

**Lone Worker & Personal Safety Policy**

Ham & Petersham SOSis committed to reducing the risks to its staff and volunteers with lone working by:

* Identifying the risks associated with lone working
* Giving practical advice and clear guidance to its staff and volunteers on how to avoid and manage risks associated with lone working
* Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that staff and volunteers do not avoid reporting them in the belief that they are not serious enough or that it may suggest failure on their part.

This document is intended for use as a reference guide and also contains advice to help staff and volunteers to work more safely. This advice is not exhaustive, nor is it a substitute for safe systems of work. It is essential that the Organiser, staff and volunteers co-operate to develop simple and practical systems.

**What is lone working?**

Lone working describes any situation whereby someone is not working alongside or near to other staff or volunteers. Due to the nature of some of our work in the community, there may be occasions when you will be in a situation where you are working alone. For example, going alone to visit a client in their own home. Given some forethought and a few simple precautions, the slight risk of going missing or becoming the subject of an assault can be reduced to a minimum.

Lone workers could be more vulnerable e.g. to assault or because they are unable to raise the alarm, if they have an accident. Therefore, the risk for lone workers is greater and more rigorous systems are needed to protect them.

**Basic requirements for all lone workers**

* Take care of your own safety and that of others affected by your actions or inactions
* Comply with lone working procedures
* Report any shortcomings in systems of work to the Organiser
* Help the Organiser to complete Incident Report Forms in the event of incidents or near misses.

**Lone working procedures**

**General advice when lone working:**

* On entering a building, premises, or the H&PSOS office, make sure you know how to get out in a hurry.
* If a person that you are meeting appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it may be appropriate to make another appointment.
* When meeting a client, ensure your behaviour is honest, fair, even-handed, considerate and helpful; never be aggressive back, this is how anger can escalate into violence; don’t be patronising. Show that you are paying attention; listen and hear clients out, even if you have heard it before.

**If somebody starts to get angry:**

* Postpone the meeting, if considered necessary, to cool the atmosphere.
* Stay calm; try to stay relaxed; don’t become rooted to one spot; move about occasionally; try to look at something you are discussing rather than at the aggressor.
* Listen carefully, even to abuse; agree where possible.
* Offer an angry person a range of options from which to choose: in that way he or she will find it difficult to stay angry.
* If you are unable to control the situation it is better to retreat.

Below are procedures that should be followed for a number of specific lone working scenarios. The procedures are not exhaustive. **Please remember that these procedures are there to protect you.**

**Client Home Visits**

Given the vulnerability of our client base, the risk of some sort of assault from a client should be very low. However, it is important to understand who else might be at the client home – a family member or an aggressive dog? It is also important to understand that abuse can come in many different forms including non-physical abuse such as verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset.

1. **Volunteer - Client Home Visit**

**Before the Visit**

* Ensure you are aware of all identified risks by discussing the visit with the office staff/volunteer (e.g. make sure you are aware of whether to expect other people or dogs to be at the client property).
* If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and for pay-as-you-go, has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving. Make sure your phone is accessible when you enter the property.
* Where possible, ensure you let someone such as a loved one, friend or family member, know where you are going, when you will finish your visit and agree a time when they should raise the alarm if they haven’t heard from you. Ensure that they have the Office contact details or if not contactable they should consider contacting the police.

**The visit:**

* Do not enter if the person you are visiting is not there and you do not know the person inviting you inside
* Remember you are visiting someone else’s territory, acknowledge it is their home and wait to be asked in, invited to sit, etc
* On arrival at the property you should assess the risk. Factors such as unexpected visitors, strange behaviours, layout of the area or any other factors that give rise to your concern.
* Familiarise yourself with the surroundings in case you need to leave quickly. Make sure you have a clear line of escape.
* Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting.
* If you feel threatened by dogs etc, ask politely if they can be moved
* Report back to the office if there are any incidents (or near misses) which arose during the client visit. They will update client records on Charitylog. The Organiser is then responsible for logging an Incident Report and deciding on appropriate course of action going forwards such that similar incidents are unlikely to occur in the future.
1. **Staff Member – Client Assessment Home Visit**

**Before the Visit**

* The details of the planned home assessment should be logged in Charitylog, in particular, where and approximately when the assessment will take place.
* Ensure you think about where you will be going and what you will be doing. If you have received a referral, make sure you are aware of all identified risks (e.g. make sure you are aware of whether to expect other people or dogs to be at the client property). Consider taking another member of staff with you if you have concerns.
* Take a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and for pay-as-you-go, has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving. Make sure your phone is accessible when you enter the property.
* Where possible, ensure you let someone such as a colleague, loved one, friend or family member, know where you are going, when you will finish your visit and agree a time when they should raise the alarm if they haven’t heard from you. Ensure that they have the contact details of the Organiser (or other responsible staff member) such that they can raise the alarm. If not contactable, they should consider contacting the police.

**The visit:**

* Do not enter if the person you are visiting is not there and you do not know the person inviting you inside
* Remember you are visiting someone else’s territory, acknowledge it is their home and wait to be asked in, invited to sit, etc
* On arrival at the property you should assess the risk. Factors such as unexpected visitors, strange behaviours, layout of the area or any other factors that give rise to your concern.
* Familiarise yourself with the surroundings in case you need to leave quickly. Make sure you have a clear line of escape.
* Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting.
* If you feel that you are in immediate physical danger – call 999.
* If you feel threatened by dogs etc, ask politely if they can be moved.
* Report back to the Organiser about any incidents (or near misses) which arose during the client visit. The Organiser is then responsible for updating client records on Charitylog, logging an Incident Report and deciding on appropriate course of action going forwards such that similar incidents are unlikely to occur in the future.
1. **Staff Member/Volunteer - Client Transportation**

**Before providing client transportation:**

* A telephone assessment, by office staff with the client, should have taken place - assessing client needs and risks. The office staff/volunteer should ensure any relevant client needs and risks are discussed with the driver before transportation.
* Office staff/volunteer will ensure details are recorded of who you are transporting, where you are going and when this will be taking place.
* Keep your car maintained and topped up with fuel.
* Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing. Do you need to enter the client’s home? Will you need to enter any premises at the destination? If so, make sure you follow *Client Home Visit* lone working procedures.
* Take a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and for pay-as-you-go, has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving.
* Where possible, ensure you let someone such as a loved one, friend or family member, know where you are going, when you will finish your visit and agree a time when they should raise the alarm if they haven’t heard from you. Ensure that they have the Office contact details or if not contactable they should consider contacting the police.

**During the client transportation:**

* Ideally, avoid sitting the client directly behind your driving seat.
* If you have immediate concerns for your safety, stop the vehicle in a safe place as quickly as possible, get out the car and raise the alarm.
* Report back to the office if there are any incidents (or near misses) which arose during the client trip. They will update client records on Charitylog. The Organiser is then responsible for logging an Incident Report and deciding on appropriate course of action going forwards such that similar incidents are unlikely to occur in the future.
1. **Staff Member/Volunteer - Minibus Driver Lone Working**

**Before setting off**:

* Remind yourself of all minibus transportation guidelines and perform all necessary safety checks.
* Office staff/volunteer will ensure details are recorded of who you are transporting, where you are going and when this will be taking place.
* Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing. Do you need to enter a client’s home? Will you need to enter any premises at the destination? ? If so, make sure you follow *Client Home Visit* lone working procedures.
* A telephone assessment, by office staff with the client, should have taken place - assessing client needs and risks. The office staff/volunteer should ensure any relevant client needs and risks are discussed with the driver before transportation.
* Take a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and for pay-as-you-go, has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving.
* Where possible, ensure you let someone such as a loved one, friend or family member, know where you are going, when you will finish your visit and agree a time when they raise the alarm if they haven’t heard from you. Ensure that they have the Office contact details or if not contactable they should consider contacting the police.

**During transportation:**

* If you have concerns about one particular individual, try to avoid being left on your own with them in the minibus. In particular, consider reordering the client pick-ups and drop-offs accordingly.
* If you have immediate concerns for your safety, stop the vehicle in a safe place as quickly as possible, get out the vehicle and raise the alarm.
* Report back to the office if there are any incidents (or near misses) which arose during the shopping trip. They will update client records on Charitylog. The Organiser is then responsible for logging an Incident Report and deciding on appropriate course of action going forwards such that similar incidents are unlikely to occur in the future.