Bath Area Play Project Lone Working Policy

Policy, procedures and practice guidance

1. Policy Statement

Where staff have to work alone, both the individual staff member and the Co-ordinator have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.
This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety policy.

2.Purpose

This policy is designed to make staff aware of the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone, at any time whether in the office, home visiting or outreach in the community

4. Context

Services are provided sometimes in the evening and at weekends, as well as in buildings and locations which may be subject to higher risks. On occasion staff may also work from their own home.
Staff working out in the community face the same risks as anyone else, as well as those directly related to their work, and premises may also be the target of criminal activity. Support for lone workers is therefore an essential part, and the same principles apply, particularly:

- a commitment to supporting staff in establishing and maintaining safe working practices
- recognising and reducing risk
- a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff
- a clear understanding of responsibilities
- the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property
- a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff

Equipment such as mobile phones, personal alarms and torches will be made available as appropriate.

5. Definition

Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of service users or in their own home, or may be the only staff member present in the office or other establishment used by BAPP or by one of its partner agencies. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

6. Procedures

6.1. Security of buildings

6.1.1 Managers are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.

6.1.2 Alarm systems must be tested regularly.

6.1.3 Key codes for access should be changed from time to time, and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected.

6.1.4 Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the exits and alarms.

6.1.5 There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.

6.1.6 If there is any indication that a building has been broken into, a staff member must not enter alone, but must wait for back-up.

6.1.7 In buildings where staff may be working with service users in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

6.1.8 Where a staff member is working alone in the office, they should not allow entry to the building to anyone unless they are expecting someone or are sure of their security and safety.

6.2. Personal safety

6. 2.1 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

6. 2.2 Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances including personal alarms.

6.2.3 Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager

6. 2.4 Staff must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.

6.2.5 Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing

in and out, and that staff use it.

6.2.6 Staff must inform their line manager if they deviate from the planned programme of work.

6.2.7 If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.

6. 2.8 Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to take into account include:

- staffing levels and availability – developing links with a residential establishment may be the best out of hours solution
- the identified risks
- measures in place to reduce those risks

6. 2.9 Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

6.2.10 Staff working in the community should be issued with a mobile phone; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider. Personal alarms may also be provided.

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6.3. Assessment of risk

6.3.1 In drawing up and recording 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

6. 3.2 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary

6.3.3 Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to ensuring that there are a minimum of two staff present at all times.

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

6.4 Planning

6.4.1 Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.

6.4.2 Plans for responding to individual service users who present a known risk should be regularly reviewed and discussed with the staff team. **6.4.3** Communication, checking-in and fallback arrangements must be in place.

6.4.4 The Co-ordinator is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting

the team.

6.5. Reporting
6. 5.1 Should an incident occur, the Incident Report form should be completed

6. 5.2 The identified person should debrief in the first instance; if this is not the staff member's line manager, that manager should be informed as soon as practicable, and continue the process.

6.6. Support following an incident
6. 6.1 Support will be made available including supervision and counselling where the staff member requires it.

6.7. Staff working at home
6.7.1 Staff working from their own homes should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential.

6. 7.2 There should be regular contact with their line manager or other designated person if working at home for extended periods, and an appropriate reporting-in system should be used if making visits from home.

7.Practice Guidance

7.1 Personal Safety
7. 1. **1** 'Reasonable precautions' might include:

- checking directions for the destination
- checking whether a service user is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them
- ensuring your car, if used, is road-worthy and has break-down cover
- avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas
- taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night
- ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly.

7.1.2 Out of normal working hours, the identified contact may be the officer in charge at a residential home, or possibly the Emergency Duty Team rather than the line manager. This should only be by prior arrangement, and they should be fully briefed by the relevant line manager on the procedure to follow.
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7.1.4 The agreed plan for contact or emergency response may be a standard one for the team or specific to the individual situation. It should be recorded and readily accessible by the identified person, and up-dated as necessary. It may be appropriate to agree a code word or phrase to indicate that assistance is required.

7.1.5 Managers should be particularly aware of the importance of such arrangements for staff who live alone.

7.1.6 Staff working from home should be aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on Caller Display, and can be retrieved on 1471. To prevent the person you call accessing your number, dial 141 before their number, or check the instructions for your mobile phone.

7.1.7 When visiting a home where a risk has been identified, staff should check that their clothing (tie, scarf, earrings etc) will not offer an assailant an advantage.   Similarly, they should be aware that pens, pencils, keys or heavy bags may also be used to cause injury.

7.1.8 The pocket guide prepared by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 'Personal Safety at work for you', gives further advice and information. (http://www.suzylamplugh.org/home/index.shtml)

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process.

8.2 Lone working and risk assessment will be regular agenda items for team meetings.

8.3 Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with their supervisor or with the whole team, as appropriate.

8.4 The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.