

# POWYS CHALLENGE

Registered Charity Number 1091494 Company No: 4350654

## LONE WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURES (VOLUNTEERS)

### Introduction

Powys Challenge has responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of its volunteers and for the health and safety of those affected by its work. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is Powys Challenge duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary.

Volunteers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with Powys Challenge in its legal obligations.

Powys Challenge believes that the most appropriate way to protect its volunteers is by raising awareness of the issues involved through training and by monitoring, and by ensuring that volunteers feel free to raise concerns in a supportive atmosphere.

This policy is being introduced to consolidate existing arrangements and not in response to an increase in identified risk. It should be noted that there have been no violent incidents since Powys Challenge was formed in 1994.

### Who are Lone Workers?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, for example:

- Volunteers working alone on the premises
- Volunteers who work outside normal hours
- Volunteers who work away from their office base

### Assessing and Controlling the Risks

There is no legal prohibition on working alone but the organisation must identify the hazards of the work, assess the risks involved and put measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment etc. Powys Challenge will take steps to check that control measures are used and review risk assessment procedures annually to ensure that they are adequate.

Risk control procedures will include the necessity to provide a responsible person with the address which a volunteer may be visiting. Powys Challenge acknowledges that this may appear to contravene the requirements of the Confidentiality Policy. However, Powys Challenge believes that the Health and Safety of its volunteer must be paramount.

When the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up will be put in place.

Where volunteers are working directly with clients, it is normally the responsibility of the referring agency to provide a risk assessment in relation to each service user. The referring agency is required to identify any known risk on the Referral Form at the time of referral. Any change in circumstances, which may affect the level of risk, must be notified to Powys Challenge in writing. Powys Challenge staff must ensure those volunteers are in fully informed of the Risk

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Assessments. Referral agencies will be provided with copies of the Trust's Lone Working Policy and Procedures.

In the case of Restorative Justice work, Powys Challenge Restorative Justice staff must assess risk on an individual basis, using information from other sources. Restorative Justice staff must also receive training in Risk Assessment. They must ensure that volunteers are fully informed of the Risk Assessments.

## Reporting

Any system of controlling risks is only as good as the reporting system supporting it.

- 1) Each volunteer must accept her/his own responsibility to report problems/incidents/or near misses. Volunteers should report any incident immediately to their Project Manager or Head Office staff who must complete an Incident Form. Volunteers should also record the incident on their Time Sheet and/or Report Sheet
- 2) The Chief Officer must ensure that volunteers feel free to report incidents and that such reporting is not linked adversely to a volunteer's ability to do a particular job.
- 3) Reports of incidents and near misses must be used to assess and minimise future risks and to inform protective strategies for the benefit of everyone.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT LONE WORKERS ARE VULNERABLE TO FALSE ACCUSATIONS BEING MADE AS WELL AS PHYSICAL HARM BEING CAUSED**

## Identified Areas of Risk for Volunteers of Powys Challenge

Powys Challenge has identified the following areas of risk for its lone volunteers:

- Powys Challenge Offices
- Client contacts outside office premises
- Courts, Cells, Police Stations, Prisons
- Driving
- Probation Service Offices
- Agency Offices
- Restorative Justice activities

Powys Challenge has developed guidance and procedures for controlling areas of risk and reporting incidents. These link closely with those developed by National Probation Service. The guidelines are below and volunteers will be required to make themselves familiar with them.

These procedures will be reviewed within one year of being introduced, and thereafter annually.

Adequate and appropriate training will also be offered.

## General Guidelines When Working Alone

These are good practice guidelines that people normally observe as 'common sense'.

- **ENSURE THAT SOMEONE KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE AND WHAT TIME YOU ARE EXPECTED TO RETURN**
- **DO NOT UNDERTAKE ANY TASK WHERE YOU FEEL YOU MIGHT BE UNSAFE.**

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- **YOU MAY REFUSE TO WORK WITH ANYONE WHOM YOU CONSIDER TO BE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL AND/OR DRUGS.**
- **DO NOT INTERVIEW IN AN EMPTY BUILDING**
- **DO NOT TAKE CLIENTS TO YOUR HOME**
- **CARRY YOUR IDENTIFICATION CARD**
- **RECORD YOUR WORK IMMEDIATELY**
- **DO NOT GIVE CLIENTS YOUR PERSONAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**
- **DIAL 141 BEFORE PHONING A CLIENT FROM YOUR HOME**
- **INFORM HEAD OFFICE OF ANY CHANGES IN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES**
- **DISCUSS ANY CONCERNS – INCLUDING THOSE OF GENDER - WITH YOUR PROJECT MANAGER**
- **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF IF YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE LATE.**
- **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF OF YOUR RETURN.**

## **Remember**

**LONE WORKERS ARE VULNERABLE TO FALSE ACCUSATIONS BEING MADE AS WELL AS PHYSICAL HARM BEING CAUSED**

# **LONE WORKING PROCEDURES**

## **Powys Challenge Offices**

Two Powys Challenge offices have 'shop fronts' and are intended to be accessible to the public. Other similar premises may be acquired in the future.

Currently there are no secure arrangements to restrict immediate access. Powys Challenge would wish this accessibility to be maintained.

However, Powys Challenge acknowledges that lone workers within the premises may feel vulnerable. The following measures and guidance are designed to reduce this.

- 1) Volunteers will be offered training to deal with handling violence and aggression
- 2) Do not interview a client if alone in the premises
- 3) Attach a notice to the door advising callers when the office will be open and who to call if the matter is urgent.
- 4) Lock external doors if alone in the premises
- 5) Report any incident which has caused concern to your Project Manager so that safety measure can be adapted in the light of increasing knowledge.
- 6) Record the incident in your own records

## **Non-Office Contact With Clients**

The following guidance relates to any visits to clients at venues other than Powys Challenge, including visits to clients' homes.

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- 1) Wherever possible, clients should be invited to attend offices or other public places where interviews can take place in a supervised environment.
- 2) Where a home visit, or a visit to other unsupervised premises is required, you should only visit where an assessment by the referring agency has been carried out regarding the safety of the visit.
- 3) You must inform a responsible person how long you will be away and ensure that s/he knows the address where the meeting is taking place.
- 4) Your responsible person should be someone who understands the importance of confidentiality
- 5) When visiting, observe all reasonable safety precautions, do not park in isolated or dark places, sit near the door, end the interview if you become aware that the situation is becoming unsafe and report to headquarters staff.
- 6) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF IF YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE LATE**
- 7) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF OF YOUR RETURN.**

## **Police Stations, Cells, Courts and Prisons**

Should it be necessary to visit clients in Police Stations, Cells, Courts or Prisons, the following guidelines apply.

- 1) Each venue will have its own requirements for conduct. You must ask what these are, and follow them.
- 2) Obtain information regarding the background, temperament and attitude of the detained person from the officer in charge.
- 3) If you are unhappy about any arrangements for your safety, you must discuss this with the officer in charge
- 4) You may request that an officer accompany you if you have been required to interview in a locked cell.
- 5) Be aware that the primary responsibility of staff is the security of a prisoner.
- 6) Always sit near the door so that you can make your exit if necessary.
- 7) Terminate the interview if any behaviour

**NB: You may be searched before interviewing a client in prison.**

## **HOME**

- 1) Do not invite clients to your home
- 2) Do not give clients your home address or telephone number.
- 3) Follow procedures for non-office contacts with clients.
- 4) Take reasonable precautions within your home to ensure your safety.

## **Driving**

The following guidelines are standard ones. They are not specific to volunteering.

- 1) If you have a mobile phone, check that it is fully charged and that it is switched on. Obtain a list of contact numbers to use in emergency. Whilst considering the importance of **not** using your mobile whilst driving, you must also be aware of your own security when pulling over to use the mobile telephone and lock all car doors.
- 2) Where possible join a national breakdown organisation.

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- 3) Complete vehicle checks before a journey, e.g. petrol, oil, and tyres. Breaking down will put you at risk.
- 4) Ensure that staff in the office and/or your responsible person knows your destination and when you expect to return.
- 5) Doors should remain locked and windows closed in built up areas or slow moving traffic.
- 6) Park in well lit areas especially if you are not returning to your car until after dark. In multi storey car parks, park as near to the exit as possible and away from pillars. Reverse into the parking space. Have your keys ready when you return to the car, and check the back seat.
- 7) If you break down pull off the road as far as possible and use the hazard warning lights. If you do not have a mobile telephone, note landmarks as you walk to the nearest telephone in order to relay your location to the breakdown organisation or police. If possible drive your car as near to the telephone as possible, using the passenger door to get out when on the motorway.
- 8) It is advised in the case of motorway breakdowns that you wait outside the car on the verge to avoid collisions on the hard shoulder. Consideration should then be given to your security when you are outside the vehicle.
- 9) It is advised that you ask the recovery vehicle driver for identification when arriving at your vehicle.
- 10) If another driver intimidates you, or a car is following you, drive to a busy public place and call the police if necessary. If a car pulls in front of you and forces you to stop, leave the engine running and if the driver approaches you sound the horn continuously with the hazard lights on.
- 11) If you see an incident or someone tries flagging you down, it could be safer to use a phone to report what you see. Gesture to acknowledge that they need help and indicate that you will phone for help.
- 12) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF IF YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE LATE.**
- 13) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF OF YOUR RETURN.**

## Passengers

- 1) If you are asked to provide transport for clients, you must ensure that the referring agency has provided a risk assessment.
- 2) If you feel uncomfortable or uncertain about transporting a client, you must report this immediately to your Project Manager or Head Office staff.
- 3) In such an instance your Project Manager will be supportive and will either provide another volunteer to share the journey or authorise that alternative transport arrangements be made for the client.
- 4) If a client appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, you should not allow her/him into your car.
- 5) You may only take the designated person in your car. Any additional passengers must be authorised to travel by the referring agency.

## Probation Offices

Where a volunteer is working within National Probation Service premises, the guidelines developed by the Service should be observed.

At most offices there are secure arrangements to restrict immediate access to those parts of the building where staff are located.

- 1) Where there are no such arrangements e.g. Welshpool, you should not work on your own under any circumstances.

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- 2) If you are working alone on premises with secure arrangements during office hours, first identify the caller and their business.
  - If s/he has an appointment and there is no one to her/him then advise her/him when someone will be available and ask her/him to return at that time.
  - If s/he is delivering goods e.g. stationery or s/he is a building contractor, s/he should still not be given access to the building if you are on your own. Advise her/him when s/he can call back.
- 3) If you are working alone outside office hours do not respond to the caller by entering into dialogue or by opening the door.
- 4) If you are working alone in the office but there are other members of staff on the premises, first identify the caller and their business.
  - If s/he has an appointment let her/him into the waiting area and notify the member of staff s/he has come to see. If that member of staff is not on the premises then notify another officer.
  - Only admit the person who has business with the Service or an appointment. Friends or associates should be asked to wait outside.
- 5) Keep delays in the waiting area to a minimum and keep the caller informed of the reason for the delay.

If a caller is abusive, threatening or violent contact the police immediately – and warn other staff already on the premises

## Agency Offices

Each agency will have its own policies and guidelines for ensuring the safety of its staff and volunteers. Where a volunteer is working with a client in the premises of another agency, s/he should comply with the guidelines of that agency.

- 1) If you are unhappy about your safety arrangements within the external office, withdraw immediately and notify your Project Manager of your actions and your reasons for it.
- 2) Ensure that your Responsible Person or your Project Manager knows where you are working, when you will be leaving and how you can be contacted.
- 3) Always make sure that you are aware of the evacuation procedures in place.
- 4) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF IF YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE LATE.**
- 5) **ALWAYS ADVISE YOUR RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR A MEMBER OF POWYS CHALLENGE STAFF OF YOUR RETURN.**

## Restorative Justice Work

- 1) You must observe the guidance concerning working with children (below)
- 2) You must check that a Risk Assessment has been carried out before any work is undertaken.
- 3) You must check that parental/guardian consent has been obtained in writing prior to any work being undertaken
- 4) You must ensure that all general Health and Safety guidelines for yourself and the young person are observed.
- 5) If you are unsure as to your safety you must not undertake the task alone, but inform your Project Manager or Head Office immediately.
- 6) You must observe all other guidelines in this document.

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## Working with Children

Powys Challenge volunteers must be particularly aware of potential risk to children and to the risk of false accusations.

- 1) Ensure that a Parent/Guardian consent form has been signed to authorise your contact.
- 2) Do not visit a child in her/his home without another adult present.
- 3) Do not be in a room alone with a child with the door shut.
- 4) Do not invite a child to your home.
- 5) Do not transport a child in your car without another adult unless parent or guardian has given specific permission.
- 6) Do keep clear and accurate records of your meetings.
- 7) Do follow Powys County Council Child Protection Guidelines.
- 8) Do follow the Code of Practice in relation to Working with Children.

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# REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS

**“Volunteers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work, and to co-operate with Powys Challenge in its legal obligations.”**

When you are going to work alone, the following instructions are for your guidance.

YOU SHOULD INFORM SOMEONE - either your designated Responsible Person or a member of Powys Challenge staff - of your intention. Tell them: -

- where you are going (address, telephone number)
- when you will return.

If you have informed a Responsible Person then you  
MUST  
INFORM THAT PERSON IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE LATE *and*  
OF YOUR RETURN

If you do not report back within an hour of your expected return, the Responsible Person MUST

- Try to contact you
- Contact the place you were going
- Inform a Powys Challenge staff member

**IF THIS FAILS, THE POLICE WILL BE ALERTED, SO  
DO NOT FORGET TO REPORT BACK.**

**It is important to bear in mind that lone workers are  
vulnerable to false accusations being made as well as physical  
harm being caused.**

All incidents must be reported to your Project Manager or Head Office. You must record the incident in your record. Powys Challenge staff will complete an Incident Report.

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