

North Berwick Coastal Community Connections Lone Working Policy

Relevant Legislation for Befriending Services

Under the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*, it is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers (including volunteers) and to take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary.

Employees (and volunteers) have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

Both relevant staff members and volunteers should be aware of and should be trained in how to respond to lone working emergency procedures.

Volunteers and lone working

Having an effective lone working policy for volunteers is crucial management support in an otherwise unsupervised situation. Although issues that might arise during lone working vary from match to match and visit to visit, North Berwick Coastal Community Connections has a legal duty to ensure that their volunteers benefit from the same health and safety procedures as employees. Volunteers need to know what the lone working issues are, what the procedures are for dealing with them, who they can turn to for help, who is managing and supporting them both during office hours and outside office hours.

Lone working and volunteers' personal safety

North Berwick Coastal Community Connections will exercise its responsibility for the safety of its lone working volunteers by:

- Covering lone working situations in initial training
- Gathering information from referral agencies on the potential risks involved in lone working with specific service users.
- Assessing lone working issues when meeting potential service users and referrers for assessment prior to matching
- Passing of specific lone working information relating to the match to the volunteer prior to matching them
- Discussing lone working situations in support and supervision on an ongoing basis

Meetings with service users

Instructions to volunteer who will be lone working include:

- Making sure details of the volunteer visits are known to someone within the organisation or at home, i.e. where they are going, how they are getting there, (e.g. car, taxi, bus), when they will be back and whom to call if they are not back at the expected time
- Volunteers must keep details of who they can contact in an emergency with them at all times
- Volunteers must ensure they are well prepared and have planned routes and journeys
- Volunteers must walk in lighted areas and ensure that they have enough petrol for any car journey
- Volunteers must keep their mobile switched on and in an accessible place. Also if they have a personal alarm, they must carry it with them at all times.
- When working with service users, volunteers will be trained to deescalate situations in a non-confrontational manner but in the event that a volunteer feels at risk they should withdraw from the situation and seek support.

Entering a service user's home

Entering a service user's home may form part (or all) of a befriending visit.

In the event that access to the home is made the following guidance should be followed

- Volunteers should discuss with the (relevant staff member) any issues or problems that might arise during any visit relating to the family's/individual's circumstances
- Volunteers should not enter someone's house if that person or anyone present is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- If there are any concerns about the way things are developing, volunteers should try to (and will be trained to) defuse the situation, e.g. by changing the subject
- Volunteers should remain aware of changes in mood, body language and behavior of service users.
- Volunteers should leave if they feel things are getting out of control
- When in the house, volunteers should always be aware of their surroundings and place themselves with a clear line to an exit

- It is advised that volunteers sit on a chair rather than a sofa and to not sit with their back to people
- Volunteers must be very aware of maintaining appropriate boundaries at all times

Reporting a Lone Working Incident

North Berwick Coastal Community Connections adheres to good practice and requires a record of all incidents to be recorded where lone working volunteer has felt threatened or has had to deal with an aggressive situation. Initial training will include information on reporting incidents.

If volunteers need to record an incident, they will be given incident forms that will allow them to fill in any incidents, in confidence. Any incidents will be reported to the Board of Trustees meetings and appropriate action will be taken. The volunteer will be notified of the action taken within 7 days of the committee meeting. The volunteer will also be given additional support stemming from the incident should it be required.

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V2, October 2021