



## PITSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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# Pitstone Community Car Scheme

## LONE WORKER AND PERSONAL SAFETY POLICY

The scheme is committed to reducing the risks to its volunteers associated with lone working by:

- Identifying the risks associated with lone working ('risk assessment').
- Giving practical advice and clear guidance to volunteers on how to avoid and manage risks associated with lone working.
- Developing the ability of volunteers to anticipate risks and to manage and deal with them.
- Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that volunteers do not avoid reporting them in the belief that they are not serious enough or that it may suggest failure on their part.

Volunteers and organisers share the responsibility for achieving these objectives. This document is intended for use as a reference guide and also contains advice to help volunteers to work more safely. This advice is not exhaustive, nor is it a substitute for safe systems of work.

It is essential that volunteers and organisers co-operate to develop simple and practical systems.

### **What is lone working?**

Lone working describes any situation whereby someone is not working alongside or near to other staff. Potentially this could include any volunteer or organiser.

Due to the nature of some of the work, there could be occasions when you will be in a situation where you are working alone, sometimes in remote or isolated areas or at night.

Given some forethought and a few simple precautions, the slight risk of going missing or becoming the subject of an assault can be reduced to a minimum.

### **Risk assessment**

Lone workers could be more vulnerable e.g. to assault or because they are unable to raise the alarm, if they have an accident. Therefore, the risk for lone workers is greater and more rigorous systems are needed to protect them.

### **Basic requirements for all lone workers**

- Take care of your own safety and that of others affected by your actions or inactions.
- Comply with risk assessments and safe systems of work.
- Report any shortcomings in systems of work to the co-ordinator.
- Complete Incident Report Forms in the event of incidents or near misses.

## **Working alone away from your home**

Before leaving your normal base, volunteers should:

- Leave details of where you plan to go, approximate times when you expect to be there, details of any meetings you have arranged (including the name of the person you are meeting).
- Ensure you have an appropriate means of communication.
- If taking a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient credit; leave it switched on; **do not use it whilst driving**.
- Consider taking any additional equipment you may need, such as a torch.
- Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated farm, adverse weather conditions for driving); if there are, discuss them with your co-ordinator before setting off.
- Contact the co-ordinator (or other person) to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule.
- Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this.
- Contact the co-ordinator, or other person as agreed, when you have safely completed your assignment.

Please remember that these procedures are there to protect you.

## **Visiting clients in their own homes**

It should not be necessary to enter the individual's home, but should they ask you to step inside (perhaps they aren't quite ready when you arrive etc), then please take sensible precautions:

- Make a note of where you are going.
- Do not enter if the person you are visiting is not there and you do not know the person inviting you inside.
- Tell the co-ordinator about any incidents which arose during the meeting.
- Remember you are visiting someone else's territory, acknowledge it is their home and wait to be asked in etc.
- Familiarise yourself with the surroundings in case you need to leave quickly.
- Don't block the other person's line of egress, but make sure your own isn't blocked.
- Let the other person enter the room first and make sure you have a clear line of escape.
- Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting.
- If you feel threatened by dogs etc, ask politely if they can be moved.

## **Aggression/violence/kidnap**

This includes aggressive or inappropriate physical contact which may or may not result in pain and /or injury or offence and other non-physical abuse including verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset. You may like to consider carrying a personal alarm and ensure that you know how to use it.

## **Other advice**

### ***If somebody starts to get angry:***

- Try to remove an angry or upset customer from an audience or, if easier, remove the audience.
- Make reasonable efforts to control the situation.
- Stay calm; try to stay relaxed; don't become rooted to one spot; move about occasionally; try to look at something you are discussing rather than at the aggressor.

- Listen carefully, even to abuse; agree where possible.
- Ask yourself if you are the best person to deal with the situation.
- Offer an angry person a range of options from which to choose: in that way he or she will find it difficult to stay angry.
- If you are unable to control the situation it is better to retreat.

After a violent, or potentially violent incident, volunteers should meet with the co-ordinator to review the incident and agree courses of action including any further support or counselling. Any such review will be treated as a priority.

A full written report of any incident or support will be compiled. This will be kept in confidence.

### **Travelling by car**

This might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas, perhaps at night.

1. Plan your route and take appropriate maps.
2. Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather.
3. Keep valuables out of sight; female drivers should not leave obvious signs that the driver is female (handbags, coats etc) on the seats.
4. Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit; when returning to the vehicle, check the back seat.
5. Be aware of safe parking areas, particularly after dark.
6. Carry a mobile phone for emergency use (see also Mobile Phone policy).
7. Do not pick up hitchhikers.
8. Carry a torch at night.
9. If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help.
10. If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave sufficient space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened.

### **Road rage**

If at any time you are confronted by this situation, it is important that you do nothing to fuel it further. Do not stop to confront the third party. If a car pulls in front of you and you are approached, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and windows closed; keep the engine running and drive away as soon as possible. If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash lights etc to gain others' attention.

If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until you reach a busy area - eg a 24 hour garage.

If you are stationary and have a mobile phone, ring the emergency services.

### **If you break down on a motorway or dual carriageway**

- Park as near as possible to an emergency phone.
- If you need to walk, wear high visibility clothing if possible.
- Leave your car by the passenger door.
- When making an emergency call, face oncoming traffic, so you can see if another vehicle is approaching.
- Tell the operator if you are a lone female.
- Never cross the carriageway.

- Wait behind the barrier, beside your vehicle if this is safe.
- Ask for ID from uniformed persons to ensure they are bona fide.

**Dog attack**

- Do not enter premises where an unfamiliar dog is loose.
- If, when talking to a customer, their dog causes you to feel uncomfortable, politely ask them to remove it.
- If you are worried about a dog/animal at a client’s home, report this to the co-ordinator, and no more bookings will be taken until the client has agreed to negate the threat.

**Travelling in isolated areas / late at night**

Wherever possible arrange trips so that they are completed during daylight hours, if you have to go to an evening appointment, be aware of safe parking areas, particularly after dark.

**Procedure for alerting to personal danger**

If volunteers find themselves in danger and unable to speak freely, they should emphasise to the antagonist that they are expected to call the co-ordinator at a pre-determined time, and that if they don't, the alarm will be raised.

On telephoning, the volunteer should say:

“Hello, this is ....., may I speak to .....?”

And then adopting a traffic light system, mentioning a green folder means that 'all is well', a yellow folder means that 'I need assistance' and a red folder means 'call the police'. **THIS WILL SIGNIFY THAT ALL IS NOT WELL. THE CO-ORDINATOR WILL IMMEDIATELY CALL THE POLICE AND DIRECT THEM TO WHERE THE INDIVIDUAL HAS INDICATED IN THEIR SCHEDULE THEY HAVE GONE.**

**Review**

This Policy was adopted by Pitstone Parish Council on .....

minute reference ..... and will be reviewed on at least an annual basis.

Signed on behalf of Pitstone Parish Council by:

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Chairman