



Lone working Policy

Sen Talk CIC, as the Employer has the responsibility for the health, safety and welfare at work of all its staff (refer to The Health & Safety at Work Act, 1974). There may be occasions when employees are working outside of the office (for example, home visits) or working out of hours within our premises. It is our duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary to provide a safe working environment. Employees also have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves.

This policy covers all staff and volunteers at Sen Talk.

The policy is endorsed by the Board of Trustees and will be reviewed annually to make sure it remains relevant and appropriate to the needs of Sen Talk and its users/members.

This Lone Working Policy is freely accessible to all. This means that Sen Talk will share copies of this policy with staff and volunteers as part of their induction and training. All Sen Talks' policies will appear on its website. Hard copies of this policy will be available upon request.

1. Who are Lone Workers?

Individuals are alone at work when they are on their own, they cannot be seen or heard by another worker, cannot expect a visit from another worker for some time and/or where assistance is not readily available when needed. Lone workers are those who work by themselves in isolation from other workers, without close or direct supervision.

Some examples of Lone Workers in the context of Sen Talk's work include:

- Only one person working alone on the premises
- Only one person working alone on the premises outside of normal hours
- Staff working outside of the premises (e.g. home visits)
- Working in premises that are not within our building

2. How do we assess and control the risks of lone working?

The organisation needs to investigate the potential hazards faced by lone workers, assess the risks involved and ensure that measures are in place to control or avoid such risks.

We will do this by:

- Involving staff when undertaking the required risk assessment – this will ensure that all relevant hazards are identified, and appropriate and proportionate measures are chosen. When a risk assessment shows it is not possible for the work to be conducted safely by a lone worker then that risk needs to be addressed by making arrangements to provide help or back-up
- Instruction, training, supervision
- Review risk assessments annually

Some factors to be considered in assessing the risk:

Risk assessments for site-based lone workers should include:

- Safe entry and exit
- Location, e.g. remoteness, transport, parking
- Risk of violence e.g. history of violence from the public or the client
- staff of a particular gender being at particular risk
- Safety of equipment for individual use
- Channels of communication in an emergency
- Site security
- Security arrangements i.e. alarm systems and response to personal alarms
- Level and adequacy of on/off site supervision

Risk assessments for mobile lone workers should include:

- Premises risk assessment where applicable
- Arrangements for home visits including consideration of alternatives
- Travelling between appointments
- Reporting and recording arrangements
- Communication and traceability
- Personal safety and security

3. Training and Support

Training and support are particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in uncertain situations. Training may also be crucial in enabling people to be safe and cope in unexpected circumstances and with potential exposure to violence and aggression. Lone workers are unable to ask more experienced colleagues for help, so extra training may be appropriate. Sen Talk will provide training and support when necessary.

Do talk to your Project Manager about any aspect of lone working you may have.

4. Home Visiting Guidelines

When carrying out home visits, your own personal safety must be your first priority. Although it is impossible to say what you should do in every situation, these notes are a guide to help your judgment when working with users in their homes.

Remember – when in doubt – get out!

Before you go:

- Check your journey using google maps or TFL journey planner.
- Avoid areas that are known to be higher risk for your journey for example short cuts along isolated areas.
- If it is a new referral, ask the referrer if there are any risks to consider on a home visit. If there are discuss these with your line manager before arranging the visit to ensure these are minimised.
- Write down the following in your online diary: the user's name and address, and the time and date of the visit – block out the estimated time the visit will take.
- Ideally first visits to new members should be undertaken in the morning.
- Ensure you take your work mobile phone with you, that it is charged and that it has colleague contact numbers stored in it.
- Have a designated colleague that you let know you are leaving for a home visit and plan to be back – for example your project manager and team members.

Who should go:

- Consider whether two people should go, for example on a first visit, if you have any reservations or if there are any specific known risks.

Dress and demeanour:

- Clothing and footwear need to be suitable and practical.
- Do not wear excessive amounts of jewellery or carry unnecessary valuables.
- Always carry some form of work identification.
- Be aware of your surroundings when using your mobile phone publicly.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Be confident and purposeful.

Timing:

- Be punctual – late or early arrival (even by just a few minutes) can be upsetting to the user.
- If you are unavoidably delayed, try to get a message to the user with an estimated time of arrival.
- On arrival, explain and reassure.

During the visit:

- Do not enter if you feel unsure or uncomfortable. Make an excuse (i.e. you forgot to pay for parking or left something in the office, etc) and leave.
- As you enter, ask the user to lead the way so you are behind them, not the other way around. They know where they are going, so it makes sense.
- Find out if there is anyone else in the property. If so, try to find out who they are and what their relationship is to the user.
- Ideally do not accept refreshments. Use a polite “no thank you I have just had a drink” for example.
- If at all possible, sit so that you have a clear exit to the door and the user is not between you and it. Always be prepared and leave immediately.
- Put your mobile phone on vibrate so it doesn’t disturb the interview.
- Check with users what name they would like you to call them.
- You will need to make a few introductory remarks to break the ice but try to avoid being side-tracked in lengthy social pleasantries. As when meeting someone in the office, remember the purpose of the visit and come back to this during the conversation.
- Remind the user that everything they tell you will be treated as confidence, unless you have a duty to report it (for example safeguarding issues).
- If you do not know the answers to a question, tell the user that you will find out back at the office. Avoid making promises – ‘we will try’ is more realistic than ‘we will’. Do not guess or raise the user’s hopes unrealistically.
- Never give money nor accept money from them. They are welcome to make a donation to Sen Talk and will be issued a receipt from Finance.
- Do not give any information that makes you personally identifiable –for example your address or personal telephone number. Do not check personal apps or online profiles during the visit.
- If at any time you feel you should leave then make a polite but decisive exit – for example “I had not realised the time”, “I have been asked to attend another meeting”, “I forgot I have to go to so-and-so”

The end of the visit:

- When you leave, make sure to take all your belongings.
- Return to the office or telephone/text by the time you indicated to your designated colleague.
- If you are leaving to attend another home visit home call/text your designated person to ensure they know you have finished the visit and are moving onto the next one.
- If you are leaving a visit and going home call/text your designated person to ensure they know you have finished the visit and are not returning to work.
- If you are concerned about anything arising from the visit, tell your manager – immediately if necessary, in relation to Safeguarding issues.
- If there is a real emergency – your safety is the priority – get out and then dial 999 – then update your manager/designated person as soon as possible.

If we do not hear from you:

- The person you designated will ring you to check you are safe. If you do not answer your work mobile, they will then try your personal numbers.
- If you answer the call but are not safe please ask them to “rebook my appointment with Mr Pink” this will inform them you need immediate help and the police will be called.
- If this does not work the designated person will report the issue to their line manager and call the number for the home, you are visiting.
- If they are still concerned about your safety the designated person/their manager will call 999 for police assistance.

One-to-One working with young people & vulnerable adults

5. Introduction

There may be occasions when employees are working with young people or vulnerable adults in a one-to-one capacity. It is our duty to assess risks to one-to-one workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. Staff have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

In order to safeguard staff and clients and to comply with Sen Talks’ insurance the following procedures must be adhered to when working one-to-one with a young person or vulnerable adult:

6. One-to-One work with young people under 18 and vulnerable adults

- One-to-one sessional work must only be carried out by qualified staff employed with a one-to-one remit as part of their role.
- Support workers may on occasion have one-to-one *conversations* with group members - this must always be in the main group room where other staff and group members can see both parties.
- Group members will not be permitted to enter the group room until at least 2 members of staff/volunteers are present.

7. One-to-One Sessional work

This may be carried out in a number of different venues / locations:

- Venues provided by a referring agency who have requested one-to-one work, such as in a college, school, council department etc. Staff must request a 'safe' space to carry out the one-to-one session, which is visible to the referring agency, such as an interview room with a window, a corner space in a larger room or a room with CCTV.
- In the client's home. Home visits must only be carried out if adult household members are present or 2 staff are attending.
- Public settings, such as meeting in a shopping centre, or at the train station.

If you are doing a home visit on your own:

- a) Complete the family details including address and phone number on your calendar.
- b) Let your manager know you are doing the visit and what time you expect to start and finish (approx).

If your manager is not available arrange for a colleague to provide cover.

Text your colleague when you arrive at the property. REMEMBER TO TEXT OUT.

If you are covering a home visit and you do not hear from your colleague:

- a) Ring them to check they are safe – 1. Work mobile 2. Home mobile 3. Emergency contact no.
- b) Ring the family to see if your colleague is still there / when they last saw them
- c) If in doubt about your colleague's safety ring the police.