



**reconstruct**

# **Lone Working Policy**

## Policy Statement

- Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 it is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or minimise risk.
- The CEO and Directors of the company has overall responsibility for the safety of those who work on behalf of the organisation.
- Reconstructs IV and Advocacy Service Manager and the service Co-ordinators have a responsibility to undertake risk assessments with staff and volunteers who may be at risk from lone working and to put in place safe working practices that take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies. (See Health & Safety Policy & Procedure and Risk Assessment Policy & Procedure).
- Employees and volunteers have responsibilities to follow guidance given and agreements made with Reconstruct and to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work or role. They must also co-operate with Reconstruct in meeting our legal obligations by attending training and supervision as well as adhere to company Policies and Procedures.
- Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Examples of lone working within Reconstruct are given below.
- A staff member working alone in an office or other venue;
- Anyone who works at home on a regular basis;
- People working outside normal hours;
- A staff member/volunteer who is required to travel alone to and from a fixed base to another place of work or to meetings etc.
- Working practices that may require staff to work one to one with children and young people;
- Potential Risks of working alone;
- Risks from members of the public nearby;
- Requirement to lock up when leaving a building;
- Poorly lit entrance/exits and car parks;
- Risks caused by the behaviour of a child or young person you are working with;
- Being injured or taken ill whilst working alone;
- Your young person becoming ill or distressed.

## Procedure

- Staff working in offices or other venues alone should:
- Notify your line manager if you are intending to work 'out of normal office hours' in the office or other community venue;
- Familiarise yourself with the layout of the building/floor. Ensure you have keys. Lock all doors that allow direct access to the building/floor/office you are working in;
- Familiarise yourself with the Fire Safety Procedures and identify escape routes;
- Do not answer the door to unexpected visitors, e.g. in the case of contractors, ask for identification and don't let them in until you have checked it out if you are at all unsure;
- Do not use lonely exit routes or lifts if there are safer alternatives;
- If possible, avoid parking your car in badly lit areas, move it nearer to the place you exit the building if possible;
- Carry a torch and personal alarm if working late;
- Notify people at home when you intend leaving work and what time to expect you home;
- Leave contact numbers at home so that the line manager can be contacted if there are concerns for your safety;
- Should you feel ill whilst working alone – seek help immediately – dial 999 if necessary;
- If you are based in another agency premises/community organisation check out their procedures for lone working and personal safety;

- If there is a Whiteboard system in operation in your office – use it – leave a note to let people know if and when you can be expected back.
- Volunteers and staff working out and about in the community with a child or young person should:
  - Ensure someone knows where you are and when to expect you back;
  - Make sure you have coordinators number and Reconstruct emergency numbers;
  - Check out the area and venue and prepare for the visit beforehand;
  - Meet unfamiliar people in a public place;
  - Ensure you have a risk assessment from your line manager regarding any potential problems when visiting clients;
  - If the situation feels unsafe - leave;
  - Always carry a charged mobile phone.

## Driving

- Plan your route in advance and have a map handy so you don't have to ask directions. Allow yourself plenty of time to travel;
- Always wear your seat belt when driving;
- Tell people your destination and what time you expect to arrive and return;
- Check your fuel, oil and tyres and think through what you would do if you had to change a tyre, particularly when making a long journey;
- Check your breakdown organisation membership is up to date and keep your card handy;
- Carry a basic survival kit, particularly when travelling in rural and isolated areas – e.g. blanket, torch, hazard triangle, bottled water, first aid kit and some loose change and a mobile phone;
- Do not keep your registration, MOT, or insurance documentation in the car; it could help a thief to sell your car;
- Do not keep valuable items on view within the car (laptops and other equipment);
- Never pick up hitch-hikers;
- Only DBS/police checked staff should transport children and young people (under 18) to and from venues. If employees/volunteers need to use private cars to transport young people, any claims must be covered by the driver's own insurance. Their insurance policy must include a clause that allows the vehicle to be used for business purposes. Usually most insurers will extend policies for no extra charge;
- When transporting children and young people in cars make sure you use appropriate car seats and seat belts for their size.

## If your Car Breaks Down

- Pull off the road as far as you can and switch on your hazard warning lights;
- Try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car or get out. Take account of how isolated you are and the time of day. If you have to start out for assistance, make a note of the surroundings, names of streets or landmarks, so you can easily relocate your car;
- Call your breakdown organisation or the police;
- Note the road name or any landmarks;
- If you breakdown in a rural isolated area and you cannot get a signal on your mobile phone, then stay inside the car, lock the door and display a 'HELP' notice in the window;
- If someone stops to offer help, roll down the window just enough to ask them to contact the recovery service or the police;
- Never accept a lift from a stranger.

## **Parking**

- Park your car in a well lit area – especially if you intend returning to it after dark. If possible ask someone you know to accompany you to the car;
- If this is not possible carry a small torch and personal alarm with you.

## **Buildings/Meetings at Unfamiliar Venues**

- Report to reception on arrival and always sign in and out of the building;
- Ask the receptionist to notify the person you are meeting.

## **Isolated Locations/Unfamiliar People**

- Avoid meetings in isolated locations; suggest a public place to meet such as a coffee bar etc.
- If you have concerns notify office based staff when you arrive and leave;
- If the person or the place feels unsafe - leave;
- Avoid walking alone at night.

## **Travelling by Public Transport**

- Before starting a journey on a train or bus, check the timetable for departure and arrival times;
- Try to travel at times when there are likely to be more people around, avoid travelling late at night. If this cannot be avoided, sit near the bus driver or in a carriage with other people;
- If using public transport with a child or a young person keep them close to you at all times and make an arrangement around what to do should you become separated;
- Make sure you have the means of contacting someone to let them know if your train or bus is cancelled or late. (Mobile phone/phone card);
- If you need to take a taxi/mini cab – use a reputable firm. Seek advice and telephone numbers before leaving for your destination.

## **Travelling by Bicycle**

- Make sure your bike is in good working order and well maintained;
- Make sure you have appropriate safety gear e.g. helmet, reflective clothing, lights;
- Secure your bike in a well lit public place;
- If travelling by bicycle with a young person, make sure you only use cycle paths and that the young person has appropriate safety gear and a safe bike.

## **Overnight Stays for staff**

- Book accommodation in advance through the company
- Let someone know where you will be staying and contact them on arrival;
- If you are unhappy about the location of your room ask for a replacement as soon as possible;
- Check all security locks on doors and windows and familiarise yourself with the fire exits;
- Don't answer your room door without first putting the deadlock or chain on;
- Do not give your room number when you answer the room phone;
- Keep all valuables with you or in the hotel safe;
- If you hear any disturbance, stay in your room and telephone for help.

## **Planning & Communication**

- Follow risk assessment advice given to you by your coordinator;
- Update us with any changes or new information;
- If in doubt or you have any concerns about risks to your safety or that of a child or young person contact us immediately;
- The company would NEVER expect you to take risks on our behalf and are committed to protecting your well being and safety at all times, including your emotional well being;
- By thinking things through and planning for the unexpected it will help you to remain confident when faced with an emergency;
- Communicate your whereabouts – this is crucial – don't forget to tell someone about your plans.

## **Working in Someone's Home**

- Always carry your company ID badge;
- Have a charged mobile phone with your emergency numbers saved;
- Do not enter the house if the appropriate person is not available;
- If anyone seems drunk, aggressive or behaving suspiciously, do not enter;
- Leave details of the appointment with a named person in the main office/line manager;
- Operate a check in system with a named person in the main office. If the member of staff does not phone in or return by a certain time the named person will take suitable action;
- If at any time the member of staff feels threatened, they should make their excuses and leave as quickly as possible.

## **Guidelines to Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour**

- Be aware of any delicate issues involved with discussions or interviews. i.e. try to have as much background knowledge before the interview;
- Do not underestimate the importance of body language. Avoid an aggressive stance. Crossed arms, hands on hips or raised hands will challenge and confront;
- Talk yourself out of problems? placate rather than provoke;
- Do not turn your back on someone who is behaving aggressively;
- If someone is becoming aggressive with you try to encourage them into an open space (e.g. suggest that you go outside to continue the conversation);
- Stay calm, speak gently and slowly;
- Do not be enticed into an argument;
- Keep your distance;
- Never try to touch someone who is angry – this will not calm the situation;
- Keep your eye on potential escape routes;
- Try to get away as quickly as possible.

## **Working Alone with Children & Young People**

All work with children and young people needs to be planned. Follow the risk assessment advice given to you by your coordinator and remember that the safety of your young person and yourself is paramount at all times. The company does not expect you to put yourself at any risk whilst carrying out your role for us. We would remind you to follow our Lone Worker Guidance and to always –

- Dress and wear shoes appropriate to the situation
- Always carry a fully charged mobile phone with relevant emergency numbers.
- Check all activities with your coordinator beforehand and when undertaking activities always follow the relevant safety guidance and use the proper, safe equipment.
- If it feels dangerous or unsafe, don't do it.
- Trust your instinct and do not go anywhere that feels or is unsafe for you or the child.
- Be aware of members of the public and any potential risks they might pose.
- Always meet with your young person in public spaces
- Make sure someone knows where you are going and when to expect you back.
- Make sure you share any new information that may affect our risk assessment with your coordinator as soon as you become aware of it.
- Use strategies of de-escalation should your young person become agitated or aggressive.
- Be mindful of your verbal and body language if your young person or a member of the public should pose a threat in any way.
- Remember safety first- if you feel under threat -leave

### **If you are in immediate danger or feel unsafe**

If you are in immediate danger and it is safe to do, so call 999 and ask for the police.

The company has a Scarlet policy as where if you ring your line manager, or a colleague and say 'Is Scarlet available?' the person receiving the call is instantly alerted to there being an emergency situation.

The recipient of the call will remain calm and will ask closed questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'. As time can be short, the following are important . 'Do you need me to call the police? Do you need another member of staff to join you? Have you been threatened? Are you still at....? Are you still with?

It is important for all workers to ensure their work calendars are up to date with full details of the visits they are undertaking so we know where they are at all times. Calendars must be shared with Reconstruct coordinators and managers.

### **Reporting an Incident**

It is important to report any incident that occurs to you, whether it be aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident to your line manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify any additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening to somebody else. If you are able to make a recording of the incident, even if only in the form of some notes, as soon after the incident has occurred as you can. Make a note of time, dates and witnesses. Contact your coordinator as soon as possible after any incident and they will help you to complete an incident form (see Workers Handbook) and make arrangements to offer you any appropriate support.

