



LONE WORKING POLICY/PROCEDURE FOR UNDERTAKING TASKS IN PRIVATE RESIDENCES

1. INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

When dealing with clients in domestic settings certain hazards to health and safety may arise. Mind in Croydon seeks to remove these risks or where this is not possible, to reduce them to a manageable level. This policy/procedure is intended to provide a framework to assess and reduce the risks that working with clients in their own homes may present. The policy applies to all our stakeholders who may undertake tasks with clients in their own homes. Those people in turn have a duty to ensure that by their own acts and omissions, they do not put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others.

Issues of health and safety can arise where, while supporting clients, someone is engaged in activity in a residence in the community where a client lives (their own home, supported housing etc). The individual carrying out Mind in Croydon's work there may be physically isolated in the residence and potentially without access to immediate assistance. Staff required to deliver support to a person's home must always have a work mobile phone.

2. ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECURING THE HEALTH & SAFETY OF THOSE ENGAGED IN PROVIDING SUPPORT TO PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN HOMES

Mind in Croydon will do its best to ensure that when people are undertaking tasks in a person's home do so in a way which is as planned and safe as possible. In turn it is requested that those people do not knowingly put themselves at risk of harm in the course of performing their tasks. If at any time they feel there is risk of harm, they should report this to their Manager or Head of Services if their Manager is not available. Consideration of the risk factors involved in working with service users is built into the assessment processes of Mind in Croydon's services. People undertaking these tasks are expected to use these systems to make a sensible judgment as to whether they consider it safe to work alone with a service user (or group of service users) in any given setting, including a reappraisal of the risks when the situation changes.

However, the nature of this work means that the circumstances and settings may vary. Because of this the person undertaking the task and the Manager of the Service shall keep practices under regular and ongoing review by means of the many mechanisms run by Mind to ensure good practice generally in its projects (this includes meetings with the Senior Management Team,). The priority must always be that people feel safe in the course of carrying out tasks with clients and that they are not knowingly exposed to circumstances where this may be in doubt.

3. MONITORING & REVIEW

The practice of the Service may be reviewed at handovers, management meetings and at other times as required, for example when an incident occurs and learning needs to take place. Individual practice will be addressed in regular discussions with those who carry out these tasks. The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review, and will take place around every 3 years.

4. PROCEDURE FOR UNDERTAKING WORK WITH CLIENTS IN PRIVATE RESIDENCES

4.1. RISK ASSESSMENT

Before going alone, an assessment of the risks should be undertaken by the Manager of the Service or someone with relevant experience who is chosen to deputise for them. The assessment of risk should consider all relevant information to make a reasoned judgement about risk, including the following issues:

- The service users concerned: Mental state, mood, medication, past and recent history of challenging behaviour, known triggers for this.
- The nature of the task: Size of the group, sensitivity of the task, activities with access to tools/potential weapons, special circumstances or history of problems associated with this activity (e.g. service user under the influence of drugs or alcohol).

- The environment: Location, isolation, security, access and exits, any risks the building itself poses e.g., faulty lighting and heating systems. Are their flats or stairs to the person's home? Does the person have a pet? Will other members of the persons family be present?
- Communication: Reliability of the technology provided e.g. mobile phone, alarm systems and whether the individual concerned is able to use it.
- Support systems: Level of access to immediate assistance, knowledge, experience and ability of the individual to manage the risks.
- Transport: Can the individual manage transport arrangements for service users and self where required

Once the potential hazard(s) and degree of risk have been identified, a judgement needs to be made by the Manager whether the risks can be managed or reduced to an acceptable level. If the outcome of the assessment is that safe working practice cannot be sustained, the work should cease until agreed adequate safeguards can be put in place. Decisions not to proceed should at all times be based on a risk assessment which identifies that safe practice cannot be undertaken. The decision should wherever possible be made in conjunction with the Manager of the service concerned. However, where this is not possible, people are NEVER expected to proceed where there is a perceived risk to their safety.

4.2. COMMUNICATIONS

Those undertaking tasks in private residences must ensure that the Service knows when they will be working alone, the exact location of where they will be working and with which service user(s). This must be communicated to the service concerned before the visit is undertaken. This information must be reported before departure and on return from each visit. This includes situations when the individual goes straight home after lone working rather than returning to base. Individuals must inform the base of the time they expect to be back at base or to have finished their span of duty. If they fail to return or to check in at that time, the Manager will assess the situation and take appropriate steps in response - this response is likely to vary according to circumstances. The Service staff will maintain a rota and update it as necessary. The rota will be managed by the Manager or other responsible member of staff in the Service who has been identified to do so e.g. when the Manager is on leave. It will be kept as a record within the Service so that the whereabouts of people is known whenever needed.

In cases where regular and routine work with a client alone is undertaken in a private residence, the Manager will undertake an individual risk assessment on as and when necessary. Those who carry out tasks with clients in private residences will be issued with mobile phones. They will be responsible for ensuring that the phone is in working order, charged and with sufficient credit.

Mind in Croydon's Services will maintain a record containing details such as mobile phone number, home address and telephone number, Next of Kin and any other relevant information. This information can be used to assist in tracing the individual should this be necessary and will be stored in the offices of the relevant service of Mind in Croydon. It will be the responsibility of each individual to report changes in their personal information to the Manager who will amend the record. Where a risk to personal safety is identified and it is agreed by both the individual and the Manager that a risk exists, the work should be discontinued until safe working practice has been discussed and agreed upon by the individual undertaking the tasks and the Manager. Individuals are NEVER expected to undertake a visit where there is a risk to their personal safety. Any incidents of hazard, threat, violence or 'near miss' must be reported to the Service Manager by the next working day. Mind in Croydon will examine whether these procedures need to be amended in any way, based on this real-life experience.

4.3. SHARING & RECORDING

All those involved have a duty of care for each other and must promptly communicate any risk from service users to the Manager of the service who will consider what action needs to be taken in response to this risk and will ensure that everyone necessary is informed promptly and appropriately and with due regard to issues of confidentiality. All those involved will be expected to routinely share information about service users and incidents with each other where it is relevant and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Reviewed and Updated by the Board of Mind in Croydon – May 2023