LONE WORKING PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

PRN-85: Lone Working Procedure for Volunteers and Employees
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Trading/Business Name: CAREHOPES
Company Registration Number: 15556946
SIC Code: 88100 – Social Work Activities Without Accommodation for the Elderly and Disabled
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1. Purpose

This procedure outlines the practical arrangements for protecting the safety, wellbeing, and security of employees and volunteers who undertake lone working activities on behalf of the organisation.

The organisation recognises that volunteers and employees may occasionally work alone while:

Visiting service users.

Travelling between appointments.

Attending community activities.

Conducting outreach activities.

Working remotely.

Delivering community-based services.

This procedure aims to:

Promote safe lone working practices.

Reduce foreseeable risks.

Ensure appropriate support arrangements.

Support effective communication.

Provide guidance for responding to incidents and emergencies.

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2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

Employees

Volunteers

Managers

Volunteer Coordinators

Directors

It applies whenever organisational activities are undertaken without immediate supervision or direct support from colleagues.

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3. Principles

Lone working arrangements will be:

Safe

Risks should be assessed and managed.

Proportionate

Controls should reflect the level of identified risk.

Supportive

Individuals should know how to access support.

Responsive

Concerns should be addressed promptly.

Person-Centred

Safety measures should support service delivery while protecting all parties.

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4. Examples of Lone Working

Lone working may include:

Companionship visits to service users.

Home visits.

Community support activities.

Travel to and from appointments.

Attending meetings alone.

Outreach activities.

Administrative work undertaken remotely.

Community engagement events.

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5. Responsibilities

Directors

Responsible for:

Ensuring this procedure is implemented.

Providing appropriate resources.

Monitoring lone working risks.

Managers and Volunteer Coordinators

Responsible for:

Completing risk assessments.

Providing guidance and supervision.

Monitoring lone working arrangements.

Responding to concerns.

Employees and Volunteers

Responsible for:

Following lone working procedures.

Reporting concerns.

Following risk management arrangements.

Maintaining communication during lone working activities.

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6. Lone Working Risk Assessment

Before lone working activities are undertaken, risks should be considered.

Risk assessments may consider:

Location.

Time of day.

Service user needs.

Safeguarding concerns.

Environmental risks.

Known behavioural concerns.

Travel arrangements.

Emergency communication access.

Risk assessments should be reviewed whenever circumstances change.

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7. Service User Risk Information

Relevant information may be shared with employees or volunteers where necessary to:

Support safety.

Inform risk management.

Enable safe planning of visits.

Information sharing must remain lawful, proportionate, and necessary.

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8. Assessing Suitability for Lone Working

Prior to undertaking lone working activities, consideration should be given to:

Training completed.

Experience.

Confidence.

Health and wellbeing factors.

Identified support needs.

Additional support may be required where individuals are inexperienced or vulnerable.

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9. Pre-Visit Planning

Before a visit or activity, employees and volunteers should:

Confirm appointment details.

Review available risk information.

Ensure communication devices are charged.

Know who to contact if concerns arise.

Record planned attendance where required.

Planning helps reduce avoidable risks.

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10. Visit Scheduling

Where practicable:

Visits should be planned in advance.

Expected arrival and departure times should be known.

Contact arrangements should be established.

Schedules should be accessible to relevant managers or coordinators.

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11. Check-In Arrangements

Lone workers may be required to:

Before Visit

Confirm intended attendance.

During Visit

Provide updates if concerns arise.

After Visit

Confirm safe completion of the activity.

The frequency of check-ins should reflect identified risks.

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12. Communication Equipment

Employees and volunteers undertaking lone working should have access to:

A charged mobile phone.

Emergency contact numbers.

Relevant organisational contact details.

Communication equipment should remain available throughout lone working activities where possible.

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13. Home Visits

When conducting home visits:

Follow agreed procedures.

Observe environmental risks.

Remain alert to changes in circumstances.

Leave immediately if personal safety is threatened.

Individuals should not enter a property if they believe it is unsafe.

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14. Arrival at a Service User's Home

Upon arrival:

Observe the surroundings.

Assess any immediate risks.

Trust professional judgement.

If concerns are identified:

Do not enter.

Contact management.

Record concerns appropriately.

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15. Conduct During Visits

Employees and volunteers should:

Maintain professional boundaries.

Remain aware of exits.

Keep mobile phones accessible.

Avoid unnecessary risks.

Act in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Safety should not be compromised by concerns about causing offence.

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16. Unsafe Situations

If an employee or volunteer feels unsafe:

Step 1

Leave the situation if it is safe to do so.

Step 2

Move to a safe location.

Step 3

Contact emergency services if required.

Step 4

Notify management as soon as possible.

Step 5

Record the incident.

Personal safety should always take priority.

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17. Aggressive or Threatening Behaviour

If aggressive behaviour occurs:

Remain calm.

Avoid confrontation.

Withdraw safely.

Seek assistance if required.

Report the incident immediately.

No individual is expected to remain in a situation where they feel unsafe.

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18. Safeguarding Concerns During Visits

Where safeguarding concerns arise:

Follow safeguarding procedures.

Record observations factually.

Report concerns promptly.

Seek management guidance where appropriate.

Safeguarding responsibilities continue during lone working activities.

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19. Community-Based Activities

When supporting activities in the community:

Consider travel routes.

Assess venue suitability.

Identify emergency contact arrangements.

Consider accessibility requirements.

Risk levels may vary according to the activity being undertaken.

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20. Travel Safety

Employees and volunteers should:

Plan journeys appropriately.

Avoid unnecessary risks.

Inform coordinators if delays occur.

Carry emergency contact information.

Travel arrangements should consider weather and environmental conditions.

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21. Remote and Home Working

Those working remotely should:

Maintain regular communication.

Follow health and safety guidance.

Protect confidential information.

Report wellbeing concerns.

Remote workers remain covered by organisational lone working arrangements.

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22. Emergency Situations

In an emergency:

Step 1

Contact emergency services if required.

Step 2

Move to safety where possible.

Step 3

Notify management.

Step 4

Follow emergency instructions.

Step 5

Complete incident reporting requirements.

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23. Failure to Check In

Where an expected check-in is missed:

Step 1

Attempt contact.

Step 2

Attempt alternative contact methods.

Step 3

Contact emergency or nominated contacts if necessary.

Step 4

Escalate concerns appropriately.

The response should reflect the level of identified risk.

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24. Incident Reporting

All incidents occurring during lone working should be reported, including:

Near misses.

Aggressive behaviour.

Threats.

Accidents.

Safeguarding concerns.

Environmental risks.

Learning from incidents helps improve safety.

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25. Post-Incident Support

Following an incident, support may include:

Debriefing.

Supervision.

Welfare support.

Additional training.

Review of risk assessments.

The organisation recognises the emotional impact incidents can have.

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26. Training Requirements

Employees and volunteers undertaking lone working activities may receive training covering:

Risk awareness.

Personal safety.

Safeguarding.

Incident reporting.

Professional boundaries.

Emergency procedures.

Training should be reviewed periodically.

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27. Lone Working Escalation Flowchart

Lone Working Activity Planned

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Risk Assessment Reviewed

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Visit or Activity Commences

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Check-In Arrangements Followed

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Concerns Identified?

No → Continue Activity

Yes

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Withdraw if Necessary

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Contact Manager / Coordinator

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Emergency Services Required?

Yes → Contact 999

No → Follow Organisational Procedures

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Incident Recorded

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Risk Assessment Reviewed

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28. Case Study

Scenario: Volunteer Feels Unsafe During a Visit

A volunteer attends a planned companionship visit and notices unexpected individuals in the property who appear intoxicated.

Action Taken

The volunteer decides not to enter.

The volunteer moves to a safe location.

The Volunteer Coordinator is contacted.

The visit is postponed.

A risk assessment review is undertaken.

Outcome

The volunteer remains safe and alternative support arrangements are considered.

Learning Point

Individuals should trust their judgement and prioritise personal safety when lone working concerns arise.

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29. Responsibilities Summary

Role	Responsibilities
Board of Trustees	Oversight of lone working arrangements
Directors	Ensure procedures are implemented
Managers	Assess risks and monitor compliance
Volunteer Coordinators	Support volunteers and monitor visits
Employees and Volunteers	Follow procedures and report concerns

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30. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The organisation will monitor:

Lone working incidents.

Near misses.

Training completion.

Risk assessments completed.

Volunteer and employee feedback.

Safeguarding concerns.

Compliance with check-in procedures.

Monitoring findings will be used to strengthen safety arrangements and improve practice.

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31. Review Arrangements

This procedure will be reviewed:

Annually.

Following significant incidents.

Following safeguarding reviews.

Following changes to service delivery.

Following legislative or regulatory updates.

Related Policies

Lone Working Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Risk Assessment Policy

Adult Safeguarding Policy

Incident Reporting Policy

Volunteer Management Policy

Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Policy

Employee Wellbeing Policy