



Guide to Safe Lone Working

In this guide “Lone Worker” refers to staff or volunteers carrying out their role in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision such as in clients’ homes or outside core working hours.

1. Introduction

Many members of staff and volunteers are required to work on their own as part of their role. Nantwich Buddies will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff and volunteers who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety.

2. Responsibilities

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for the communication of these guidelines. Staff and volunteers are responsible for informing the Volunteer Coordinator of any concerns about working alone.

All members of staff and volunteers must comply with any advice, procedures or working practice introduced to minimise the risks identified regarding working alone.

3. Safe Systems of Work

When staff and volunteers are required to work alone the following specifics should be considered:

- a) Required ability of staff and volunteers, for example: professional training; experience; medical fitness/physical capability.
- b) Means of communication, for example: mobile telephone ownership.
- c) Emergency procedures, for example: means of summoning help; means of raising alarm.
- d) Supervision for new members of staff and volunteers
- e) Defined working limits: clear procedures should be established as to the limit of what can and cannot be done. Clearly this cannot be defined in general terms, but the general precautionary principle of ‘if in doubt ask your line manager/Volunteer Coordinator’ should be observed.

4. Summary

Working alone can bring additional risks to a work activity. Nantwich Buddies has developed these good practice guidelines to control risk and protect staff and volunteers. All those who are required to work alone should familiarise themselves with the guidelines and follow them. Apart from ensuring the lone worker is capable of performing the tasks associated with their role without supervision, the other most important factors to be certain of are:

- a) The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risk to which they may be exposed.
- b) All available information on clients is reviewed before visiting.
- c) The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.
- d) A lone worker system is being utilised so that someone knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and the length of time that he/she will be working alone.

5. Lone Working Precautions

Each service that requires staff and volunteers to work alone requires a specific Lone Working Risk Assessment and the provision of Good Practice Guidelines (see attached) relating to the specific work area in terms of service users and location.

Risk Assessments and precautionary measures should take account of:

- Remoteness of the place visited
- Means of travel
- Potential communication problems
- Access to telephones or provision of mobile phones and alarms
- Emergency contact arrangements
- Medical conditions which might make a person unsuitable for lone working
- Providing and implementing safe systems of work
- Assessment of manual handling activities and suitable training

Staff and volunteers new to the role may need to be accompanied during their initial visits.

If the nature of the tasks change in any way a new risk assessment may need to be carried out. Lone workers must follow good working practices and safe systems of work.

Control measures will be identified by risk assessment and will include:

- All staff and volunteers working alone are to carry and use a mobile phone
- The Volunteer Coordinator must ensure that lone workers' emergency contact details are available and up to date.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Lone Visits - Before the visit

The majority of new referrals are received by Nantwich Buddies from GP Surgeries, Cheshire East Adult Social Care Team or other agencies such as Healthbox or Age UK. These organisations will know the circumstances of the clients being referred.

- For each referral, the Volunteer Coordinator, or similar nominated person, will complete a Risk Assessment prior to a member of staff or volunteer visiting any client. This will usually be completed by phone.
- All the information gathered from the referring organisation and the verbal Risk Assessment will be passed to the volunteer prior to a visit.
- An employee/volunteer will never be asked to visit the home of a client before that employee/volunteer has had the chance to develop a rapport with the client over the phone beforehand. It is recommended that befriending phone calls take place for at least 4 weeks prior to a first home visit.
- If there are any concerns prior to a visit then the member of staff or volunteer should not make a lone visit but should arrange to be accompanied by a colleague.
- If there are any concerns or the client is a new referral, employees/volunteers can log their planned visit with the Volunteer Coordinator via WhatsApp and request a phone call from the Volunteer Coordinator during the visit.
- Ensure that you have the correct address for the person you intend to visit.
- Ensure that you have a mobile phone containing emergency contact numbers within easy reach.
- Ensure that your phone is fully charged.

During the visit

- If on arriving the member of staff or volunteer has any concerns whatsoever about entering the property, then they should cancel the appointment using their mobile phone or call the Volunteer Coordinator and give them the telephone number to cancel the appointment.
- If the client does not answer the door after several rings, try phoning their number, check with neighbours or look through windows if safe to do so. If you have emergency contact details for the client, call them. If you still get no response call the Volunteer Coordinator.
- If this is a regular client and you have a keysafe number, alert your Volunteer Coordinator before going in and keep the phone line open. When the door is answered, look at the individual for any signs of aggression or indication that they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, say you have had an urgent call you need to deal with and leave. Call your Volunteer Coordinator immediately.
- If the client has a pet that is known to be excitable or dangerous, ask for it to be put into another room or secured during the visit.
- Put yourself in an alert frame of mind, let the client go into each room ahead of you and, where possible, keep yourself between the door and the client.
- Please remember if in doubt do not make the visit

After the visit

- Carry your keys in your hand
- Carry a torch at night
- Check the interior of your car, particularly behind the front seats before getting in
- DO NOT hang around making notes etc, drive off and stop later in a busy place
- Car alarms are effective as a warning mechanism
- Belong to a national breakdown organisation or have arrangements with local garages in the event of a breakdown
- Do not stop if flagged down at the scene of an accident; telephone the emergency services and check that it has been reported

Safety in your car

- Staff and volunteers who transport clients must ensure they have the necessary level of insurance (volunteers must inform their motor insurance company).
- Always park in the direction that you need to leave
- If you think you are being followed, go directly to the nearest Police station or another 'safe haven', e.g. shop, GP surgery
- Keep car doors locked when driving around
- Whenever possible keep to well-lit main roads – do not take short cuts down poorly lit roads unless necessary
- Where possible avoid parking in deserted, poorly lit locations or in a confined space that you may get blocked into
- Secure the vehicle when you leave it, do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle

Emergencies at the client home

- If faced with a medical emergency, then dial 999 and follow the instructions given. If unsure if it is an emergency, then dial 111 and ask for advice.
- If your client is unwell and unable to call the doctor, ask if they wish you to do so or whether they would like you to contact a family member. If they say no and you are concerned about them, contact your Volunteer Coordinator.
- If you smell gas, are aware of an electrical problem, or there is flooding, telephone the appropriate emergency number and follow the instructions given.

Working Outside Core Hours

- Ensure you tell a family member what time you expect to return home if you will be working unusual hours. If you live alone have a nominated person who you will contact.
- Have emergency contact numbers on your phone.

If you are working alone in buildings

- Park as close to the building as possible in a well-lit area – move your car closer to the front door if necessary, to minimise the risks of leaving the building on your own.

- At any time in any circumstances where you feel threatened or unsafe, you should call for assistance. You should be mindful of your own safety.

Emergency system for staff and volunteers

- There may be no prior warning signs and on entering the house the member of staff or volunteer may feel uncomfortable.
- If, at any time during the visit, you feel vulnerable, or a potentially violent or aggressive situation is developing, leave and notify your Volunteer Coordinator
- If you are unable to leave and are able to make a call then a call should be made to your Volunteer Coordinator to alert them of the situation by using the agreed code word - BUDDY. This should be done by the member of staff or volunteer apologising to the client saying that they should have called the office with some information – for example “Tell Mrs Figgins I am running late!”
- The person taking the call needs to know where the member of staff or volunteer is and when to ring, so the message should continue along the lines of “I understand that you need to deal with this urgently, so if you need to speak to me further I am with Mr/Mrs/Miss Name, of address for the next fifteen minutes”. If you wish the call to be made sooner than fifteen minutes then say you will be there for 5/10 minutes or whatever.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will call after the interval given to see if everything is all right. If you leave the client’s home before the time indicated please telephone the Volunteer Coordinator before you drive off, and advise that you are all right and everything is fine.

If a member of staff/volunteer is missing

- If the member of staff/volunteer has not returned home at the agreed time and their partner/nominated person has not been successful in contacting them the partner/nominated person should call the Volunteer Coordinator.
- If the member of staff/volunteer is no longer with the client, the Volunteer Coordinator will ascertain what time they left and how much time they would need to return home. If the member of staff/volunteer is missing for over 2 hours, the Volunteer Coordinator will ring 101 and report the circumstances of the missing member of staff/volunteer to the police. The police should be provided with the name, address, phone numbers, car registration, details of last visit, time last seen and emergency contact details.