

Lone Working Policy

Good practice and health and safety guidelines for staff and volunteers

1. Purpose of policy

Chronically Supported CIC's duty to assess and control any risks around lone working is governed by the Health and Safety at work Act 1974 (HSWA). This requires Chronically Supported CIC to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of its employees.

These guidelines should form part of an employee or volunteers' introduction to working with Chronically Supported CIC. They are intended:

- To promote good practice and safeguard the health and safety of all concerned.
- To offer staff a practical and realistic framework for assessing and reporting risk when working alone on behalf of Chronically Supported CIC.
- To provide guidance on how to prevent and reduce risks associated with situations where a member of staff or volunteer is working alone.
- To provide guidance on what action to take in the event of concerns being raised regarding the personal safety of a member of staff or volunteer.
- To show procedures for dealing with an emergency out of office hours.
- To communicate recommendations on new technology such as client's filming staff as a record of meeting.

2. Before a lone working visit/situation

- Chronically Supported CIC only initiates contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Clients will have advance notice of any visit (unless the service co-ordinator agrees that this is not necessary). Initial visits to a new client will always be arranged with them, in advance and where possible by a director.
- The reason for the visit, the client's home circumstances, and an assessment of risk and hazards will be given to the employee or volunteer visitor wherever possible.
- There are some limited situations where a director may not have made an initial visit. The employee or volunteer will be told when no initial visit has occurred so that they can be aware that the information they are given may not be comprehensive. Where an initial visit has not been possible, the director will take basic information over the phone, e.g. who lives in the house, any family/neighbours/regular visitors, any pets (especially large dogs), any health and safety hazards, parking.
- Employees and volunteers should be clear about the limits of their "helping" relationship following discussion with their line manager and with regard to the principles of their boundary training.

- If an employee or volunteer anticipates that a home visit may be difficult, then they should talk it over with their line manager before going. It may be that going with another staff member is the best available option or taking detailed notes of the interaction and feeding back to the director.
- Employees and volunteers should remember to take their ID card to any meeting with a client, along with their mobile phone and the client's emergency contact information, if known.

If an employee or volunteer has any reason to be concerned for their own or anyone else's safety, these concerns should be reported to the director without delay.

3. Keeping Safe

The general rules are:

- Employees and volunteers should always put their own safety first.
- Directors, employees and volunteers should take reasonable steps to assure themselves that it is safe to make a solo visit to a new client. If there are any concerns, employees and volunteers should discuss this with the director to mitigate the risk.
- Ways to mitigate a risk may be doing a dynamic risk assessment, attending an appointment with another staff member, having a clear point of contact, and a discreet way to raise the alarm, note taking within the meeting, having a debrief with the director, and timely escalation of concerns. It must be remembered that initial contact with a client (be that over the phone or in person) could lead to a dynamic risk assessment that suggests Chronically Supported CIC is not the best provider for the person and that their case needs to be escalated to adult social care or safeguarding. See Adult Safeguarding Policy for more information.
- If a director is making an initial home visit e.g. an assessment or review, they should follow the additional instructions detailed in Appendix A.
- Directors, employees or volunteers making routine visits to clients they know, should make it clear on Plinth what time their appointment is scheduled to end.
- If, for any reason, an employee or volunteer feels uncertain before entering a property, they should follow the check-in procedures set out in Appendix A. If they feel unsafe for any reason, they should not enter the property, alert the director, raise the alarm, or contact the police if necessary.
- If employees or volunteers feel unsafe when already in a property, they should make an excuse to leave immediately if possible or discreetly raise the alarm. The wording to be used to discreetly raise the alarm if it is considered that leaving the property could escalate the situation is, "would it be possible for someone to bring my yellow folder to this visit". All employees and volunteers should be aware of this wording.
- Employees and volunteers should park in well-lit areas if it is dark and not carry unnecessary valuables into clients' homes.

- Volunteer visitors should ensure the director knows the day, time and duration of their visit and that they know this policy and how to raise the alarm or escalate a concern.
- Where it is noted that an employee or volunteer has not returned at a reasonable interval after the expected time, directors should a) try the person's mobile b) ring the client's house and depending on outcome c) decide on next steps in agreement with other directors.
- If an employee or volunteer was not concerned for their safety during a visit, but is a victim or harassment or bullying, they should alert the director immediately and keep a record of the exchange/interaction.

4. No reply at a client's home

If employees or volunteers make a pre-arranged visit and cannot get a reply, they should follow the simple steps below. There is almost always a simple explanation, but it is important that we are confident that the person is not inside and unable to answer the door. Employees and directors should give the client plenty of time to respond as they may move slowly or have a hearing impairment and not realise that someone is there.

Simple checks would include:

- Calling the letter box
- Looking and calling through any accessible windows
- Ringing their phone
- Speaking to a neighbour in case they have seen the person leaving
- Calling the Chronically Supported CIC directors to see if they know anything. They will contact the person's emergency contacts. If there is still no answer, the director will decide on next steps.

5. Escalation/Informing the Directors

Employees and volunteers should let the director know immediately:

- If they have had to enter an unoccupied property
- If they have received "no reply" when they visited
- If a client has given a gift or money and they have felt unable to refuse (See Bribery Policy).
- If there are any significant changes affecting the client or their circumstances.
- If they are aware of any new or existing risks or hazards in the client's environment that may cause a risk to the client, employee and/or volunteers or others.
- If there is a concern for person safety or the safety of another person.

6. In an emergency

Occasionally, directors, employees or volunteers may encounter an unexpected risk, emergency, or hazard when they visit. This could be because a client is ill, has fallen, is aggressive or distressed or there may be a fire risk or structural neglect.

The general rules are:

- For employees and volunteers to put their own safety first and leave if necessary and report back to the directors and the emergency services if appropriate.
- In each situation, employees and volunteers should report to Chronically Supported CIC as quickly as possible and keep a record of proceedings.

7. New Technology/employees and volunteers being filmed on entry or during a visit

New technology is emerging all the time and can be both a help and a hindrance. Some people have been employing the use of home CCTV or doorbell cameras for some time to improve their sense of personal safety and/or as a record of meetings or a medical exchange. Legally this sits within the realm of note taking if filming an exchange and the client is responsible for GDPR compliance as it is their personal equipment.

Recommendations would be for the clients to make Chronically Supported CIC aware that they are using this type of equipment. It may be added to their client information sheet (CIS), do that all employees and volunteers are aware. Anybody with concerns should discuss this with the directors.

Appendix A

Emergency Contact Procedures

1. Keeping Safe During Office Hours

Chronically Supported CIC recognises that there is an element of risk to all visits when working alone but have assessed that the greatest risk for employees and volunteers is going to a client's home for a first visit where the situation is unknown. Those usually involved in such visits are directors making assessment visits. To mitigate this risk the following procedures have been put in place.

Instructions for Directors, Employees or Volunteers making a home visit.

- When making such a visit, the employee should ensure that the visit is recorded in Plinth
- The employee should record their time of arrival and expected departure time in the case notes on Plinth.
- Upon completion of the visit the employee should ensure notes on Plinth confirm safe departure from the visit with the final note: "visit complete at (time)"

Instructions for Directors

- Check Plinth to ensure all employees or volunteers have safely completed their scheduled visits.
- If any of the visits are not updated as complete contact the employee or volunteer to confirm and update Plinth accordingly.