



Lone Working Policy

Incl Practice Guidance

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Date: March 2022

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Signed off:

Purpose

As stated in its Health and Safety Policy The Kelly Foundation recognises its duties and accepts its responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and of other people who may be affected by its activities so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Kelly Foundation will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the safety of lone workers or staff who sometimes work alone, by minimising the risks that they face and putting in place appropriate measures to improve their safety. This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify individual responsibilities and describe procedures to support the minimisation of risk.

Definition

Lone working can be described as any situation or location in which someone works without a colleague nearby; or when someone is working out of sight or earshot of another colleague.

Lone working can take place when people are:

- working as individuals at a fixed site but are separated from others e.g. working alone in buildings or interviewing a service user alone in a meeting room
- working in a remote location, including outdoors
- working alone away from base e.g. home visiting often involving contact with the public
- working outside normal working hours, e.g. alone in isolated buildings or working alone in the community
- travelling alone as part of their work e.g. travelling to meetings or travelling to the home of a service user; and
- working on other employers' premises or working from home.

Many lone workers will come into more than one of these categories and each of these categories may present a different individual or combination of hazards. Staff who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other workers. However, for lone workers, the risk of harm is often greater. The main hazards facing lone workers are violence and aggression and lack of access to assistance in an emergency.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the safety of all persons who are employed or volunteering in providing services for The Kelly Foundation.

The Board of Trustees must make sure that all their staff are aware and the policy is implemented where required. They are also responsible for ensuring that any learning from an incident is shared across all stakeholders for whom it might apply

Staff who lone work must ensure that they:

- do all they can to ensure their own safety and that of their colleagues. This is in line with current health and safety legislation

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

Safety in the community

Home visits

Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan to reduce any risk that exists. Refer to existing Risk Assessments.

When planning home visits consider the following:

- Is a home visit really necessary? Could the person be interviewed at the office?
- Can someone else be present such as a co-worker etc.? Could it be a joint visit with a colleague including partner agencies such as Social Services?
- Is there a possibility of a service user relative or friend being present which may add to the risk? - try to check this out beforehand.
- Take into account what is known about the person. Any history of aggressive behaviour should entail a discussion with a member of the Management Team as to the best way of approaching a visit. With such situations preference will always be to interview them from a work base.
- Where possible plan the visit during daylight preferably in the morning this gives time to sort out a difficult situation if needed.
- Make sure that someone else in the team knows where you are going – keep the office diary up to date.
- Make sure that someone else in the team knows how to contact you
- Make sure that the Management Team can contact your next of kin – keep your emergency contact details up to date in your file.
- Always take a mobile phone, ensuring it is appropriately charged.
- Do not go into a person's home if they appear to be drunk or ill etc.
- Ask that dogs and other potentially dangerous pets are kept out of the room.
- Think about where you sit, avoid sitting on peoples' beds.
- If the person you are visiting/anyone else present starts to get abusive/ aggressive then leave immediately.
- Give full consideration that during Mental Health Act assessments the situation can be very dynamic.

Travelling by car

In the course of work staff or volunteers may have to make journeys in their car alone. There have been a number of incidents nationally in the recent past, which have highlighted the potential dangers and have raised awareness of how vulnerable each of us could be despite the care we take. However, the risk of such an incident is extremely low.

The advice given below is intended to give practical guidance on how to reduce the possible dangers that may occur whilst driving alone

- Always keep windows closed and doors locked when driving alone, particularly at night and in isolated areas.
- Do not give lifts to strangers e.g. a hitchhiker, or accept lifts from a stranger if you breakdown or have an accident.
- If you see an incident or someone tries to flag you down, think first. Is it genuine? How would you best help? It might be safer and also more helpful and practicable to report what you have seen using your mobile phone.

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- If you believe you are being followed, keep calm and continue driving to a busy place e.g. garage, police station etc. where help could be available. If necessary draw attention to yourself by sounding your horn.
- If other drivers or vehicle occupants try to attract attention e.g. indicating a fault with your vehicle, ignore them and avoid eye contact.
- If a car pulls in front of you and causes you to stop NEVER turn off the engine. If the driver or passenger approaches: reverse as far as is safely possible and ensure doors and windows are locked. If necessary draw attention to yourself e.g. by sounding the horn.
- When parking in daylight always try to imagine what the place would be like at night.
- When parking at night
- Always lock away any valuables out of sight in the boot.
- Never leave the car unlocked or the ignition key in it when it is unattended.
- When returning to the car, always have the door key ready. It is better not to stand by the car searching for the key

Travelling on foot or public transport

- Think ahead, be alert and be aware of your surroundings
- Keep to busy, well-lit roads and avoid poorly lit or quiet underpass
- Avoid carrying valuables (i.e. excessive amounts of cash or expensive jewellery)
- Always sit near the bus driver on a driver-only bus or stay downstairs
- If possible, wait for the bus at a busy stop that is well lit, or a bus stop close to area of activity - for example, a garage or a late shop
- Have the fare ready, separate from other money or valuables
- Try to avoid having hands full with heavy bags

Out of Hours working

Please note that a number of the points below will also be relevant to Mental Health Act assessments

If you work within Out of Hours there are additional factors that staff and volunteers must consider when undertaking visits/meeting outside office hours;

- Ensure that a member of the Management Team knows where you are going
- Ensure that the meeting is recorded in the office diary
- Ensure that you send a file note recording the details after your meeting
- Do not travel alone, out of hours, with a Service User unless you have first discussed with a member of the Management Team, that you have referred to the service user risk assessment and have obtained permission from the parent/guardian/primary carer/social worker etc
- Think about the weather conditions, how long you may be out
- Ensure you inform a family member, emergency contact of where you will be going and who to contact if you do not return
- Ensure that you have adequate car breakdown insurance

Office Safety**In The Kelly Foundation Building**

Although lone workers are often working out in the community, there can be times when staff or volunteers are working on their own in The Kelly Foundation building. This can include staff or volunteers who have to interact with service users or member of the public in their place of work without colleagues nearby.

The main risks to staff lone working in the The Kelly Foundation building include:

- Managing accidents and incidents and lack of assistance in case of emergency
- Handling of loads and people
- Use of work equipment
- Use of electrical equipment
- Working with Display Screen Equipment
- Violence and Aggression from service users or member of the public.

Any member of staff who may be lone working in The Kelly Foundation building must ensure that they have had the correct induction regarding relevant safety procedures for the team and the building.

Working in other bases

Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, that employer should inform the lone worker of any risks and the control measures that should be taken. In these settings it is as important to establish likely risks and control measures, as it would be if you were seeing a person in their own home.

When conducting meetings/interviews in any unfamiliar setting, staff should familiarise themselves with the security features such as panic alarms, exit routes. Should there be concerns about their safety, consideration should be given to asking another staff member to sit in or undertaking the interview somewhere that is observed by other staff, or by delaying the interview.

For any interview, members of staff should ensure another staff member knows where they are, with whom and what time the interview should conclude. The office diary must always be kept up to date.

Working at home

The Kelly Foundation recognises that staff may work at home.

Potential hazards that may arise include:

- Handling of loads
- Use of work equipment
- Use of electrical equipment
- Working with Display Screen Equipment
- Stress/mental health issues arising through lack of regular contact or the opportunity for debrief after managing a challenging incident.

Risk Assessment

Prior to an activity

In the case of staff who regularly work with service users alone, whether on The Kelly Foundation property or in another place it will not be necessary to conduct a specific risk assessment for every service user. The expectation is that, under normal circumstances, staff should refer to the service users individual assessment prior to planning any activity and discuss with a member of the Management Team.

Only in circumstances where the level of risk to staff is significantly different to that identified within the service users individual risk assessment should an additional/specific risk assessment be undertaken. For example, where there is evidence that a service user presents a greater risk or there is a significantly greater risk because of the particular area that a member of staff is required to visit; then an additional/specific risk assessment should be undertaken.

There will be certain scenarios and activities that can be classified through a risk assessment as low-risk – for example, staff undertaking office work during normal daytime hours.

The following factors should be considered during the risk assessment process:

- type of incident risk, for example, physical assault/theft of property or equipment)
- working conditions: normal, abnormal and hazardous conditions, such as dangerous steps, unhygienic or isolated conditions, poor lighting
- staff delivering unwelcome information or bad news: whether they have received suitable and sufficient training to deliver sensitive or bad news and defuse potentially violent situations
- the possibility of an increased risk of violence from service users due to a disability, alcohol or drug misuse, medical condition or mental health condition and the risk of violence from their carers or relatives
- working in or travelling between certain environments or settings
- lone workers carrying equipment that makes them a target for theft or makes them less able to protect themselves; and
- evaluation of capability to undertake lone working – for example, being inexperienced or pregnant, or having a disability.

During an activity – Dynamic Risk Assessment

Dynamic risk assessment is a term used when the situation in which risk arises changes and consists of on the spot decision making. Lone workers should be able to recognise the risks presented by those who are under the influence of alcohol/drugs or are confused, are wanting to discuss personal or sensitive matters, or where animals may be present.

Being alert to these warning signs will allow the lone worker to consider all the facts to make a personal risk assessment and, therefore, a judgement as to the best course of action (for example, to continue with their work or to withdraw). At no point should the lone worker place themselves, their colleagues or their service users at risk or in danger.

However, dynamic risk assessment must not be seen as a substitute for the systematic assessment of risk arising out of activities undertaken by The Kelly Foundation staff. In all circumstances, controls must be put in place where there is reasonable likelihood that the health or safety of staff may be at risk.

Reporting incidents and near misses

There are established procedures for dealing with assaults, threats of violence or other incidents. All staff must familiarise themselves with these procedures.

Key points are:

- all accidents or incidents including verbal abuse, racial abuse, threats, and aggressive behaviour, inappropriate behaviour/language or violence should be reported immediately to a member of the Management Team via telephone with a back up file note.
- Where appropriate, the member of the Management Team, after consulting the staff member should contact the Police to report the incident.
- A de-briefing should be made available to the staff member as soon as is practicable. Depending on the location and time of the incident it may be necessary to hold a short immediate debrief with a colleague before ensuring that a comprehensive debrief takes place with the Management Team at the next possible opportunity.
- The Management team and staff member should discuss any need for continued support/counselling which can be arranged
- An investigation of the event should take place as soon as possible to see if protective action should be taken. This should be done jointly with other partnership agencies if it is appropriate.
- A factual record of the event should be made on the service user staff file. Consideration should be given to putting a warning message on the file.
- Risk assessments must be reviewed after an incident or near miss.
- Incidents/near misses should be monitored at a local level to identify trends.

Monitoring & review

The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process. Lone working and risk assessment will be regular agenda items for team meetings. Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with a member of the Management Team or with the whole team, as appropriate. The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

Appendix 1 – Signing sheet

This is to confirm that I have read the Lone Working Policy version 1.1

I understand my responsibilities within this policy.

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

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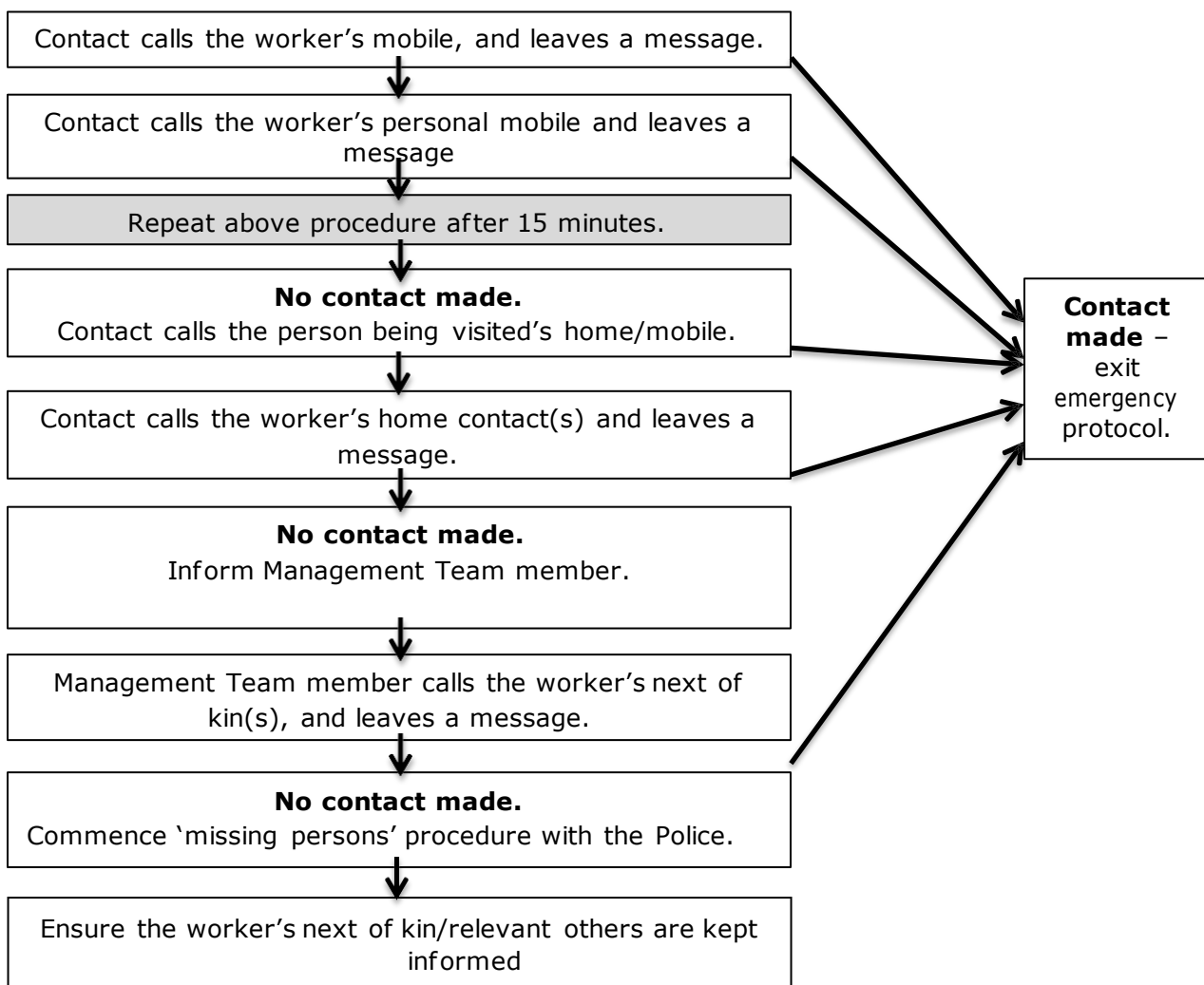
Appendix 2 - Example staff protocol in case of emergency

This is provided as an example and each staff member should make sure that they create a plan that meets their own needs.

All staff will have their appointments recorded in the office diary – to include a location, purpose of the meeting, case identifier if relevant, and start and finish times.

This protocol covers two main scenarios:

1. A member of staff does not appear for an expected appointment:
 - a. In this situation the member of staff who becomes aware of this, becomes the contact and is responsible for alerting the Management Team and initiating the protocol
2. A member of staff is undertaking a visit that has significantly higher level of risk
 - a. In this situation, as part of the risk assessment and planning a contact will be identified who takes responsibility for initiating the protocol if the worker does not check in as agreed.



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Appendix 3 – Example lone working risk assessment/ checklist

This is provided as an example and is not exhaustive. Each staff member should make sure that they have an assessment or checklist that meets their own needs, date & time of visit, people being visited and purpose:

Situation/ People being visited	√	Notes/ further actions agreed/ planning
Are there any warnings (or known previous behaviours) on file?		
Specific guidelines relating to known behaviours?		
Are current circumstances particularly stressful?		
Is the nature of the visit possible to be a negative experience?		
Will others be present?		
Are there pets to consider?		
Environment		
How safe is the location?		
Transport is arranged (e.g. car has enough fuel)		
Route & parking are known/ arranged		
Mobile phone charged		
Contingency		
Diary up to date with details of visit in		
Contact details up to date		
In the event of a challenging visit consider arranging a contact to check in with afterwards		