

VOLUNTARY ACTION SHETLAND - SHETLAND BEFRIENDING SCHEME

LONE WORKING POLICY

Staff and volunteers and Lone Working

In line with Voluntary Action Shetland's Safe working practice guidelines for staff when meeting clients, having an effective lone working policy for staff and volunteers is crucial management support in an otherwise unsupervised situation.

Although issues that might arise during lone working vary from match to match and visit to visit, Voluntary Action Shetland - Shetland Befriending Scheme has a duty to ensure that their staff and volunteers benefit from the same health and safety procedures. Staff and volunteers need to know what the lone working issues are, what the procedures are for dealing with them, who they can turn to for help, who is managing and supporting them both during office hours and out with office hours.

Lone Working: Staff and Volunteers Personal Safety

The Shetland Befriending Scheme will exercise its responsibility for the safety of its lone working staff and volunteers by:

- Covering Lone Working situations in initial training
- Gathering information from referral agencies on the potential risks involved in Lone Working with specific service users
- Assessing Lone Working issues when meeting families and service users for assessment prior to matching
- Passing on of specific Lone Working information relating to the match to the volunteer prior to matching them
- Discussing Lone Working situations in support and supervision on an ongoing basis

Meeting the Service User

Instructions to staff and volunteers who will be Lone Working include:

- Making sure details of the meetings are known to someone, i.e. where they are going, how they are getting there, (e.g. car, taxi, bus), when they will be back and who to contact if they are not back at the expected time
- Staff and volunteers are to keep their card with details of who they can contact in an emergency on them at all times

- Staff and volunteers are to ensure they are well prepared and have planned routes and journeys
- Staff and volunteers are to walk in lighted areas and ensure that they have enough fuel/charge for any car journey
- Staff and volunteers are to keep their mobile switched on and in an accessible place. Also if they have a personal alarm, to carry it with them at all times
- Staff and volunteers when working with service user, should attempt to de-escalate situations in a non-confrontational manner but in the event that they feel at risk they should withdraw from the situation and seek support
- Staff and volunteers are to ensure they are nearest the exit in a property when they are with someone who is at risk of challenging behaviour
- If a staff member is meeting someone on a higher risk category for an initial meeting, alternative arrangements can be made to meet with them, i.e. 2 members of staff could attend/meetings held within office hours in a public area. Careful assessment of risk would occur for a volunteer being considered to work on a 1:1 basis with the service user
- If personal safety is a significant risk to staff or volunteers, the scheme reserves the right to withdraw the service user from the scheme

Entering a Service Users Home – Guidance Points

Entering a service user's home will be linked to the befriending meetings with the volunteer either picking the service user up or dropping them off to/from their home. For a number of matches, volunteers may undertake meetings at the service user's home but only with the prior agreement of the scheme and in exceptional circumstances.

In order to regularly review the match a staff member may undertake the review in the service user's home or alternative arrangements can be made if necessary.

In the event that access to the home is considered the following guidance should be followed:

- Staff and volunteers should discuss with scheme staff any issues and problems that might arise during any visit relating to the service users circumstances
- Staff and volunteers are not to enter someone's house if that person or anyone present is under the influence of drugs or alcohol

- If there are any concerns about the way things are developing, staff and volunteers are to try and defuse the situation, e.g. by changing the subject
- Staff and volunteers are to remain aware of changes in mood, body language and behaviour
- Staff and volunteers are to leave if they feel things are getting out of control
- When in the house, staff and volunteers are to always be aware of their surroundings and place themselves with a clear line to an exit
- It is advised that staff and volunteers sit on a chair rather than a sofa and to not sit with their back to people
- Staff and volunteers are to be very aware of maintaining appropriate boundaries at all times

Reporting a Lone Working Incident

The Shetland Befriending Scheme adheres to good practice and requires a record of all incidents to be recorded where a lone working member of staff or volunteer has felt threatened or has had to deal with an aggressive situation. Initial training will include information on reporting incidents.

If staff and volunteers need to record an incident they will be given incident forms that will allow them to fill in any incidents, in confidence. Any incidents will be reported and appropriate action will be taken. The staff member or volunteer will be notified of the action taken within 7 days. The staff member or volunteer will also be given additional support stemming from the incident should it be required.