

## **Lone Working Policy and Procedure**

### **Purpose**

- To comply with status, regulations and quality standards

### **Scope**

- London Housing Trust (LHT)

### **Policy Introduction**

LHT recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or out of office hours.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health & Safety at work Regulations 1999, LHT has a duty of care to advise and assess risk for workers when they work by themselves in these circumstances. However, employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work.

This Policy applies to all LHT employees including service users whose work may be described as Lone Working. It is also recognised that almost any member of LHT staff could become involved in lone working at any time. Supplementary information and guidance is also available on request.

- Frequently asked Questions on Lone Working
- Guide to Completing a Risk Assessment for Lone Workers
- Advice on Making home Visits Away From Your Office Base' Examples of Lone Working may include
  - Where only one person is working in the premises
  - Situations where people work separately from each other
  - People working outside normal office hours
  - Visiting tenant's home

- Working from home

**It is LHT policy to:**

- Provide risk assessment for lone work/working employees
- Provide lone working induction and training for all our staffs.
- Have an effective system for the reporting of incident/accident when visiting clients in their respective homes
- Check that action has been taken following receipt of lone working related an incident/accident
- Train staffs on how to report any incident/accident.
- Implement and manage the risk assessment for lone working/workers
- Risk assess the workplace, floating support services
- Implement customers/clients risk management plan
- Establish lone working risk rating through risk assessment process
- Identify and implement client risk management plan
- Establish duty system and emergency plan and procedure for lone worker
- Managing safeguarding adult at risk (SAAR) portfolio within LHT
- Implementing checklist and responsibility when lone working.
- Provide personal safety equipment as may be needed for all employees working alone
- Provide the means of communication in the event of emergency
- Train all lone working staffs to be at least emergency first aid competent

**Procedure**

- All LHT services to have an up to date risk assessment which covers lone working
- A local system in place within LHT to ensure the whereabouts of all lone working and Staffs understand and use of the system
- The service risk assessment and relevant individual risk management plans reviewed and updated immediately whenever risks change
- Establish Lone working management plan e.g Lone working must not take place unless an up to date client's risk management plan has been completed and the risk rating says the staff may be lone worked
- Determine a risk rating, the support worker to review the contents of the risk management plan and any other relevant information, and make a decision on whether or not it is appropriate to work alone with the customer.
- Use the checklists to ensure that risks are minimised.

**Lone Working – Understanding and Managing Lone working Risk**

If lone working occurs in a service the service must have an up to date risk assessment. It is the LHT Operations Manager's responsibility to complete this and review it annually.

The Risk Assessment in the Workplace will set out:

- What are the lone working risks for the service – i.e. do support staff work alone, when, how often, where etc.)
- What is in place to manage these risks (i.e. duty call in/call out systems, customer risk management plans, communication systems etc.)
- What further actions are needed in order to reduce risk, who is responsible for these and when these will be put in place.

### **Risk Assessment in the Workplace (Accommodation Based Services)**

The preventative measures to manage risk which may be deployed in scheme based services will vary according to the physical design and layout of the building, customer group and staffing model and level. The following measures will be deployed as a minimum standard in all accommodation based services where lone working occurs:

- All clients' risk management plans be up to date and reviewed in accordance with the Support Planning and Risk Management Procedure
- Access to the out of hours management on call service
- Effective partnership relationships with statutory and emergency services to ensure an immediate response to an emergency
- All staff know who to contact in an emergency
- All operational staff members must refrain from working in a way that is likely to put them at risk. This includes not working with anyone unknown (friends/visitors) who has not received a risk assessment
- A panic alarm installed in an office/meeting/key work room if necessary
- Agreed protocol about carrying out key working alone – i.e. members of staff sitting next to the door, other members of staff checking during the course of the meeting

### **Night working:**

LHT Operations Managers must complete a Night Working Risk Assessment, should members of staff be lone working at night.

### **Risk Assessment in the Workplace: Floating Support Services.**



The following preventative measures must be deployed in all floating support services where lone working occurs in an individual's home:

- All customer risk management plans must be up to date and reviewed in accordance with the Support Planning and Risk Management procedure.
- All risk alerts must be up to date on CIMS
- All staff must carry a mobile phone that is charged and accessible during their visit to the clients/service users visits.
- All LHT employee must comply with the duty system in place in their service - calling the designated duty worker when they begin and end a visit with a customer.
- If a worker becomes concerned about their safety or a customer's safety during their visit they must contact the operation Manager (**Winsome Chambers**) and/or the emergency services depending on the nature of their concern and the degree of seriousness.
- LHT operational staff members must refrain from working in a way which is likely to put them at risk. This includes working with anyone unknown (friends/visitors) who has not undergone a risk assessment.
- When a support worker arrives at a customer's front door they must carry out a quick 'door-step risk assessment'. This entails re-assessing the support environment at every visit to ensure that new and emerging risks have been considered. Staff must always put their own safety first, and decisions made in door stop risk assessments will always override previously completed assessments.
- In these occasions the customers risk assessment must be updated, before lone working is carried out again.

### **Customers/Clients' Risk Management Plans**

- Lone working must not take place unless a customer/Clients risk management Plan been completed and a risk rating given(**see the attached documents**)
- Referrals to LHT must contain a risk assessment, either on the LHT referral form or the referring agency's form.
- Any concerns from the referral must be raised with the customer before they enter the service. Where there is a concern of risk, support worker/staff should speak to relevant external agencies to get as extensive understanding as possible regarding the risk of lone working with the customer/client.
- A risk management plan must be compiled within 24 hours of a customer taking up a service/contract with LHT. The management plan will set out what the



assessed risks are, what is in place to mitigate these risks and what further work is needed in order to further manage the risk – with timelines set out.

### **Lone Working Risk Rating.**

To determine a risk rating, the support worker must review the contents of the risk management plan and make a decision on whether or not it is appropriate to work alone with the Clients/customer.

#### **LHT risk ratings are set out below:**

<b>Low risk</b>	es, an operational staff member may lone work with a client's/customer, including clients home.
<b>Medium risk</b>	n operational member of staff may sometimes lone work with the Client/customer – for example, only in public spaces. Details of the risk and when, where and how lone working can occur must be included here.
<b>High risk</b>	o, an operational member of staff may not lone work with the Clients/customer. Details of risk are needed along with details of how many members of staff should work with the clients, where and when this should occur etc.

This assessment should generally be carried out by two members of staff, including support worker with the operation manager.

The risk rating must be agreed with the support worker's and Operations Manager. The Lone Working risk rating should then be added onto the clients plan and entered onto the Clients Information Management System (CIMS).



The clients should be informed of the lone working risk rating, unless there is a clear and recorded risk related reason why they should not be informed.

The risk management plan will be then be reviewed within

- 7 days in clients accommodation based services
- 28 days in floating support services.

### **The Duty System and Emergency Calls.**

LHT operations manager (**Winsome Chambers**) is responsible for establishing a local procedure to ensure the whereabouts of all team members are always known. As a minimum, the procedure would establish:

- The role of the duty desk and how staff will keep each other aware of their movements.
- The procedure to follow when a member of staff does not check in after a visit or interview.
- When the Police should be contacted.
- What a support worker and the Duty Worker should do in the event that a support worker is prevented from leaving the premises
- An emergency code word for staff to use to signal that they are in trouble but cannot contact the Police.
- If a support worker is working with a customer outside of normal office hours (09:00 – 17:00, they will be required to inform their **Duty Desk**. **However prior permission to 'lone work' outside of these hours must be sought from the line manager.**
- § Prior to end of normal Duty Desk hours, the back up manager/team leader holding the mobile phone will agree with the operational staff member arrangements for arrival and departure from appointment.
- § It is a requirement that support workers members call in at arrival and call out upon leaving appointment

### **Safeguarding Adults at Risk (SAAR).**

It is important to recognise that “lone working” increases the potential for risk to customers from staff, it is therefore crucial that before working alone, LHT employee must ensure customers/Clients are fully aware of the organisation’s policies and procedures regarding:

- SAAR
- Professional Boundaries

### **Operation Manager’s checklist for lone working.**

- Conduct risk assessments for all lone working situations before allowing staff to engage in them.
- When staff are working with Client/customers, make sure they have all available information about the customer from relevant agencies.
- Ensure that all staff engaging in any form of lone working are familiar with organisational and local policies on lone working, and that they understand the provisions for their support by the organisation, including training available.
- Ensure that staff always check the customer's Risk Management Plan to determine the risk rating prior to working alone.
- Ensure staff appreciate and take their responsibilities for their own safety seriously.
- Always advise staff to walk out of a situation that seems to be becoming hazardous, and interview the customer with two members of staff option where this seems safer.
- Conduct regular incident drills to ensure that staff are trained in how to respond to an emergency.
- Be aware that a member of staff who is experiencing personal or health problems may look more vulnerable to attack and be more vulnerable to distress following any incident. Provide appropriate support.
- Report any incident via Safeguard incident reporting system

### **Additional responsibilities where staff make home visits**

- Establish a formal calling in/paging procedure, and ensure that staff are fully aware of it.
- Regular monitoring of visit scheduling should be performed, to ensure that the programme, duration and content of visits is reasonable and not putting either staff member or customer under unnecessary stress
- Where customer visits are required in locations assessed as presenting medium or high risk, visits should only be authorised during daylight hours, or with a two/three person team.
- Consider issuing portable personal attack alarms if necessary, and ensure that staff are trained in how to use them.
- Make sure staff have all relevant numbers and the means to contact the on-call manager
- Give staff the authority to arrange an accompanied visit, security escort or taxi if needed.

### **Staff Checklist and Responsibilities when Lone Working.**



- LHT employees should take a number of steps to help ensure their own safety when lone working.

All employees should always:

- Read the lone working risk assessment in conjunction with the individual Clients/customer risk management plan.
- Take note where a Clients/customer file is flagged to denote that the customer is receiving Care Quality Commission regulated activities or that a current Safeguarding Adults at Risk case is open (or was closed in the last year).

### **On-site interviews**

- LHT employees must be aware of the location of any emergency alarm buttons in interview rooms and report faulty alarms promptly.
- Ensure there is another member of staff who can be summoned in an emergency.
- If a conversation in an interview becomes heated, employee should try to diffuse the situation. If this is not successful, attempt to terminate the interview, calling on the help of a colleague as necessary.

#### **Note:**

**If you LHT employee feel that a customer is in a volatile or challenging state, avoid seeing the person on your own, regardless of what the lone working risk rating is, and arrange an alternative time or see them in a common area, e.g. reception.**

### **Off-Site visits**

- LHT employees should always advise their operation manager and the rest of the team of their visit schedules.
- Ensure you are familiar with the case history and any relevant risk assessments of the Clients/customers you intend to visit.
- Follow the local calling -in procedure at all times.
  - Ensure your company mobile phone is kept on, is fully charged and accessible for emergency use.
  - Always conduct an on-the-spot assessment of risk in order to identify any unexpected threat (these assessments do not need to be written. Listen to your instincts. You may decide not to go in or to leave immediately if the person is drunk or aggressive
  - If you feel uncomfortable about the circumstances of the visit or the behaviour of the customer/clients, do not enter the property. Always remember you are the visitor.
  - Say who you are, why you are there and show your LHT Identity card. Wait to be invited in, or ask if you may enter.

- Before you enter, check who you are talking to. Do not enter the house at all if the appropriate person is not available.
- Acknowledge that it is their territory; let them lead the way.
  - If you feel at risk at any point during your visit, leave as soon as possible.
- Study your surroundings and be aware of exits. Check as you go in how the front door locks, to enable a rapid escape if needed. Ensure you can get out quickly if necessary – don't get trapped. Try to sit nearest the door.
- Take only what you need into the house. Do not spread your belongings around.  
You may need to leave in a hurry.
- Ask for dogs or other animals to be put in another room.
- Do not use the bedroom area or sit on a bed if at all possible.
  - If you are prevented from leaving or threatened, stay calm and try to control the situation.
- Remain alert. Watch for changes in mood, movements or expressions.

### **General safety tips**

- LHT lone working staffs must use common sense when conducting visits, including not wearing obvious jewellery/carrying expensive looking accessories.
- If staffs have travelled to a visit by car, keep vehicle doors locked at all times, and park only in well-lit areas if it is likely to get dark before you finish your interview.
- Plan your journey in advance. Always give the impression that you know where you are going.
- Be aware of attitudes, traits or mannerisms which may irritate customers
- Valuables, such as wallets, should be kept in an inside pocket and secured. Try to keep your hands free.
- If staffs carry a handbag, use a small bag slung across your body under a jacket or coat, or a shoulder bag with a short strap and secure fastenings. Make sure it sits close to the body with the fastenings innermost.
- You are more likely to escape danger by wearing clothes you can move in easily and shoes that are comfortable. Walking quickly is usually safer than trying to run.

- Staffs must carry in your pocket a BT/mobile charge card, the telephone number to stop all your cheque cards, some change or a Travel card, and your keys.
- Whenever possible, all staffs should avoid walking alone at night. Keep too busy well-lit roads. Avoid poorly lit or little used underpasses.
- If you have to wait around, choose a well-lit, busy area and look confident and positive. Never accept lifts.
- Do not take short cuts, unless you know they are as safe as the longer route.
- If you think you are being followed, cross the road and keep walking. If you are still being followed, make for the nearest busy area, an open shop or a well-lit house and, if necessary, ask for help
- Staffs should avoid areas where you know groups of people loiter, such as pubs or clubs.

## Post Incident

If an incident does occur when a support worker is lone working with a customer, the following must take place:

Debriefing	Talk through their experience as soon as possible after the event
Adjusting Work	Consider possible short or long term changes in the work that would benefit support the employees recovery, e.g. not going out on visits for a few days
Time Off Work	The operation manager may determine that a period of time off work is required, this must be agreed with the Senior Manager
Legal Help	If legal action will be taken, LHT will provide support
Police	Help reporting the incident to the police if the event warrants it
Counselling/Support	Direct the employee to the appropriate support services
Reassessment of the customer's risk assessment	Where an incident has occurred, the customer's risk assessment must be reviewed.

## ABOUT THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### Review Schedule

The Lone Working policy and procedure is currently scheduled for review by August 2016. However, it is a 'live' document, and will be amended (as and when necessary) to reflect any changes in legislation, regulation or good practice.

### **Other Associated Policies and Procedures**

- § Personal Care Policy
- § Personal and Sexual Relationships Policy
- § SAAR Policy
- § Professional Boundaries Policy
- § Support Planning and Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- § Referral and Assessment Policy
- § Risk Assessment in the Workplace Policy and Procedure

### **Equality and Diversity**

This policy has been developed in a way that ensures it is in line with the latest legislation, good practice and guidance related to equality and diversity.

Where necessary an equality impact assessment will be used to ensure that the policy and its resulting practices do not have a discriminatory or undue negative impact on clients as a result of race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, religion or faith, pregnancy and maternity.

### **Localisation of Procedures**

This document details the procedures that should be followed in order to ensure that LHT employee undertake lone working in a safe environment. The procedure has been designed in such a way as to be applicable across the range of LHT services.

It is expected that all services work to the procedures set out in this document. Additional guidelines may however be devised to reflect a particular specialist service. Any local guidelines must be approved and signed off by Operation manager and the health and safety consultant.

### **Communicating the Policy and Procedure**

**Staff/Client/Service users**



LHT management will ensure that all employees/clients/service users are aware of, and fully understand this policy and procedure through:

- Compulsory training as part of the induction programme.
- Regular updates in changes to practice and legislation in team meetings, supervisions, and casework management meetings with operation manager.

### **Customers /Clients**

LHT will ensure customers/Clients are aware of this policy and procedure, what they can expect from it, and how it affects them, through:

- Introduction to key policies during their induction into the service.
- An accessible 'key policies' handbook, written for customers/Clients.
- Customer consultations when developing new/reviewing existing policies.
- Customer meetings.
- Ongoing discussions in key working session.