

# VOLUNTEER LONE WORKING POLICY

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## **1.0 Introduction and background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Brain Tumour Charity recognises that some staff and volunteers are required to work by themselves without close or direct supervision, sometimes in work areas or out of office hours.

The charity will avoid the need for employees to work alone where reasonably practicable. Where lone working is necessary, the charity will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of employees working alone.

It is the responsibility of The Brain Tumour Charity's member of staff to conduct a risk assessment and that arrangements are in place prior to a lone visit.

### **1.2 Who does this policy apply to?**

- All members of The Brain Tumour Charity staff team, both office and field based
- Volunteers
- Trustees and Chair

### **1.3 Aims and objectives of the policy**

The Brain Tumour Charity works with children, young people, adults and families who are affected by a brain tumour. This work sometimes requires lone working and it is the aim of this policy to ensure that every worker is safe in their practice. The Brain Tumour Charity considers personal safety a top priority and has a duty of care to all its staff and volunteers to ensure they can lead active, safe and secure work lives.

There are many situations which occur every day in which staff, volunteers, children, young people and vulnerable adults may find their personal safety at risk e.g. home visits, fundraising and travel. This policy provides advice on planning ahead, assessing risk and coping with difficult situations.

### **1.4 Definitions**

A lone worker is defined as an individual who for significant periods of their working time, is engaged in activities which places them in a situation without direct contact with other staff, or without direct supervision. A member of staff, who requests to work at home, rather than remain in their normal workplace does not meet the definition of a lone worker. (The Prince's Trust, 2012).

Work-related violence is defined by the Health and Safety Executive, 2013 as 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.' Verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incident. Physical acts are comparatively rare.

#### **Lone workers include:**

Those working at their main place of work where:

- Contractually they are a home based worker
- Only one person is working on the premises
- People work separately from each other, e.g. In different locations
- People working outside normal office hours

Those working away from their fixed base where:

- One worker is visiting another agency's premises or meeting venue
- One worker is making a home visit to an individual

- One worker is working from their own home

## **1.5 Responsibilities**

### **The Brain Tumour Charity will ensure that:**

- Lone working is avoided as far as is reasonably practicable;
- Emergency procedures are in place so that members of staff working alone can obtain assistance if required;
- A risk assessment is completed by a person competent to do so prior to employees working alone;
- Any employee working alone is capable of undertaking the work alone;
- Arrangements are in place so that someone else is aware of a lone worker's whereabouts at all times;
- Persons working alone are provided with adequate information, instruction and training to understand the hazards and risks and the safe working procedures associated with working alone;
- Training records are kept;
- Providing resources for putting the policy into practice; and
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed;
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of this policy;
- Identify situations where people work alone and decide whether systems can be adopted to avoid workers carrying out tasks on their own;
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents;
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident;
- Providing a mobile phone, and other personal safety equipment, where this is felt desirable

### **The person conducting the lone working assessment will:**

- Give consideration to the greater risks to expectant mothers and young persons;
- Involve the employee who is working alone in the assessment process and the development of safe working methods;
- Advise the employee undertaking the lone working of the findings of the assessment;
- Maintain a file of all lone working assessments.

### **Employees working alone will:**

- Follow the safe working arrangements developed by the charity for lone working;
- Take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety;
- Inform their line manager/ volunteer coordinator of any incidents or safety concerns;
- Keep their calendar up to date.

## **1.6 Guidance for Risk Assessments of Lone Working**

### **Consideration should be given to:**

- The remoteness of the workplace;
- Potential communication problems;
- The likelihood of a criminal attack;
- Potential for verbal and physical abuse;
- Vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress and depression;
- Whether the person is medically fit and suitable to work alone;
- How the lone worker will be supervised;
- How the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as an assault, vehicle breakdown, accident or fire;
- Whether there is adequate first-aid cover.

## **1.7 Good practice for Lone Workers**

- During their working hours, all staff leaving the workplace (or home) should record details of where they are going and their estimated time of arrival back at base.
- If, in the course of a trip away from the office, plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to the office.
- If the visit is assessed to have sufficient risk, details of the planned visit must be recorded and arrangements should be made with a manager or colleague to check that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task on time;
- Telephone contact between the lone worker and a colleague, may also be advisable.
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities.
- Lone workers should be provided with a mobile phone and other personal safety equipment where necessary.
- Staff must report personal safety related accident incidents, and near misses.

## **1.8 Arrangements for recording the whereabouts of staff**

- Staff must ensure that their appointments are logged on Outlook. This must include details of the contact name and address of where the meeting is taking place and when the meeting starts and finishes.
- A system must be put in place to ensure contact is maintained with a manager or nominated buddy, and appropriate and timely action can be taken if contact cannot be made with an employee.
- The Line Manager or nominated Buddy must be aware of the movements of the staff member and have access to their contact and location details. Buddies should follow the agreed local procedures for alerting their line manager if contact attempts fail.
- Where there is genuine concern for a staff members wellbeing (if they have not returned from the visit, maintained contact with their Buddy and/or cannot be contacted), the line manager should be informed and the police should be called.

## **1.9 Home visits**

- No member of staff should undertake an initial home visit on their own, unless: a risk assessment has been completed and the assessment has been viewed and authorised by their line manager.
- All home visits must be appropriately planned with full consideration given to risk assessment findings e.g. visiting with a colleague for an initial visit.
- No volunteers will ever undertake a home visit.
- Staff on a home visit should phone their Line Manager or another member of staff, to inform them that the home visit is to commence and they will be in the property for an agreed amount of time and will call back when the visit has completed. If the staff member does not call back within the specified time, the Line Manager or other member of staff should try to contact the staff member on the home visit.
- There is a procedure in place to further ensure the safety of the staff member. If the employee feels unsafe at any time during a home visit, they can contact the office and use a code word into a conversation. Once this code word has been used, it is the responsibility of whoever answers the phone, to implement the emergency procedures immediately, which includes informing the Line Manager and calling the Police.

## **1.10 Meetings on a 1:1 basis**

As standard practice, we do not meet with young people on a 1:1 basis. However, on the occasion when this is deemed necessary, all employees must adhere to the guidance below.

- Before arranging this meeting, gain a relevant background of the young person and any information that The Brain Tumour Charity holds.

- When holding a 1:1 meeting, always use a room where you are visible to others, such as a public place or a room with open door/glass panels. This must apply to all 1:1 visits.
- Arrange to meet on neutral territory such as a café.

### **1.11 Dealing with a Personal Safety Emergency**

- If in immediate danger, call 999
- Where possible, remove yourself from the source of the danger
- Report the emergency to your Line Manager as soon as possible.

## **2.0 Travel arrangements**

### **2.1 Car**

- Make sure your car has oil and adequate level of fuel before setting off on a journey
- Carry a map, torch and a charged mobile phone when driving
- Always park in a safe area and avoid multi-storey car parks where possible
- Always make sure your car is locked and when returning to the car, check the back seats to ensure that there is no-one in your car before getting in
- Always try to park near an exit, if the only option is to park in a multi-storey car park, on a well lit floor and is used by other car users
- If someone tries to get into your car and forces the door, flash your lights and sound your horn
- Always reverse into a parking space to ensure you can make a quick get away if needed
- Ensure you are a member of an automobile rescue association
- If you breakdown on the motorway, it is advised to not stay in your car and move away from your car. If you breakdown and have to remain in your car, sit in the front passenger seat as this creates the impression that you are not alone
- When the emergency services arrive, consider asking for identification
- If someone stops to help, do not open the doors or windows, but ask them to call the emergency services
- Do not stop to pick anyone up and if you notice another car in danger, do not stop to help. Simply acknowledge them and pull over when safe, to call the Police and notify them of your concerns
- Drive with the doors locked and never leave anything of value on display
- If you believe you are being followed by another car, keep driving to a public place and call the Police
- If a car travels alongside you at the same speed, slow down to let them pass. If you continue to be concerned, drive to a public place or a police station and call the Police from your car
- If someone in a car tries to get your attention, avoid eye contact. However, they may be trying to notify you of a problem on your car.

### **2.2 Walking**

- Always walk by a busy, well lit road
- Don't be tempted to take a short-cut if you are in a rush, by a lesser known route
- In crowds, keep alert
- Keep your bag and any other belongings close to you and your bag shut
- Do not accept lifts from strangers
- Walk facing oncoming traffic if there is no path to walk on
- Avoid potentially dangerous spots and dark areas such as subways and densely populated areas
- At night, do not use a torch unless absolutely essential e.g. in rural areas with limited or no street lighting. It is better to allow your eyes to adjust to the dark and if you always use a torch, it could make a potential assailant aware of your presence.
- If you are walking back from a visit, let a colleague know what time you expect to return home or to the office.

- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts and take action. As confidently as you can, cross the road and head for a busy area
- If a vehicle stops to ask for directions, make sure you stand back from the car or if you don't feel confident, say you are not local and not able to help
- Equally, if a vehicle pulls up alongside you, walk in the opposite direction and head for a busy area
- Beware of strangers offering to accompany you in a quiet area, in particular
- If you are attacked, call for help. Shout a positive instruction to passers by such as 'Call the Police' and be prepared to allow your bag, mobile phone or briefcase to be stolen.

### **2.3 Public transport**

- Always sit in a well lit area and with people you don't feel threatened or intimidated by
- It is safer to sit with people than alone. Try to sit near the driver of the bus
- Always have your ticket or money ready when travelling by public transport.

### **2.4 Taxis**

- Always have the number of a reputable local taxi firm on your work mobile phone
- Give them your name and destination and when they come to pick you up, ask them who they are collecting and where they are going. If you are in doubt, do not get in
- If travelling late at night, consider using a taxi if public transport is unreliable and not regular
- Always sit in the back of the taxi and do not share personal information with the taxi driver
- Have your house keys ready for when the taxi pulls up to your house.

### **3.0 Working alone**

- Be secure
- Ask all unknown visitors to show some pre-agreed form of identity before allowing them in your home
- Have a spyhole or chain fitted to your front door so you can see who is visiting you before opening the door
- In a public place keep your briefcase or bags either on your lap or between your feet
- Don't leave coats or jackets unattended in a public place
- If visiting business premises be aware of the fire exits.

### **3.1 Staying in a hotel**

- Check in advance that you are comfortable with the location of the hotel
- When checking in, if the desk says your room number aloud and people are about then ask for a new room as the room was broadcast and tell them that
- When booking, ask for an upper floor room as it provides fewer ways for someone to gain access
- When getting in a lift, let strangers push their floor number first. If you feel uncomfortable, get out or push a different floor number. Stand facing inwards, not facing the door. Let the stranger leave the lift first, stall, then head to your room once they have gone
- Never put the card for breakfast outside your door overnight as it advertises how many people are in the room. Similarly the 'Do Not Disturb' sign indicates that people are present in the room
- Use the peephole and only ever open the door if comfortable. If required, call reception to confirm who is at the door. In almost all hotels "0" is operator.

### **3.2 Lone working in a vehicle**

- Staff are strongly discouraged from being in a situation where they are alone with young or vulnerable people in a vehicle
- If this situation does arise, the risks must be assessed and agreed in advance with their line manager

- Volunteers must never be in a situation where they are alone in a vehicle with a young or vulnerable person.

### **3.3 Personal Attack and Intimidation**

- If you feel this is very possible, get away as quickly as possible. Head to where you know people are
- If you are unsure that someone is following you, check by crossing and re-crossing the street
- Breathe properly to keep calm
- Yell or shout "Phone the Police" or another specific instruction which somebody can follow
- Use your personal alarm if you have one to disorientate your assailant and give you a little more time
- If you are on public transport pull the emergency cord or yell to the nearest member of staff
- Do not respond physically unless absolutely necessary. It can provoke more violence and limit your options
- If you see someone else in danger ring 999 and give the police clear directions.

### **4.0 How to Handle Potential Threats and Problems**

#### **4.1 If conflict arises:**

- Avoid confrontation. If anyone makes provocative, offensive or challenging remarks consider terminating the meeting
- Everybody has their personal buffer space. Do not encroach upon it
- Avoid aggressive body language – crossed arms, pointing, raised arms could all be taken as confrontational. Do not touch anybody
- Make suggestions rather than orders or trying to dominate
- Appear calm, remain sitting and make clear simple statements
- Show that you are taking the person's concerns seriously and give them space to back down without losing face
- Immediately report any threatening or challenging behaviour to your line manager or volunteer coordinator