Churches for Tunbridge Wells
Tunbridge Wells Churches' Winter Shelter

An Ecumenical Christian Charity
www.tunbridgewellschurcheswintershelter.co.uk

Lone Working Policy

Approved by Management Committee: December 2015

Date of Review: December 2017

1. Introduction

There are times when TWCWS requires staff to work alone in various ways throughout the organisation. TWCWS is committed to ensuring that all staff are provided with the appropriate training and other necessary tools, which will help to keep them safe and minimize risk during these times.

Within TWCWS services there are many examples of lone working occurring regularly, the most common being a lone member of staff in a project office surrounded by one or more service users, or a floating support worker visiting a service user in their home. There are also numerous other scenarios where workers might find themselves alone with a service user and/or members of their family.

Additionally, travelling to and from appointments with service users, whether on public transport, on foot or in the member of staff's car can present certain challenges, as does accompanying service users to meetings, particularly where there might be unexpected (and unexplained) periods of waiting required. There are also examples where a member of staff might have to enter a service user's room or deal with a situation in a communal area without support.

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the key factors which can affect lone working and the responsibilities of all staff in relation to maintaining personal safety whilst lone working.

2. Policy Statement

TWCWS has a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work.

Regulation 3 of The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999, states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

- the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and
- the risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct of their undertaking

This policy applies to all TWCWS's employees, temporary workers and volunteers working at premises for which TWCWS has a responsibility or at any other locations at which staff are present on work-related business.

3. Definition

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers are those who work by themselves without constant, close or direct supervision.

4. Responsibilities

Deliberate or negligent failure to comply with this policy and the responsibilities set out below will be treated as gross misconduct which may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

4.1. The Management Committee

- The Management Committee is responsible for ensuring that risk assessments have been carried out where there is, or may be, a requirement for lone working and for identifying, implementing and monitoring any specific risk controls which may be needed as a result.
- The Management Committee should take steps to check that control measures are in place. Examples of control measures include instruction, training, one-to-ones, and issuing protective equipment.
- The Management Committee is responsible for bringing the risk assessments to the attention of their staff and ensuring that they are aware of, understand and comply with this policy.

4.2. All TWCWS Staff

- All TWCWS staff are required to comply with this policy and any risk assessments relating to lone working, following any control measures designed to reduce the risks associated with lone working.

- All TWCWS staff must report to their manager any circumstances, which they consider may require additional controls to reduce risk.

- All TWCWS staff are responsible for the prompt reporting of any medical condition which might make them unsuitable for working alone, or create added risks for working alone.

- All TWCWS staff must inform their the Management Committee if they feel, after a comprehensive risk assessment has been carried out, that it is still unsafe to lone work with an individual.

- All TWCWS staff are responsible for reporting immediately to the Management Committee any incident which occurs in relation to lone working and recording the incident, in detail, on an Incident Report Form.

5. Hazards and Risks

The main categories of hazards and risks associated with lone working are listed below:-

5.1. Working alone with Service Users

There may be a risk of assault. Assault may be understood as an act which has or is intended to have a damaging effect on an individual, irrespective of whether physical injury occurs. It includes verbal abuse, threats and physical assault. There could also be a risk of allegations relating to personal conduct. This is a risk that relates to both service users and staff.

5.2. Emergencies

Emergencies may be caused by the following: by property damage (e.g. due to adverse weather, fire or flood) by a breakdown in essential service or because of service user/s behaviour.

5.3. Travelling

Travelling to and from appointments, whether on public transport, on foot or in the member of staff's car can present certain challenges. There can be risks of accident, personal injury to staff member, service user, and member of the public or staff of other agencies. There is also a risk of unpredictable behaviour by a service user.

5.4. Other Workplace Hazards

There can be risk of injury as a result of manual handling. Another risk is that of assault or theft when handling and banking cash

6. Risk Assessments

6.1. What should Risk Assessments take into Account?

Risk assessment should take into account factors such as the age, sex and physical capabilities of the individual staff member, as well as the location at which they will be working or to which they will be travelling.

They should also take into account the individual characteristics, case histories and current risk assessments of service users with who staff are in contact, and their current state and nature, such as:

- Physical and mental health
- Evidence of alcohol, drug or other substance misuse

6.2. Key Factors when Risk Assessing

The following key factors need to be considered when forming risk assessments and strategies to reduce risk:

Time

The time of day can be a factor as to possible sources of support and rescue, as can the day of the week. Staff are much more likely to find themselves isolated at the end of a shift or overnight, as well as at weekends or on public holidays. The time of year should also play a part in safety planning, particularly when planning visits at the end of a winter's day.

Place

It is much easier to manage risk and control a situation when it is occurring on home ground.

People

Staff should gather as much relevant information as possible about the needs and risks relating to working with our service users and they should aim to keep those as up-to-date as possible. However, it is much more difficult to gather reliable information about other people that staff might come into contact with as a result of working with them. For example, a service user may have a family members or friends who could present serious risks to them or staff but workers remain unaware of this.

Environment

Staff should consider their working environment and the role other people play within it. A risk associated with lone working can be considerably reduced if other people are present, for example members of the public or other professionals like GPs, Community Psychiatric Nurse etc.

Knowledge

Staff should always consider how much information they have about the lone working scenario and how much control they have over it.

6.3. Risk Assessment Control Measures

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk-control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Employers should identify situations where people work alone and ask the following questions:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are females especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Are service users at risk due to the lone working?
- What happens if the person becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency?

6.4. Control Measures for All Staff

- The Management Committee should ensure that staff are made aware of the current emergency code during their induction, which will signal to a colleague that the member of staff requires assistance.
- Staff and Managers should ensure that service users' risk assessments are up-to-date in files and on the TWCWS files. It is very important that risks are recorded and updated so that out-of-hours support can access some information regarding risk when trying to assist a service user, or when dealing with an emergency.
- Staff should call colleagues to check in and out of service user appointments. The Management Committee should check regularly that check-in and out calls are being carried out.

- Staff should ensure that someone is aware of all journey schedules, including location, contact telephone numbers, address and persons/places being visited and estimated return times. On completion of journey that person should again be notified.

- Anyone who uses their car at work, must ensure that their car and registration details are up-to-date on the TWCWS files

- Access to adequate first aid facilities, in particular, a properly stocked first aid kit, must be provided.

- Emergency procedures, including who to contact, should be prominently displayed at all TWCWS projects.

- Vehicle doors should be kept locked when travelling and windows open to a minimum when driving through built-up areas.

- All routes should be planned prior to departure to reduce the chance of becoming lost, or having to ask for directions.

- Staff should park their vehicles as close to their workplace as possible and in a well-lit location after dark. Wherever practicable it is recommended that staff only make client visits or arrange appointments away from their usual workplace during daylight hours.

- Staff should carry a minimum amount of cash necessary when travelling and ensure that any valuables and jewellery are discreetly carried or worn.

- If a member of staff is working alone and is required during the shift to handle petty cash they should undertake this in a locked office. Additionally a variance of day, time and route when collecting or delivering petty cash should be followed.

6.5. Control Measures for Outreach & Floating Support Staff

- Everyone should ensure that they have a list of emergency contact telephone numbers with them at all times. This should be readily available, and include instructions on how to contact the emergency services.

- All outreach workers will be provided with a mobile phone by TWCWS. It is the responsibility of the worker to ensure their phone is charged up and that they have contact numbers stored in the phone. TWCWS provide all outreach staff with a personal attack alarm. Staff should carry this on their person whilst at work.

6.6. Control Measures for Office & Accommodation-based Project Staff

- A list of emergency contact telephone numbers should be kept in the office at all times. This should be readily available, and include instructions on how to contact the emergency services.

- In all cases where a staff member believes that they or a colleague are under threat of physical injury, consideration must be given to contacting the police as an emergency, or at a later date through the appropriate manager if it is felt that an ongoing threat exists. Medical assistance must always be sought if an assault takes place which causes physical injury to any person.

- Service user interviewing, wherever practicable, should be carried out in an area which allows the interviewer to retreat safely in case of emergency.

- When dealing with visitor(s) staff should, wherever practicable, remain in a position of safety until they are assured the visitor(s) do not present a personal safety risk.

- Staff should be aware of any devices designed to raise the alarm in case of emergency and know how to operate them e.g. hand-held personal attack alarms.

6.7. Recording and Reviewing Risk Assessments

Risk assessments must be recorded fully on the relevant forms and regularly reviewed, a minimum of once every six months or sooner if an incident occurs. All staff should enter service users' risks onto the files.

7. When Lone Work is Not Possible

When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back-up should be put in place. The risk assessment should help decide the right level of supervision. There are some high-risk activities where at least one other person may need to be present.

High-risk tasks, involving contact with service users who are known to be verbally or physically aggressive, have mental health issues or are drug users, should be assessed for appropriate staffing levels (e.g. Two staff per visit or only meet in a public place) and the relevant service user file should be marked .

8. Working at Another Organisation's Premises

Where a TWCWS employee is lone working at other organisations' premises, that organisation should inform TWCWS of any risks and the control measures that should be taken. This helps the lone worker's employer to assess the risks.

9. Training

All staff that are required to work alone, or with minimal supervision, must be competent to carry out their work safely and without risk to health. In this connection, training is particularly important and all staff should undertake the following compulsory health and safety training:

Training	Frequency
Management of Aggression and Violence	Once – refreshers recommended
Introduction to Risk Assessment	Once
Manual Handling	Once
Appointed Person's First Aid	Every 3 years
Fire Awareness	Every 2 years