

## LONE WORKING GUIDANCE

*“Often people do things in their own homes which they feel quite comfortable with, but which would be classified as risky if carried out in a workplace. We are required by law to be aware of and manage the risks that our volunteers are exposed to – even though they as individuals may not personally mind the way they work.”*

Many volunteers carry out their role either completely alone, or as the sole representative of their organisation in a more social situation.

There are certain sensible guidelines you should follow to ensure your safety, good reputation and sense of well-being:

- Always tell someone close to you that you are going to a client’s home. If this is not possible, your organiser or local staff member should keep a record of what they have arranged for you to do. You should let them know what time you are expected to return and make an arrangement to let them know you are back safe and sound once you have concluded your duties.
- Always think about your safety during the different seasons. For example, if you live very close to the client you visit, walking back to your home in the evening may feel good in the spring and summer, but the same may not be true in the autumn and winter months. At those times, you need to ensure that your way home is well-lit and that you are equipped with the right footwear and clothing. In rural surroundings, street lighting may be sparse, so carry a torch, even for familiar routes. **ALWAYS CARRY A FULLY-CHARGED MOBILE PHONE WITH YOU.**
- If there is bad weather (this could mean exceptionally heavy rain or strong gales, as well as snow), please do not set out on the journey to your volunteering appointment. Let your Organiser or local staff member know that you are safe at home, and that you will not be visiting your befriender. They will get in touch with them on your behalf.
- Avoid physical contact or manually handling members of the households you visit. The only time this is acceptable is when offering a steadying arm. If someone falls or trips when you are with them, stay with the person, but call for help immediately. A neighbour may be able to help you – you may even feel it necessary to call for an ambulance.
- Never undertake any personal care duties.
- Do not agree to prepare food from scratch.

- **Do not under any circumstances agree to assist a client with medication.**
- Your client may prefer you to use their title and surname rather than addressing them by their first name, as is becoming common these days. Please wait for an invitation to use someone's first name.
- Think carefully about your conversation with your client. Genuine interest on the volunteer's part could be construed as an invasion of privacy by the client. Your visits should be purposeful, preparing the client for joining in activities in the community.
- It is likely that our clients will grow to trust us and rely on us, and we may well become valued confidants after a while. It is up to us to be non-judgmental and treat with absolute respect and confidentiality any information the client imparts (**see the RSVP Confidentiality Policy**).
- If a conversation starts to feel uncomfortable to you, or inappropriate, change the subject.
- If a situation arises where you feel your physical safety is being threatened, you need to leave the premises as quickly and safely as possible.
- As mentioned elsewhere, see the **RSVP Confidentiality Policy**
- You need to treat any disclosures of alleged abuse very carefully.

***IMPORTANT: If while volunteering you identify a clear risk to your health & well-being, or if something happens or is said which simply makes you feel uncomfortable, report it immediately to your local co-ordinator or staff member. The appropriate action will be taken. This may mean stopping the activity while the situation is assessed. Don't forget, there is plenty of support for you within our large organisation.***