

Lone Worker and Lone Volunteer Policy

Introduction

This policy refers to paid staff and volunteers. Where the word “worker” is used it should be taken to mean any person who carries out tasks on behalf of Warwickshire Vision Support, whether paid or unpaid. It does not mean that WVS regards its volunteers as having the same statutory or employment rights as its paid staff. It does mean that WVS considers that many areas of good practice relate equally to paid staff and to volunteers.

Warwickshire Vision Support recognises its duty of care for the health, safety and security of staff working alone, either in paid roles or as volunteers. Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAW) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 MHSW are applicable. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks. WVS Lone Worker and Lone Volunteer Policy must be applied to all situations covered in the next section and will need to include work carried out on WVS premises, and those situations where employees or volunteers are working in other premises which are either publicly managed or privately owned.

Lone Workers and Volunteers

This policy is designed for employees and volunteers who either frequently or occasionally work or volunteer alone. It also refers to both high and low risk activities.

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For example;

- People working separately from others in a building
- People who work outside ‘normal’ hours
- People who work away from their fixed base without colleagues
- People who work at home other than in low risk, office-type work
- The definition covers staff and volunteers in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures

For Warwickshire Vision’s workers, these include the following situations:

- People who visit service users’ homes
- People working outside of standard working hours
- Where the nature of the work requires the individual to work in isolated areas
- Community based staff or volunteers working autonomously at other premises
- People who are attending exhibitions, displays etc. out of hours.

Potential Hazards of Working Alone

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses may occur when there is no-one to call for help or first aid available
- Fire
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building for example, danger of being accidentally locked in
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone

WVS's Responsibility

WVS, through its CEO, has a general responsibility to ensure a safe working environment for workers working in lone situations. We need to:

- Be aware of those activities that require lone working or those groups of employees/volunteers who are required to work alone, and to ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments for those situations are carried out.
- Ensure that all relevant workers are familiar with our Code of Conducts for staff and volunteers and Service Users.
- Provide workers with appropriate information and support advising of the hazards of working alone and associated good practice.

Workers' Responsibility

- It is the responsibility of the worker to co-operate with any safe system of work provided by Warwickshire Vision. Lone volunteers are provided with guidelines to refer to.
- Each person must do all they reasonably can to avoid being exposed to risk. This will include continual assessment of the situation they find themselves in.
- If the worker is faced with a situation where they feel compromised or unsafe, or are involved in an incident, then should immediately move to a place of safety. If this is an urgent situation then the relevant emergency services must be called on 999. For any other situation, or after emergency services have taken over, please call the office on 01926 411331 and ask to speak with your line manager, the volunteer co-ordinator or the CEO to update them.
- Where an incident occurs, even if no injury is sustained, the incident must be reported to the worker's line manager/coordinator as soon as practicable, and an accident/incident form completed.
- Any new or perceived risk must be reported to Warwickshire Vision immediately.

Employees or volunteers should:

- Always tell someone where you are going, who you are meeting and when you expect to return
- Remain calm and factual in all situations and report any concerns or safeguarding issues immediately to WVS Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Do not meet aggression with aggression
- Do not enter a building, particularly someone else's home, if you do not feel comfortable or safe.
- Always carry a mobile phone with you.

Risk Assessments

To reduce the risk for people working alone we carry out a risk assessment of the following issues, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access.
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk. • History – any previous incidents in similar situations.
- Any other special circumstances.

All available information should be taken into account and risk assessments should be updated at regular intervals. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

The Risk Assessment should be carried out or arranged by the manager / vision support officer / ROVI, for the lone workers environment; any identified risk should be written down and kept as a matter of record.

The following should be taken into consideration:

- Does the workplace/location present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Does the person being visited constitute any risk to themselves or to others?
- Ensure that lone workers have no medical conditions, which could make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary.
- Identify training needs to ensure competency in safety matters?

Practical issues to consider include:

- Can doors and windows be closed and locked to eliminate the likelihood of unwanted intruders.
- Is access restricted by other means e.g. security keypads, swipe cards

- Environmental conditions around the location including street lighting and visibility.
- In an emergency can the worker leave the premises safely.
- Is there mobile phone coverage?

Communication

Maintaining effective communications with workers in lone situations is essential. It will help to ensure that workers keep colleagues/relatives informed of their whereabouts and provide a means of making contact in an emergency.

All workers who work alone outside the WVS offices should ensure that a relative, friend or WVS colleague knows where they are going and when they expect to return. All workers should ensure that the WVS contact register on Charity Log contains up-to-date details of their next of kin or people to contact in emergency.

Workers who are alone in the office must inform their line manager and are responsible for adhering to security and fire regulations.

Conclusion

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff or volunteers, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. Warwickshire Vision ensures that measures are in place to reduce risk and that expectations have been communicated to employees and volunteers operating alone and appropriate support provided.

All staff and volunteers, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and should take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with carrying out their normal duties.

Warwickshire Vision Incident / Accident Contact List

Position	Name	Telephone Number
CEO	Keith Eales	07817 929798
Community Services Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead	Rebecca Bourton	07458 305886
Rehabilitation Services Manager	Andrew Baker	07458 301985
Volunteer Co-Ordinator / Deputy DSL	Maria Tongue	01926 411331
Deputy DSLs	Helen Jones / Kimberley Byford	01926 411331
Chair of Trustees	Liz Thiebe	Tel: 01926 411331
Police / Ambulance / Fire Service Emergency		Tell: 999
Police non Emergency		Tel: 101

Monitoring and review of the Policy

This policy is to be monitored by the CEO to ensure that it meets current needs, and is to be reviewed every three years.

Version control

The table below shows the history of the document:

Version Number	Author & Job Title	Date
V.1		April 2017
V.2	Deborah Kerrison Finance & Admin Manager	June 2022
V.3	Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager	July 2023