- lit roads.
- Walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Keep your hands free to defend yourself as a last resort.
- Carry an alarm in your hand or in a convenient location on your personal belongings.
- Avoid areas if possible where you know groups hang around.

- **DO NOT**

- Take Short cuts.
- Walk through poorly lit or quiet areas such as underpasses.
- Accept lifts unless you know and trust the driver.
- Switch off from the world by wearing a personal radio or music player.
- Wait around unless you really have to. If you do, then keep to well lit or busy

En- route

- **Consider :**

- The Time. Is the visit Out of Hours after 5.00pm ?
- The Location.
- The Route
- Lock car –whilst driving.

- Being followed? Uneasy ? Uncertain ? remain with or return to your vehicle,
- Drive away for a short while, drive to a place of safety; if you are using public transport stay on or get on a bus, go to a place of safety; if your suspicions are confirmed, contact Police Scotland.
- **On Arrival at a Home Visit.**
 - Park as near as is practicable to the address to be visited, in such a position as to be able to drive straight off and in well –lit areas at night. Do not park directly under a street light, as there is a greater probability your car will be broken in to.
 - Keep valuables, such as money, handbags, or wallets and important papers out of sight as far as possible.
 - Ensure no Confidential documents can be seen and are securely held.
 - Avoid as far as possible, waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, particularly at night.
 - Keep aware of the nearest place of safety, such as shops.
 - Stand well clear of the doorway after ringing or knocking.
 - Show ACC ID Badge.
 - Remain aware of the behaviour of all persons in the house, looking for any signs or signals that may indicate a potential problem.
 - Remain aware of the environment and maintain escape routes in case problems arise.
- **If in Doubt**
 - Double check the address and telephone number. Check the telephone directory or ask the operator to confirm.
 - Consider ringing back to confirm.
 - Verify information about previous visits.
 - Ask the client to be visible at the house window or door as you arrive and to leave light on/curtains drawn back at night.
 - Do not enter premises.
 - Seek advice/assistance from Out of Hours Colleagues.
 - Plan your action to ensure your personal safety.
- **Prevention (As far as is Possible)**
 - The best way to deal with violence is to prevent it happening if possible – always in a professional manner.
 - Dress appropriately for the area or client to be visited, particularly when the service user's culture demands that women be well covered up. Do not wear expensive looking jewellery.
 - Wear shoes and clothes that do not hinder movement or your ability to run away in an emergency.
 - Ensure that transport is regularly serviced.
 - Keep bags and equipment locked in the boot of the car.
 - Avoid multi story car parks when alone.
 - Be Alert at all times when walking in the streets and if your bag is snatched let it go and report the incident to your Line Manager for recording as an incident and report it to the Police.
 - Use your judgement before entering lifts with strangers.

- Watch out for hazards in a home, such as poor lighting, trailing flexes, cables narrow or steep staircases, alert any colleagues who may also be visiting.
 - Do not conduct a visit with pet dogs present. Request politely that the dog be removed if this is not complied with the Incident must be reported to your Line Manager as 'Threatening or Menacing Behaviour'.
 - Contact a colleague or your Line Manager, if you are unhappy about making a night or out of hours visit alone.
 - Remember that you are a guest when you enter a home, try to be relaxed, friendly, polite, and understanding. Do not be critical of the client's home.
 - Never force your way into a client's home. Always ask permission to enter if you have not been invited in. If an forced entry is required please contact Police Scotland to assist.
 - Always explain clearly the purpose of your visit.
 - Be tactful in dealing with difficult situations within the home. The Client may be sensitive to comments – take time to listen.
 - It is important to know clients well, where appropriate. Be knowledgeable of a client's biography eg any likes or dislikes, associated disorders, perceptions, difficulties, psychological or behaviour problems.
 - Every member of staff in contact with clients in the Community should have regular opportunities to discuss problems and methods of dealing with them., with colleagues and/ or their Line Manager.
- **Dealing with a Violent Incident or Episode in a Clients Home**
 - Put your own safety first,. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. Professional Codes of contact do not require you to jeopardise your own safety; it is better to leave and find alternative ways of providing the service. Which may require a letter to be issued to the client asking that they attend an appointment at the office or nearby office or other ACC premises.
 - If a client or relative is disturbed, tension is rising and violence seems possible, you should remember that while that person is 'disturbed' they are able to speak from a position of stability and influence.
 - If you are sure the aggression is not directed or is being directed towards you personally and that the person is simply 'letting off steam' at someone about their situation, allow the person to have their say, calm them down and then try to discuss the situation and help them to think of ways to deal with the problems.
 - In rare circumstances where the presence of another individual is making the situation worse, it is sometimes best to seek a way of separating the client from the other person. This might be done by suggesting that you move elsewhere with the client, or by steering the other person to another part of the house. It is important to remember to be tactful.
 - Extra help should be called if it seems that it may be needed. At this point, when violence is only a possibility, other people should not burst upon the scene, this could easily precipitate violence. They should

either stay just outside the room when the disturbed client is, or if any of the relatives are on particularly good terms with the client that person could help talk them through the crisis.

- If violence is directed to a member of the family and they are sustaining injury, attempt to reason with the client. Help should be summoned if available in the house or contact your Line Manager or colleagues by use of a Mobile Phone. It is important to withdraw to a safe location to make such a phone call.
- If violence is directed to yourself or another party when no help is available, and if you are unable to manage the client, turn and break free, leave immediately and inform your Line Manager and the Police via the emergency 999 service if appropriate.
- Recognise the limits of your own ability to deal with the situation and the time when it becomes prudent to leave.
- Use panic alarms only in situations where there is a clear escape route and use them for surprise only, not for summoning help, unless certain there is someone nearby who will definitely come to help and assist you.

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