Lone Working Guidelines

There is no legal prohibition on working alone but all employers have a duty to consider whether it is safe for an employee to do so and assess the risks posed by such working.

Lone worker scenarios within The Voluntary Network:

- Co-ordinator visiting prospective volunteer or client
- Staff travelling to appointments
- Sole worker in the office
- Volunteer visiting a Befriending Client
- Community Transport Drivers

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. Extra control measures:

- Check that lone workers have no medical conditions which make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary.
- Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual
- Discuss with employees the risks to identify appropriate measures
- Avoidance whenever reasonably practicable
- Regular contact with the employer. Contact number to be available at all times
- Enhanced reporting systems
- Planning of travel to minimise risk e.g. avoidance of travel in the dark, pre-planning routes, parking in well-lit areas
- Mobile phone
- Diarised appointments
- Access to first aid kit for treating minor injuries
- Emergency procedures
- Increased support and supervision
- Safety of equipment – procedures must be established to ensure effective reporting of defects checking and maintenance of equipment
- Undertake a risk assessment particularly in case where violence has been reported/known

Volunteer lone working

Volunteers must be reassured that they will not be asked to visit families where it is known that there are circumstances which may compromise their own or the Co-ordinator's safety. Volunteers will also be withdrawn from situations where concerns for their safety are identified.

Personal safety should be an essential element of each course of preparation. Volunteers may be in a potentially vulnerable position since they visit Clients on their own.

It is important to get safety in perspective and not to worry volunteers. Each year in the UK over 5,000 volunteers visit families in their own homes. There have been very few recorded incidents of volunteers experiencing problems. Nonetheless, this should not prevent schemes from ensuring that all volunteers are aware of reasonable safety precautions to take.

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