

BROTHERS OF CHARITY SERVICES IRELAND

NATIONAL LONE WORKING POLICY


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Ethos

'We are committed to working with people with an intellectual disability to claim their rightful place as valued citizens. Inclusion is a fundamental principle that underlies all aspects of our work. We believe in the intrinsic value of every person and we aim to further the dignity of all associated with our services.'

'We continue the Brothers of Charity Services' tradition of being open to the best contemporary influences. We want to be inspired by the most creative ideas ...and to ask how we give them concrete expression.'

The Brothers of Charity Services Ethos (2001), Going Forward Together.

1.0 Introduction

The Brothers of Charity Services Ireland endeavours to offer services/supports in local communities. This enables each person who is supported by our services to positively engage in the social and economic life of their local towns and villages and in doing so, develop a range of relationships that enhance their quality of life.

Our responses are based on the recognition of each person (who is supported by our service) as an individual, an equal citizen with equal rights and an absolute respect of that status. We, therefore, support each person to live their lives based on their own personal visions and choices, to identify and select their personal goals in life and to develop their personal plan to achieve those goals.

2.0 Policy Statement

The Brothers of Charity Services Ireland (BOCSI) recognises that staff working on their own are a vulnerable group and therefore are potentially more at risk than other employees. It is therefore the policy of the Services to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to provide safe systems of work for those who work alone in order to bring about a reduction of any foreseeable risks.

In all circumstances when staff work alone the Services strive to eliminate or reduce foreseeable risks associated with lone working and requires that all such work is subjected to hazard identification and risk assessment and that the agreed control measures are put in place to eliminate those hazards or reduce the risk as far as reasonable practicable.

3.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for staff working on their own by developing a continuum of responses that ensure an environment where staff, individuals and visitors are safe.

In addition, the Policy strives to ensure the reduction of all reasonably foreseeable risks associated with lone working so far as is reasonably practicable and to outline arrangements to achieve this risk reduction in line with legislative requirements.

This Policy has been developed to provide guidance to management and staff regarding best practice in order to maintain personal safety while working alone.

Each Region must develop local Protocol/ Guidelines to support the implementation of this Policy.

4.0 Scope

This Policy applies to all employees when they work alone in the Services or are on Services business.

5.0 Legislation and other related policies

- Health and Safety Authority (2011) Guidance on Lone Workers in the Healthcare Sector
- Health and Safety at Welfare at Work Act (2005)
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 2007
- HSE (2011) Policy for Lone Working
- HSE (2011) Guidelines for Lone Workers
- The Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults with Disabilities Regulations 2013).
- Brothers of Charity Services Ireland National Risk Management Policy.

6.0 Glossary of Terms and Definitions

The Services refers to the Brothers of Charity Services Ireland. Staff includes all persons paid or unpaid or volunteers who support Individuals in our Services.

Lone workers refers to those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision (Health and Safety Authority).

Individuals refer to Children and Adults who are supported by our Services.

7.0 Responsibility

7.1 Employers

Under Section 8 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2005 every employer shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees.

7.2 Senior Managers

It is the responsibility of Senior Managers to:

- Promote and support the aims and objectives of the policy.
- Ensure that adequate and appropriate procedures/arrangements are in place in order to implement and disseminate the policy.
- Ensure that supporting guidelines or protocols are developed locally to support the implementation of the policy.
- Ensure that procedures exist for the reporting and investigation of any incident involving staff working on their own no matter how apparently trivial an incident may at first appear, and to make appropriate recommendations to prevent recurrence of such incidents.
- Ensure all staff receive appropriate training in accordance with the risks associated with their work activities.

7.3 Heads of Department/ Line Managers

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department/Line Manager to:

- Adequately risk assess any staff or areas that fall within the scope of the policy.
- Be responsive to the concerns of staff in relation to working on their own.
- Be familiar with and understand the contents of the policy.
- Promote and support the aims and objectives of the policy.
- Develop local guidelines/protocols and integrate the guidelines/protocols into daily safe work practices to ensure safe systems of work are in place relative to staff working on their own.
- Ensure that the appropriate measures are in place in order to disseminate, implement and monitor the effectiveness of the local guidelines/protocols.
- Investigate and record in writing all incidents/accidents involving staff working on their own and make appropriate recommendations to prevent a reoccurrence.
- Ensure that staff working on their own receive appropriate training prior to engaging in lone working activities, such as, Induction Training, Client Protection Training, Manual Handling and techniques that respond to behaviours that challenge if their work involves working with individuals with behaviour that may challenge.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided to staff involved in any incident in terms of both immediate and follow up support.

7.4. Staff responsibilities:

Staff have responsibility under Section 13 of the 2005 Act to take care of their own safety, health and welfare, and to co-operate with the employer in discharging its statutory duties.

Staff member's duties include:

- To take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others when working alone.
- To co-operate with their employer to enable him/her comply with Safety, Health and Welfare legislation.
- To report any defect in the place of work or the systems of work without unreasonable delay.
- To report any work being carried out, or likely to be carried out, in a manner which may endanger the safety, health or welfare of the staff or that of any other person.
- Having regard to his or her training, and the instructions given by his or her employer, make correct use of any article or substance provided for use by the staff at work or for the protection of his or her safety.

8.0 Guidelines

Staff may be required to work alone in various situations. These include:

- Making home visits,
- Working in a residential setting,
- Working in a building with individuals that are supported by the Services without the presence of other staff,
- Working alone in buildings without the presence of other persons, and
- Driving on their own, or with individuals who are supported by the Services, without the presence of other staff (this does not include driving to and from work).

Within the Services the circumstances and risks to which staff are exposed will vary greatly as will the framework within which staff work. The degree of risk varies as will the controls used to reduce them. The risks posed to staff members working alone in a residential setting in comparison to a staff member carrying out home visits, or driving for work may be very different and require different strategies to be put in place.

Appendix 1 – “Guidelines for Staff Working Alone” gives guidance to staff on good practice when working alone.

8.1 Assessment and Management of Risk

In line with the BOCSI National Risk Management Policy it is essential that each Region identifies the risks present in their Service Areas through the risk assessment process and develops local management plans such as guidelines/protocols, to support staff working on their own. The professional judgement and local knowledge of managers and staff make an important contribution to assessing the risks of lone working and, therefore should be considered along with other available information concerning individuals supported and their activities. There

may be circumstances where the risks to staff working on their own have been assessed and are considered high. In such circumstances alternative arrangements may need to be put in place in consultation with staff and management.

Each Region is required to identify the risk related to lone working and develop its own local protocols/guidelines to reduce and control the risks identified. When assessing the risk associated with lone working the following areas should be considered:

- Physical hazards
- Psychosocial hazards
- People moving and handling/manual handling
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour
- Physical/Sexual assault
- Environmental
- Chemical hazards
- Biological hazards
- Geographical areas
- Weather conditions
- Times i.e. day or night
- Theft/criminal damage
- Road traffic accidents/breakdowns/punctures
- Presence of Animals

8.2 Information Sharing

In order to carry out their job safely and efficiently it is important

- To ensure that staff working on their own have access to appropriate information. Good quality information in relation to contacts and locations can prove very helpful.
- To ensure that there is an appropriate flow of information to and from other departments/outside teams. This is especially important where there is a risk to the staff's safety from an individual, relative, carer or animal when working alone.
- To ensure whenever possible that all individuals supported by the Services, relatives and carers are aware that the preferred channels of communication are through an authorised source. This should be communicated in detail to staff working on their own prior to commencing lone working activities where possible.
- Where practicable, both the management and staff working on their own should obtain as much information as possible from a wide variety of sources e.g. GPs, Social Services, Consultants, Clinics, Gardaí and other organisations as appropriate.

8.3 Incident reporting and follow-up support

- All incidents and near misses must be reported

- In the event of an incident taking place, the Line Manager should immediately ensure the individuals and staff receive any necessary medical treatment and/or advice/support.
- The Services should analyse the incidents and accidents related to lone workers in order to identify individuals at risk and review outcomes of strategies implemented and management plans.

8.4 Supervision

In order to identify the significant risks related to lone working, or hazards that may be unique to a specific group of staff working on their own, local management must establish and maintain an appropriate consultative mechanism such as regular meetings. This forum should be utilised as a support mechanism for the staff who work alone. Regular contact between the Manager/Head of Department and the lone worker should be encouraged and fostered as this forms a key part in ensuring the safety of the lone worker.

9.0 Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or, if necessary, amended in the light of experience of its operation.

10.0 References

1. Health and Safety Authority (2011) Guidance on Lone Workers in the Healthcare Sector
1. Health and Safety at Welfare at Work Act (2005)
2. HSE (2011) Policy for Lone Working
3. HSE (2011) Guidelines for Lone Workers

Appendix 1 – “Guidelines for Staff Working Alone”

Points to Consider when on a Home Visit

- At the start of the visit, staff should introduce themselves, show their identification and explain the reason for their visit before entering the house. Staff should also clarify who is at home. Staff should only enter the premises if they are invited and if they feel safe to do so.
- If staff feel there is a risk of harm to themselves, they should not enter the house and should leave immediately. Staff should not enter the house at all if the person they intend to meet is not present.
- Staff should also be aware of animals in the house, and if they feel uneasy with animals being present, they should, prior to entry, ask for them to be removed. If this is not possible alternative arrangements should be made to carry out the visit, such as, rescheduling when the animal is not present or choosing an appropriate alternative meeting place such as a Brothers of Charity Services premises or other public place where alcohol is not served.
- If the lone worker feels uncomfortable in the surroundings they should ensure that, when they enter the house, they make themselves familiar with the door lock in case they need to make an emergency exit.
- When entering the house they should let the occupier lead the way. They should avoid entering rooms first and should sit near to the doorway.
- Staff should politely refuse food and drink if they are concerned about the level of hygiene or for safety reasons.
- Staff should remain calm and focused at all times and keep their possessions close to them. Staff should only carry a small amount of possessions with them. They should not give their personal mobile or home telephone number, or address, to the person they are visiting.
- Staff should be aware of their own body language (as well as that of others) as there may be a potential risk of exacerbating the situation by sending out the wrong signals, particularly where there may be cultural, gender or physical issues to consider. If staff feel unhappy about how the visit is going, they should terminate the visit as soon as possible even if not completed.
- Staff, should not enter other rooms without the householder’s permission.
- Staff should be aware of potential environmental hazards (e.g. unsafe furniture).
- If staff are required to perform a treatment procedure, consent should be obtained from the individual/parent/guardian prior to commencing the procedure.
- Staff must ensure that they record the details of their visit on file.

Working Alone in a Residential Facility

Staff working in residential facilities will require varying levels of security and supervision based on a risk assessment. Staff members may be working alone at day time and more commonly at night. No staff member will be left to work alone without prior discussion of the risks present and adequate controls been put in place.

Common risks when working alone in a residential setting

1. Accidents e.g. Slips/trips/falls

2. People moving and handling/manual handling
3. Physical hazards
4. Chemical hazards
5. Biological hazards
6. Psychosocial hazards
7. Physical/Sexual assault
8. Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour
9. Theft/criminal damage
10. Road traffic accidents/breakdowns/punctures

Working Alone in a Brothers of Charity Services Premises

When members of staff are working alone in a Brothers of Charity Services Premises they must ensure that:

- Appropriate security precautions are taken e.g. doors and windows closed.
- Before answering the door they should, if possible, check to see who is at the door. Curtains or blinds should be drawn if working during hours of darkness.
- Staff vehicle should be parked as near to their work premises as possible to avoid having to walk long distances alone particularly during hours of darkness or in secluded locations. If staff know that they will be working late and alone they should move their vehicle to a location nearer to their premises when a parking space becomes available.
- Staff who are working alone in an office building should lock the entrance door of the building.
- If a staff member is the only member of staff in the building while seeing individuals, the following should be followed and recorded in a central diary/appointments book log/book:
 - Name of person the staff is seeing
 - Time of Appointment
 - Time you expect to finish
- Prior to seeing individuals alone, staff should discuss the level of risk with their Manager/Head of Department
- All cases of aggression and violence should be reported in writing to their Manager/Head of Department. If a client protection concern arises the Client Protection Procedures must be followed.
- Where there is information indicating concerns about safety in relation to known individuals, these individuals should not be seen in a non-supported centre.
- Staff should ensure that the telephone number of the local Garda Station is easily available in the event of an emergency. Staff should discuss with their Manager/Head of Department if they are concerned about the security in a particular workplace where they frequently work alone.

Lone Working and Travelling

- Before starting out on a journey, staff should ensure their vehicle is road worthy and that they have sufficient fuel. Adequate time should be allowed for the journey. Where possible staff should ensure that bags and equipment are secured safely in the car boot or out of sight.
- Staff should avoid having items in their vehicle that contain personal details. When carrying a laptop it must be powered off and stored in a locked boot, and every reasonable precaution must be taken to protect it and the information on it from theft or damage.
- Staff should ensure that all doors are locked especially while travelling at a slow speed, when stopped at traffic lights, and travelling through urban areas.
- Staff should always park their vehicle as close as possible to the location that they are visiting. The vehicle should be parked in a well-lit area if possible, facing in the direction in which they will leave and in a manner that cannot be blocked by another vehicle. When parking in day light, staff should consider accessing the vehicle after darkness falls.
- On leaving the vehicle, staff should ensure that all the vehicle's windows are closed and the doors are locked.
- Lone workers should not stop, especially after dark, for people requiring help. They should stop in a safe place, as soon as it is practicable to do so, and contact the emergency services as appropriate.
- If followed, or if in doubt as to whether you are being followed, staff should drive to the nearest Garda station, or manned and lit building such as a petrol station, to request assistance.
- If parked up in traffic and approached by someone, the window should be lowered only sufficiently to hear what the person is saying.
- Staff should never pick up hitchhikers during their course of work.

In the event that staff who drive as part of their work or staff that are employed as drivers are required to drive individuals without the presence of other staff where the risks are deemed acceptable, the following should be considered:

- The driver/staff should be informed by the relevant person(s) of any information that they need to know regarding the individual/s medical condition or behaviours that they may present with that may put the individual, other individuals or the driver at risk while in the vehicle.
- In cases where drivers are employed as drivers and link with various services to provide them with a transport service it is the responsibility of all levels of management and staff to ensure that the driver is provided with the relevant information to ensure that he/she can carry out their duties safely. It is the responsibility of the Manager to whom the driver is accountable, to ensure that driver is given the training required in relation to driving alone e.g. Transport Safety Training, Good Practice Guidelines Training, First Aid Training, Epilepsy Awareness Training.
- In cases where individuals, to ensure their safety, require safety devices to be fitted that are deemed to be restrictive, such as buckle bosses or

a harness, the driver should be informed/shown how to use them correctly and how to open them in the event of an emergency.

- If these items are used drivers should read or be informed of the protocols or risk assessments that are in place regarding the use of safety devices.