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The Breastfeeding Network

Lone worker Policy including Safe Home Visiting

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BREASTFEEDING NETWORK
LONE WORKER POLICY including SAFE HOME VISITING

Guidelines for volunteering or working alone, including making home visits.

Please be aware of your own responsibility in ensuring your personal safety when working alone and making home visits. BfN asks that you think carefully about the following guidelines and not to take any unnecessary risks with your own safety.

It is impossible to write guidelines that cover all situations, so please discuss how these guidelines might apply in your own situation with your supervisor in supervision. This policy is part of the Health & Safety Policy and should be viewed together with that policy.

1. Introduction

This policy aims to explain the steps you can make to minimise, but not completely remove, the risks of working alone, especially in when visiting a mother in her home.

Lone Workers are defined as those that work by themselves without close or direct contact with another volunteer or staff member (HSE 1988).

2. Lone working

You may be in a position where you are volunteering on your own. This section explains steps you can take to help you decide whether you have sufficient information and instructions to feel safe and confident to continue.

Lone working includes situations where you may be:

- out in the community or visiting mothers in their homes.
- helping at a drop-in where you may be the only person in the building for part of the session.
- helping at a drop-in, in the same building but some distance away from other staff or volunteers.
- working outside normal office hours, perhaps travelling to, or from, a session at the hospital.

In these situations your Local Authority/ PCT Lone Working Policy may be relevant so take priority, this BfN policy should complement the local policies. There should be training available covering the hazards and risks associated with lone working. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your supervisor before continuing.

Before you start

- Check the condition of the premises – does it seem safe? Has a risk assessment form been completed – this will let you see what actions others in the building have done to make it safer. This should include making the entrance to the venue safe, with sufficient lighting around the venue so there are no hidden, dark corners. The same steps should apply to the entrance to the hospital car park and entrance to the building.
- When you are travelling or volunteering do you have a way of contacting your supervisor or colleagues - by phone or mobile? Are these options always available? Are they adequate and reliable? Would you be able to summon help if you felt you were in danger?
- Do you have access to a personal distress alarm? This may be funded through the local peer support scheme.
- Check out who uses the premises or neighbouring buildings - is there a risk of a visitor being violent?

Avoid

- Taking your own children, if you are working on your own.
- Inviting a mother, or other callers, to your own home as an alternative to attending a group or home visiting. This is beyond the scope of this document and no risk assessment has been done covering breastfeeding support in your own home. No breastfeeding support should be offered in your own home.

Manual handling

A separate risk of being on your own is whether you will be doing tasks that are easier with another person such as lifting any heavy objects. This might be tables, heavy chairs, training boxes etc. Further details are included in the Health & Safety Policy.

3. Home visiting

Always arrange visits directly with the mother. This is to make sure this is a genuine call and there really is a mother.

- Make sure you have a charged mobile phone with phone credit before doing any home visits. You may be able to get one through local BfN funding.
- Make sure that you have clear instructions on how to get there and find the flat or house without having to stop and ask for assistance e.g. green door on the left, opposite the newsagents.
- Find out the full name, address and phone number of the person you are visiting.
- Agree a time of arrival and approximate duration for the visit.
- Aim to visit in the morning or early afternoon – rather than the evening or late afternoon so you can avoid travelling in the dark, especially to areas that you do not know well or might feel uncomfortable in. If you are working in the evenings you may want to work in pairs.
- In extreme weather conditions you should seek advice from your manager/ coordinator and go in pairs if necessary in case of breakdown.
- Ask about parking near the house. Make sure you do not leave valuables in your car or other items left visible.
- Leave a note at the Children's Centre/ Clinic / Flying Start Centre (or at home if you do not work within a local scheme) with the name, address and phone number of the person you are visiting. To protect confidentiality this information could be placed in a sealed envelope, with the time that you left your home or Children's Centre and the time you expect to return written on the outside, together with instructions to open the envelope and phone you and / or the last person you are visiting if you are late home. This should be set out in your local policy. There should be a check-in time agreed between the team.
- Call just before you leave to check that the mother is still expecting you and she will be in to see you. This gives you a chance to check she is still happy for you to visit.

Planning your route: plan your journey and look at the map before you go. Identify safe places to park close to the house or flats.

- You might ensure that someone knows your intended route.

Remember to take:

- The name, address and phone number of the person you are visiting and directions on how to get there, together with a map.
- Your BfN registration badge – wear it so it can be clearly seen.
- Your charged mobile phone with the numbers that you need in the phone. Make sure you have enough phone credit to make calls.
- Your map/ A-Z with address and instructions.
- Any paperwork and leaflets including a BfN information leaflet with you to leave with the mother, so that she knows which organisation you are with.

How to reduce risks:

- Do not get into lifts with people who make you feel uneasy. If you are in a lift and feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts and get out. Use stairs if possible.
- Do not look through the letter box if there is no answer.
- Do not take your own children.

When you arrive

- If a father or other man answers the door, you might announce yourself and ask for the mother by name. If you are at all unsure about the situation, then do not go into the house.
- Listen to your intuition.
- Make sure you are at the right address and talking to the right person before entering.
- Let the mother lead the way in, this gives you the opportunity to leave the door unlocked (if she has small children, this may not be possible as they might get out).
- If you feel uncomfortable at any time during a visit, then make an excuse and leave.

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- It might be useful to think through an excuse you can use should this situation ever arise.
- Know where the door is should you need to leave quickly and try to have a clear line of exit – don't get cornered.
- Ask for dogs to be put into another room if you they make you feel uncomfortable.
- Be careful about moving towards or raising your voice with the person while the dog is in the room, talk quietly and calmly to the dog, don't stare at it. If the dog seems aggressive and they refuse to move it, leave.
- If you feel under pressure, or are presented with violence or a threat of violence then leave immediately.

When you return from a visit:

- Let your supervisor or colleague know that you have returned safely as set out in local policy. There should be an agreed system for checking you are back safely and audited at regular meetings.
- If you have any concerns about the visit then speak with your supervisor.

Notes

Car insurance. Let your insurance company know that you travel on charity business and that you are able to claim mileage. If you are considering giving a mother a lift to a drop-in or training venue you will need to let your insurance company know. This should not increase your premium. However, it may invalidate it if you don't let them know.

Household insurance. Do not use your own home to provide breastfeeding support. BfN does not cover you for this purpose and your own household insurance may be invalidated.