

Lone Working Policy

Effective Date: 22 October 2018

Review Date: October 2023*

* This policy may be revised sooner if there is a change in working premises, conditions or laws directly affecting this policy.

Lone Working Policy

Procedures and Guidelines

This policy is written for all staff and volunteers employed by Healthwatch Reading and includes all those working for Reading Voice, which managed by Healthwatch Reading.

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. This includes people who are office-based working on their own, people working separately from others, e.g. in group settings, or on home-visits; people who work outside normal office hours and people who work at home.

So far as reasonably practicable, Healthwatch Reading will ensure that employees and volunteers, who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time, are protected from risks to their health and safety.

Due to the nature of the work carried out by Healthwatch Reading it is possible that any member of staff or volunteer could be exposed to the dangers of lone working. Hence, it is essential that all members of staff and volunteers are aware of the dangers.

Healthwatch Reading will ensure that lone workers:

- Have full knowledge of the risks to which they are being exposed.
- Can record their whereabouts and what they are doing to inform their colleagues and supervisor.
- Know what to do if something goes wrong.
- Have appropriate support and supervision.

As the employer, Healthwatch Reading, has the main responsibility for protecting the health and safety of lone workers, but lone workers must help the employer to fulfil this duty by:

- Taking reasonable care to look after their own health and safety.
- Plan travel to minimise risk e.g. avoidance of travel in the dark if possible, preparing routes, parking in well-lit areas.
- Safeguarding the health and safety of other people affected by their work.
- Co-operating with their employer's health and safety procedures.

The following guidelines will outline the risks identified for lone workers and the control measures put in place to minimise these risks. Control measures may involve training, instruction, back up, supervision and protective equipment.

A. Procedures for Staff working from the Office

Most staff working for Healthwatch Reading, work their hours flexibly and often work away from the office in the community. This means that the number of staff working in the office can vary and, in some cases, involve one person being on their own. To ensure the safety of office-based staff the following procedures should be followed:

4. Care will be taken always when allowing access to the building for visitors. The main door to the third floor of the library should be kept locked if working alone and no other members of the Elevate Hub Teams are present. All staff working from the office are provided with the code for entry to the building and the third floor.
 - a. The third-floor door should not be unlocked after hours for anyone other than staff, volunteers or expected visitors.
 - b. The main entrance to the building is opened via an intercom system out of hours, which allows visitors entering the building to be screened. Upon answering the intercom system, staff should only allow access to the building via the intercom if the visitor is expected, i.e. for a meeting or is familiar to them, e.g. a volunteer. If a member of staff is alone in the office, then the person waiting should be asked to ring and make an appointment for another time.
 - c. In the case of meeting with vulnerable clients, every effort should be made to hold these meetings in the Holybrook room with a member of the Healthwatch Reading Team present in the office.
1. At no time will staff indicate that they are alone in the workplace, or are ever likely to work alone, either via the intercom, by phone or by email.
2. Staff must disclose any medical condition, which might increase the risk to their personal safety if they work alone. In this case, their line manager will put in place procedures or precautions to ensure that these risks are minimised.
3. If a member of staff is concerned about their personal safety in any way, they must report this to their line manager, so that appropriate action can be taken. If staff feel they are in immediate danger they should call the police.
4. Staff should report all incidents/accidents to their line manager at the first opportunity. Appropriate action can then be taken, and future risks can be assessed and minimised.
5. In the event of violent behaviour or threats of violence being made to any member of staff the following procedure must be followed:
 - a. Details should be entered in the accident/incident book and reported immediately to their line manager. (The Accident/Incident Book is in the main office).
 - b. An investigation of any incidents of violence or threats of violence to staff and volunteers will take place with their support.
 - c. Any further control measures identified by the investigation will be introduced, after consultation with staff.

B. Procedures for Staff working out of the Office

Home Visits

Being in someone's home creates another area of potential danger to personal safety. To reduce the risks the following procedures should be followed:

1. All home visits must be logged in the work calendar, stating the full name, address and contact details of the person you are visiting, the time of the visit and when it is expected to end. For those advocates who cannot access the work

calendar an email with the details of the visit is to be sent to the Advocacy Services Manager and info@healthwatchreading.co.uk in advance of the visit.

2. All potential volunteers must be entered onto the appropriate potential volunteer database prior to a visit with full address and contact details.
3. Wherever possible home-visits should take place during office hours, 9 am - 4 pm and all staff should ring, text or call into the office upon completion of each visit for the day and before 4pm. Ensure that someone in the office is aware of the home visit taking place and knows to expect your call, text etc on completion. Anyone who has not been heard from within 30 minutes of the expected completion time of the visit will be called either at home or on their mobile to check they are safe. Any concerns will be reported to the line manager.
4. If it is not possible for visits to be done during office hours then you need to follow the procedures below, either:
 - a. Inform your line manager or other member of staff of the meeting, who you are meeting, where and what time. An appropriate system then needs to be arranged to notify them when you have completed the visit, e.g. a text or phone call.
 - b. Reading Voice Advocates should inform the Advocacy Services Manager by telephone on 07437 013335. If the Advocacy Service Manager is on annual leave, then they must inform the office and will be notified of the staff member on-call that evening.
 - c. If it is felt to be appropriate, a family member or friend can be given the contact details of the line manager to be kept in case they need to raise the alarm at any time or are concerned about your whereabouts.
 - d. Reading Voice Advocates who work freelance should switch off their mobile phones at 8pm each evening and leave an appropriate voice message for any calls outside of these hours.
5. Staff should always be aware of the potential dangers when visiting someone at home. If a potentially dangerous situation seems to be developing, leave as quickly as possible, your safety should be your priority. For instance, you should not attempt to intervene in a domestic conflict.
6. Staff should be assertive about any personal safety issues arising in someone's home and ask for their co-operation if necessary. For example:
 - a. Asking them to keep a dog in another room during your visit.
 - b. Sitting in the seat nearest to the exit.
 - c. Asking to be seen downstairs, if they request you go upstairs.
 - d. Telling them you will return another time, if there are people in the house you are unsure of.
7. Staff should report all incidents/accidents to their line manager at the first opportunity. Appropriate action can then be taken, and future risks can be assessed and minimised.
8. In the event of violent behaviour or threats of violence being made to any member of staff the following procedure must be followed:
 - a. Details should be entered in the accident/incident book and reported immediately to the line manager.

- b. The line manager will investigate any incidents of violence or threats of violence to staff and volunteers with their support.
 - c. Any further control measures identified by the investigation will be introduced, after consultation with staff.
 - d. If a child or vulnerable adult was involved in the incident, the safeguarding procedures should be followed.
 - e. Consider, with your line manager, the feasibility of any continued contact with this person.
9. If a member of staff feels in immediate danger they should not hesitate to call the police.
 10. Staff should always take a common-sense approach and pay attention to gut reaction.
 11. Staff must take their mobile phone with them on home-visits and keep this switched on.
 12. Personal alarms can be obtained on request.
 13. No member of staff or volunteer under the age of 18 should home-visit alone.

Volunteers

It is not recommended that volunteers visit someone at home, unless that person has already been visited by a member of staff and the situation has been risk assessed. In the instance that a volunteer is requested to do a home-visit, they should follow the same procedures as staff.

C. Volunteers and staff travelling in connection with Healthwatch Business

Travelling in connection with Healthwatch business is an area of potential risk to personal safety. It is important that staff and volunteers:

1. Read the Drivers Handbook
2. Ensure someone knows and can easily determine their whereabouts and their expected time of return to home or office.
3. Try to use 'known' travel routes where possible, avoiding isolated areas if they can.
4. Keep activities confined to daylight hours wherever possible.
5. Stay alert and get help as quickly as possible if concerns about safety develop. Lock car doors and drive to a police station or garage forecourt. Do not leave the car unless necessary. Contact the police if there is a continued danger.
6. All Healthwatch staff and volunteers must not use their mobile phones whilst driving. Hands-free mobiles are not recommended as these can also cause distraction.
7. If on foot, try to be as visible as possible. Walk where it is well lit and populated. Be aware of possible places of safety to head for if trouble develops. Personal attack alarms are available if requested.
8. Keep body language confident and assertive - move purposefully and avoid heroics. Remember to put your personal safety first.

9. Accidents that happen during Healthwatch time should be reported and noted in the accident/incident book.
10. All staff and volunteers should ensure they are medically fit to drive. An employee or volunteer returning from an illness or operation should act upon the advice given by their doctor and if advised not to drive to heed this advice.
11. Within work time no member of staff or volunteer should drive in conditions which put them at risk of an accident, e.g. heavy snow, floods, ice or thick fog. If in any doubt as to whether to drive in poor conditions guidance can be sought from the office following directive from their line manager.

Transporting passengers

There may be occasions when you will need to transport passengers in connection with Healthwatch business. This is most likely to be a Healthwatch volunteer (in other instances please speak to your line manager).

All volunteers will be asked to:

- Complete an application form.
- Declare any criminal convictions, and in addition complete a DBS check where appropriate to the role.
- Meet with a member of Healthwatch staff for an interview.
- Attend an induction and training sessions.

These steps must be taken before any volunteering activity takes place for Healthwatch, and before volunteers are transported as passengers.

Volunteers will be encouraged to use their own vehicle or public transport whenever possible.

Young People under 16 years of age, must only be transported by staff or volunteers who have a current enhanced DBS check, and parental consent must be obtained. It is advised that two people accompany a young person in the vehicle.

D. General Guidance for all Staff

1. All members of staff regardless of their role should ensure they complete the work calendar clearly detailing the following:
 - a. Time expected in the office and time expected to leave the office.
 - b. Any activities planned outside the office, e.g. home-visits, meetings, working at home, and group activities and their location.
 - c. How you can be contacted, if not by mobile phone.
 - d. Home-visits - following guidance outlined above.
2. Staff should access training to raise their awareness of potential risks associated with their role and how these can be minimised.
3. Staff should also understand when and where to seek guidance or assistance from others.
4. If a member of staff is called out to the office because the alarm has been activated, they should not attend the premises alone. If staff are suspicious for

any reason when called to the property they should not enter the premises but should contact the police.

This policy was revised and adopted by Healthwatch Reading Trustees on 22nd October 2018.

Signed

Name

Designation