

Personal Safety and Lone Working Procedures.

1. Aim of policy

Is to minimise the risks of violence to staff and to fulfil the legal obligations that the organisation has under Reg 3 of Health and Safety at Work Regs., 1999.

2. Definitions of:

Violence and aggression:

“Any behaviour towards an employee in the course of his or her work that has a damaging physical or psychological effect upon the person”.

Staff:

Any worker, be they advocacy worker or member of support staff and any volunteer be they a management committee member or volunteer advocacy worker.

3. Policy statement

AdvoCard believes that:

- All violence to staff is unacceptable whatever form it takes and whatever reasons are cited for it.
- The risks to staff of carrying out their work should be recognised and the organisation should take action to minimise these risks.
- Violence can have a potentially damaging effect on staff.
- Dealing with or being subject to violent behaviour is not considered to be a failure on the part of staff .

4. Action to be taken to minimise the risk of violence and aggression

The project will, in the case of the Mental Health Act service:

- Carry out risk assessment, with two workers, on initial visit by filling in Risk Assessment Checklist after visit.
- Assist staff to identify their individual awareness of risk and in what circumstances they feel more vulnerable. This will be done in supervision and peer support meetings with Advocacy Manager.
- Monitor the number and types of incident to see if there are any general patterns emerging.
- Carry out a yearly evaluation of the policy by consulting staff in supervision and by analysing the reports of violent incidents

The project will, in the case of the volunteer delivered service:

- Always send two volunteers when conducting a home visit
- Assist volunteers to identify their individual awareness of risk through group support meetings and 1:1 support

5. Procedures

5.1 Interviewing in offices.

- There should always be at least one other staff member present in any office building during the interview/ assessment process.
- Under no circumstances should a service user be first seen in any office building alone. The appointment should be cancelled.
- Staff should familiarise themselves with security arrangements for any office used for interviewing.

5.1a Lone Working in Office – Norton Park

- Ensure office door is locked and that entrance is only gained with permission.
- If the telephone rings do not arrange meeting at office or inform caller that you are in the office on your own.
- Should someone forcibly enter the room immediately activate the mobile panic alarm and attempt to leave the office .If this is not possible attempt to contain the situation until assistance arrives.
- On leaving office and building after such a scenario have mobile phone at hand and be very alert about anyone loitering within or outwith building. Phone police if concerned this is the case.
- On receipt of abusive phone call, hang up and if person is persistent and you are concerned, phone police to investigate source.
- Certain people can be given access to the office while you are lone working at your own discretion. They would include Advocard staff and volunteers, Albion Trust staff and other agency staff known to the project.

5.1 b Lone working in Office – Leith Walk

Set out below are guidelines for staff when working alone in the Advocard office. They should be adhered to at all times. It is recognised that lone working should be avoided as much as possible because of the risks involved and the disruption this causes to the service we provide to our users.

5.1b.1 All staff should adhere to the following:

- On entering the building make sure that the front door is securely closed
- Leave both blinds on the door fully down.

- Feel free to work either in the rear office or at the reception desk. (This is related to who you are and where you normally work.)
- Remember to unlock both the rear door and security grill the moment you arrive to ensure you can exit in the event of a fire. (Under review)
- Locate the mobile panic button and make sure you have it on your person at all times.
- If the telephone rings answer it and deal with the call as normal. Do not inform anyone that you are in the office alone. Do not arrange for them to come to the office at that time.
- If the door intercom should sound answer it and inform the person that we are closed and suggest that they come back another time. Do not tell them you are in the office alone. If you do not wish to answer it then don't. (Under review - for discussion)
- Should someone forcibly enter the building immediately activate the mobile panic button and attempt to leave the building, If this is not possible attempt to contain the situation until the police arrive.
- On leaving the building follow the normal security procedure. Remember to take the mobile panic button with you. Be very alert when locking up for people loitering near the office. If attacked activate the mobile panic button and wait for the police.

5.1b.2 On Receipt of abusive telephone calls

- Hang up and record. Do not state that you are alone. If concerned contact the police.

5.1b.3 On Receipt of abusive intercom calls

- Do not respond, hang up and if concerned call the police.

5.1b.4 Individuals who can be given access while lone working.

- Certain people can be given access to the AdvoCard office while you are lone working at your own discretion. They are volunteers and committee members.

5.2 Initial assessments in the community

Some initial assessments may be carried out in the community. There should always be two staff/volunteers present.

Staff should not provide lifts to those using the advocacy service. If it is necessary to accompany someone to an appointment or meeting then public transport should be used. Travel costs will be refunded on production of a ticket or receipt.

- If during the referral process another agency has indicated concern about a history of violence a risk assessment should be sought as a matter of urgency with the prior knowledge and consent of the service user.
- Should the service user agree, then the interview should be conducted in Leith Walk office only after the risk assessment has been completed. Interviews in other offices should be carefully considered with a guarantee of other workers present and safety procedures for that environment gained.

5.3 Home Visits and checking-in

- All staff should write in the diary the name of the service user they are visiting and their expected time of return.

- All home visits by volunteers should be in the diary and support staff should be aware of the visit. Volunteers should report to the office on arrival and departure.
- If working alone at Norton Park, Advocacy Worker must inform Leith Walk staff of intended visit.
- Staff should ensure that they have a mobile phone with them in case of emergency during the home visit.
- In the event of delay staff should phone the office to advise that they are running late
- Staff should identify on referral which cases present more risks, both in terms of risk of violence in the family and risk in the community.
- In cases, which present a risk of violence to a staff member, then they will have a responsibility to ensure there is someone else present. They will inform another worker of details of visit and time of expected return. They will confirm they have returned to same worker.
- The Norton Park and Leith Walk office have responsibility to be available for checking in if the worker has alerted them to the visit.
- If the person does not check in as expected the office should call the worker on their mobile phone
- If you are in danger and the office calls you on your mobile and you are able to pick up but not to be honest about what is taking place, use the following code: **‘No, I won’t have time to go to the bank’**.

- If you are unsafe, unable to leave the house, but can use your mobile, phone the person you arranged to call and use the following code: **‘I won’t have time to go the bank’**.
- This code will alert the office to call the police and inform them that they believe an incident is taking place
- If having followed through all other potential contacts for the worker they are not contactable the office should call the police.

5.4 Guidance for visiting service users at home

- Go in daylight wherever possible
- At the person’s home remember you are the visitor. Say who you are, where you are from and show some identification. If the service user is not present do not enter the house.
- If you get an aggressive reception or the service user appears out of control do not enter the house
- If the person seems to be under the influence of excessive alcohol or drug use do not enter the house
- If the person begins to use alcohol or drugs during the visit you should aim to end the visit as soon as possible.
- Try to take only what is essential into the house. Leave handbags and briefcases behind if possible. Avoid taking anything that you would not want the service user to see or read.
- Always take your mobile phone with you.
- Take in your surroundings. Where possible sit with a clear line to an exit.

- At all times remain alert to changes in mood and behaviour.
- If you feel vulnerable, leave as quickly as possible.

5.5 Guidance on risk assessment and management

When working with individual service users staff should be able to make an assessment of the risk of violence based on a number of factors including:

- individual worker awareness
- Known history of the service user
- the demeanor of the service user at the time
- What is known from information gathered from checklist completed at initial visit.

6 Risk factors

the following factors should be considered in making a risk assessment.

6.1 Does the person have a history of violent behaviour?

- Get as much information as possible on previous behaviour
- What was the mental state at time of previous behaviour?
- What was social situation at the time?
- What stresses was the client experiencing?
- What were the triggers to the previous violent incident?
- Are the present circumstances similar?

6.2 Does the person use alcohol or drugs?

Be aware of changes in drug or alcohol use. Get as much information about how substance use can change an individual service users'

behaviour.

6.3 Has there been a change in circumstances?

Stress and frustration are two key indicators to violence arising from a person's emotional state. Staff need to build an awareness over time of what changes or circumstances are likely to cause significant stress and frustration for the service user.

Staff should remember that risk assessment is an ongoing process and that decisions need to be constantly reviewed in relation to changing circumstances.

6.4 Indicators of violence

The following factors should be monitored as they can give an indication of potential violent or aggressive behaviour. Staff should note if the factors below are changing.

6.5 Behaviour and body language

such as escalating speech, pacing up and down, averting eyes

6.6 Language

Such as depersonalised language e.g. referring to staff as "you people"

6.7 Dealing with aggression and violence

Staff should consider the following guidelines when faced with a potentially violent or aggressive situation.

6.8 Be aware of your self and your body language

- Stay calm, speak slowly, gently and clearly

- Avoid body language, which may be misinterpreted such as hands on hips/folded arms, raised arm. Do not touch the person
- Try to sit down
- Be aware of your posture
- Give the person as much space as possible
- Maintain eye contact but not for too long as this can be interpreted as threatening
- Avoid fiddling or tapping pens

6.9 Aim to calm the person down

- Encourage the person to talk
this can help to diffuse the situation
- Listen
Make sure they know you are listening to them.
- Hear them out
Let them do most of the talking
- Resist arguing
your aim is to avoid confrontation
- Be aware of your language

Avoid remarks such as "calm down, don't be silly."

- Depersonalise the issues

Don't get into a debate about what you did or did not do. Remember to let them do the talking

- Watch for changes in their behaviour

Such as the lowering of their voice, a more relaxed manner, which shows that the person has calmed down.

7 Reporting Incidents

All incidents should be reported to the project manager and recorded in the case file.

8 Aftercare

Staff will be offered the opportunity to discuss the incident and review any action, which could be taken to avoid a similar situation arising.

Staff will also have the opportunity to access counselling and time off work should this be needed.

March 2007