

## **Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Mind**

### **POLICY ON LONE WORKING**

Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Mind (DGS Mind) recognises that staff and volunteers working alone with service users may be at risk. To reduce the possibility of this risk DGS Mind will train all staff and volunteers in how to deal with difficult and dangerous behaviour, will provide alert systems for staff and volunteers engaged in lone working, and will ensure staff and volunteers are aware of the policies and procedures on lone working. This procedure will be reviewed every 2 years to take into account any changes which may occur.

Lone working is defined as situations where a solitary staff member/volunteer is working with one or more service users, in situations where there are no other staff (including staff of other agencies) or volunteers to summon if assistance were required. The organisation has strict limitations on where and how lone working can occur:

#### **In the Office Base:**

No lone working is permitted. Outside of office hours, there will be at least two counsellors/group facilitators in the building at any one time. Counsellors working outside office hours must cancel their sessions if fellow counsellors, who were intended to be working in the building at the same time, are unable to attend. In the rare circumstances where a staff member is working alone in the office building, service users are not permitted entry.

#### **In DGS Mind Community Venues:**

No lone working is permitted. Counsellors and group facilitators must ensure other DGS Mind staff or volunteers, or the staff of other agencies, are on the premises and aware that a 1 to 1 or group session is taking place. The one exception to this rule is lone working on the DGS Mind Allotment, where 1) all service-users must already be known to the facilitator and have been appropriately risk assessed and 2) as a rule other allotment holders are nearby. Where the facilitator feels that exceptionally, risks are high, the session should be cancelled.

#### **In Public Places:**

Lone working in groups or 1 to 1 can take place in these locations, within the following procedure:

#### **In Private Homes:**

1 to 1 lone working can take place in these locations, within the following procedure:

## **Lone Working Procedure**

### **General Lone Working**

1. All initial visits to a private home must be undertaken by two staff/volunteers. Where it is the intention that this initial visit will result in 1 to 1 contact between the service user/carer and a staff/volunteer, this visit must result in a written risk assessment, which will be informed where possible by a risk assessment by an external professional. It is good practice for the professional risk assessment to be received prior to an initial visit.
2. Where the above risk assessments indicate that lone working with a named individual is possible, then the staff/volunteer lone working must be trained in the use of the 'Look out call' system prior to taking on the work.
3. Staff/volunteers must appropriately alert the 'Look out call' system prior to making a lone visit, or meeting a service-user/carer in the community, and cancel the alert at the end of the meeting. There are additional features for emergencies detailed in the training. For security reasons, codes and pin numbers are not given here.
4. It is the duty of lone workers to ensure they always take their mobile phones on lone visits and keep them switched on. They must ensure the phone is fully charged, has credit and that the appropriate codes are programmed in. If mobile phone coverage is poor, then lone workers should discuss with the office or their supervisor as to how to deal with the situation. The organisation will provide lone workers with a mobile phone, if they do not already have one. This must be returned on leaving the organisation.
5. All staff/volunteers should feel free to call the police to any situation where they feel this is necessary. Besides the conventional 999, mobile phones reach emergency services through 112, even in areas where there is no signal. Emergency services 112 are able to track where you may be if you are unable to talk.
6. The staff practice of recording their whereabouts on their movement sheet, at the beginning of every week will continue. It is important that all staff members know where this is kept. It should not be kept in view of others who may pass through the office as it will contain confidential information. Staff should always mention to their supervisors/reception that they are going on a lone visit when leaving. Any changes during the week must be made to the sheet.
7. If, prior to a lone visit a lone worker feels unsure about the risks involved, then they should postpone and discuss the changing nature of risk with their supervisor.
8. Staff or volunteers should not continue with the visit if they feel that the person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if they appear aggressive or abusive, or present a risk. Make whatever excuses needed, to safely leave the situation.

### **Transport**

1. Staff and volunteers are not generally permitted to take service users in their cars unless the procedure outlined below is adhered to. Staff are not permitted to travel in vehicles which service-users are driving.
2. All occasions when there is reason to transport service-users in cars, or to travel in a service-users car must be approved in advance by the line manager. This approval must be recorded in writing, and may relate to a one-off journey, or a series of journeys, or a longer term approval.
3. The line manager's approval will be based on a consideration of:
  - A risk assessment (Appendix 2)
  - Condition of the vehicle and insurance issues



**Appendix 1: Risk Assessment of the situation, individual and area:**

Potential Risk	Level Of Risk: High, Medium, Low	Action to be taken to control risk
Is the house in an isolated area?		
Is the road uneven (e.g. pot holes)?		
Is there a risk getting to and from the house?		
Is the house in well lit area?		
Is the house itself well lit?		
Is there a lot of clutter?		
Are there other people living there/coming around a lot?		
How well does the person appear to be?		
Are they dressed appropriately?		
Are there any obstacles in front of the door?		
Are there any animals?		
Is there evidence of drug use?		
Are there children ?		
Are the house windows, locked shut?		
Is the flooring hazardous ( holes, nails etc)?		
Is there mobile phone reception?		
Previous history of person		
Are things available that could be used as weapons?		

**High level:** This means the risk is of a level which may be very dangerous and requires immediate action.

**Medium level:** This indicates that there is a risk which could be potentially dangerous however; it is/could be controllable.

**Low level:** This means there is none or little risk which is unlikely to be dangerous.

## Appendix 2:

### Assessing risks when using a car with a service user.

Potential Risk	Level Of Risk: High, Medium, Low	Action to be taken to control risk
How does the service user appear (well, unwell)?		
Has the service user expressed any suicidal thoughts?		
Is there in alternative way to get to the destination?		
Is there a past history of dangerous behaviour in cars?		
Are the driving conditions dangerous (weather, darkness)?		

Levels of risk explained:

#### **High level:**

This means the risk is of a level which may be very dangerous and requires immediate action.

#### **Medium level:**

This indicates that there is a risk which could be potentially dangerous however; it is/could be controllable.

#### **Low level:**

This means there is none or little risk which is unlikely to be dangerous.