

## **SAFETY POLICY (Including Lone Worker Guidance)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years that Blackdown Support Group has been running there have been no worrying incidents, however, it is important that all of us involved keep to some guidelines to ensure that this remains the case. This policy, procedures and advice applies to workers on the charities premises and on other premises which are either publicly managed or privately owned, and to those situations where workers are alone or in small groups in isolation.

This policy also highlights areas of potential risk and ways of diminishing this risk when visiting people in their own homes or in other settings as a lone worker. This policy applies to all paid and unpaid (volunteer) workers.

Your own personal safety must be your first priority. Although it is impossible to say what you should do in all circumstances, this policy is a good practice guide to help you manage potential risk.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The trustees of the charity have a general responsibility to ensure a safe working environment.
- It is incumbent upon the Board to identify the hazards, assess risks and put measures in place to avoid, mitigate or control the risks.
- It is incumbent upon workers to co-operate with safe systems of work and follow any instructions or advice given and reasonably seek to avoid a situation that may result in an accident or incident.
- A worker involved in an incident that causes them harm will receive appropriate support from the Board.

### **PRINCIPLES**

- **All volunteers should give priority to their own personal safety and comfort.** We don't knowingly accept referrals of people with a history of violence, but other people or animals within the household may pose a risk.
- **Please continually make your own assessment of the situation.** If a person is aggressive or drunk do not enter the house. Make an excuse

and leave immediately. You do not have to accept abusive or racist language.

- **You have a right to leave any situation that makes you feel uncomfortable.** Trust your intuition, act on the warning and leave immediately. We will always support you in taking that action. Then contact the Co-ordinator as soon as possible. If you live alone, you may like to tell a friend or neighbour where you will be and when you expect to be back and make arrangements to call or text them on your return.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Volunteers and staff must do their own risk assessment when arranging their appointment with a client. Ask the following questions:

- Verification of location – is the house difficult to find, or in a particularly rural location?
- Access to the premises – e.g. are there any steep steps?
- Time of the visit – consideration of circumstances after dark.
- Parking available?
- Are there any potentially dangerous animals or pets?
- Do they wish a relative / friend to be present?
- Is there any history of violence, aggressive behaviour or domestic violence within the household? Any relevant information will be shared with the volunteer.
- If the visit is to apply for a benefit, the client will need their National Insurance number, medical letters and their prescription list to hand.
- Confirm date, time and office telephone number, should the client need to cancel.

## **RISK MITIGATION**

- The workers' first priority is to ensure personal safety. This could mean leaving the premises, seeking another person for support, or calling the police. Remember – when in doubt – get out!
- Workers are urged to leave a risky situation immediately. Where this becomes impossible, help must be summoned, including calling for police support when appropriate.
- Arrange to meet the client outside of their home if this is preferable.
- Do not enter the property, particularly a client's home, if feeling unsure or uncomfortable with the situation; make an excuse and leave.
- You may wish to make the first contact by telephone; ascertain information during this contact such as whether it is likely that other people will be there and who they are.
- Be punctual. Delay or early arrival (even by a few minutes) can be upsetting to the client. If you are unavoidably delayed, you must ring and explain and reassure.
- As you enter, ask the client to lead the way so you are behind them, not the other way round.
- Always carry and show your ID card.

- Always be prepared to leave immediately. Do not take off your coat or unpack any papers until you feel comfortable in the situation.
- You may ask the client to turn off the TV or radio if you consider them a distraction.
- Check with the client what name they wish to be called.
- If appropriate, remind the client that everything they tell you will be treated in confidence.
- When you leave make sure that you take all your belongings
- If you are concerned about anything arising from the visit, advise the Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

## **BOUNDARIES.**

Clients have the nature and limits of our service explained to them. If they are asking you to do something that you are not happy with say that you must consult with the Co-ordinator first.

## **PRIVACY.**

The client is never given the volunteer's, address or telephone number unless the volunteer is asked first. If you wish to prevent them from getting your telephone number via the 1471 service consider dialling 141 before their telephone number, if you call them. But this could result in the call not being picked up.

## **AGGRESSION.**

If a person shows aggression your aim should be to get away quickly and report the incident. Keep your distance and don't invade the person's personal space. Never put your hand on someone who is angry. Do not react aggressively yourself to a threat. Stay calm; speak gently, slowly and clearly. Avoid an aggressive stance and, if possible, try not to look down on an aggressor. Do not attempt to referee a domestic conflict situation. Never remain alone with an actively violent person. Preferably keep a barrier between yourself and an aggressor, move gradually backwards and leave. Immediately then report the incident.

## **ACTION IN THE EVENT OF AN INCIDENT**

In the event of an incident report to the Co-ordinator, even if no injury is sustained, as soon as practicable. (Injury in this sense includes physical, psychological, social or emotional trauma)

**Review Date:** December 2016

**Approved by Committee on:** 14 February 2017

**Signed by Chairman:** Sarah Folland

**Next Review Date:**