LEVEL TRUST POLICY FOR LONE WORKING AND OUTREACH SERVICES 2023-24

Approved Date: September 2023
Review Date: September 2024

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1. Level Trust has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of all people carrying out lone working and outreach work for the organization. However, all employees have a duty to ensure their own health and safety, and to not knowingly put themselves in situations of increased risk without first ensuring that adequate control measures are in place.

1.2. **All instances in which individuals will be lone working or working away from their normal location will be risk assessed, and control measures will be put in place accordingly.**

1.3. Lone working can potentially put employees in situations of increased risk and means that in the case of an accident the usual support offered by colleagues is not available. However, it is often necessary for workers to carry out work on their own for periods of time.

1.4. When undertaking lone workingand outreach working, there will be occasions when staff will work with individuals who present increased risks. For example, who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or whose mental health is deteriorating. It is not the intention of this policy to prevent these people from receiving Level Trust's support, but to ensure that staff providing this support are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1. This policy applies to all occasions when Level Trust staff are working alone, as well as to all services delivered by Level Trust staff that are wholly delivered away from the Level Trust base.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. The aim of this policy is to enable Level Trust staff to carry out lone working and outreach work safely and effectively.

3.2. This will be achieved by:

- Setting the Health and Safety standards for lone working and outreach work.
- Identifying the different risks associated with lone working in different environments and the control measures necessary to reduce these risks to an acceptable level.
- Setting out the different types of outreach work and identifying some of the control measures necessary for each one.
- Documenting a local lone working procedure and communicating the procedure to staff.
- Monitoring the lone working procedure.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. **LONE WORKING** is any situation or location where someone is working without a colleague nearby; or when someone is working out of sight or earshot of another colleague. Lone workers also include community or outreach workers. For some roles, a large percentage involves lone working; for others it may occur very infrequently, as and when different circumstances arise. Level Trust staff may find themselves lone working when:

- working in an office
- working at home
- working in a service
- travelling alone whilst at work
- undertaking detached or outreach work
- visiting service users in their homes.

4.2. **'OUTREACH'** is when support is provided by Level Trust staff which requires them to work away from the Level Trust base. This includes 'street' ('detached') work; delivering services from a pop up unit; delivering services from the premises of a partner agency and home visiting.

4.3. A **'CALL IN' SYSTEM** is a system whereby staff who are lone working/ providing outreach support can indicate remotely that either a session has been completed successfully, or that there are problems and staff require assistance. This system will be operated internally via a dedicated member of staff (Jennie White 07360217642 or Tina Edwards 07752434303). When using an internal call in system, a 'code' should be developed to be used by staff to summon assistance without communicating this to other people in the vicinity. Our code will be, "Can you get the red file out and leave it on the desk?" means help!" An internal call-in system must have an associated procedure for responding to missing employees/ employees who have indicated they are at risk. Testing of the 'call in' system should take place, at least every six months, to ensure staff are familiar with it and the actions following a call containing the code word. See appendix 4.

4.4. The **'BASE'** is the location where there will be Level Trust staff who have up-to-date details of where staff will be undertaking lone working/ providing outreach support, and will be responsible for instigating missing worker procedures. In the first instance, staff should contact Jennie White and then Tina Edwards.

4.5. **STALKING** "can be broadly described as a series of acts which are intended to, or in fact, cause harassment to another person" Home Office and Lord Chancellor's Department Consultation Paper, *Stalking: the Solutions* (Home Office 1996)

4.6. **LOCAL LONE WORKING PROCEDURE** is a safe system of work relating to lone working which is specific to the service from

which staff are operating.

5. RESPONSIBILITES

5.1. The CEO (or appointed deputy if the CEO is away from work) is responsible for:

- Ensuring that relevant Risk Assessments and Risk Management Plans are in place to cover all instances of lone working and outreach working. For outreach work from a specific location with multiple service users, a Health and Safety Risk Assessment for the session and venue will be necessary. Whereas for work with an individual service user, either in a single location or across multiple locations, it may be possible to cover the risks associated with providing outreach support to them in their Person Centred Risk Assessment.
- Ensuring that Health & Safety, Person Centred Risk Assessments and Risk Management Plans are reviewed and updated periodically (at least annually) and in the light of changing circumstances.
- Ensuring that, where lone working or outreach is undertaken, there is a call in system in place. The CEO (or appointed deputy) are also responsible for ensuring that all staff, including temporary staff, know their own responsibilities within the call in system. This will include being aware of any 'code words', their responsibilities when a staff member has indicated that they are at risk, or when they fail to make contact after providing outreach support (see Missing Employee Procedures – section 7). The CEO will be responsible for periodically reviewing and testing the emergency 'call in' system to ensure that staff are aware of the system, any code words and the action to take in the event of the code word being used (see Appendix 4).
- Ensuring there are documented local lone working procedures that include a signing in and out system that is specific to the service and this procedure is communicated to staff. Line Managers are responsible for monitoring the system to ensure staff are adhering to the procedure.
- Checking the Health and Safety arrangements and key policies of all partner agencies from which outreach services will be delivered, and remedying any concerns prior to the service being provided.
- Ensuring that up-to-date information relating to lone workers and outreach workers is held at the service, including contact details for family / next of kin, a recent photograph, and car make, model and registration.
- Ensuring all staff have undertaken a lone working or outreach induction before they carry out lone working or outreach support. This should include information on all the relevant known risks and subsequent control measures as well as polices relating to incident

and accident reporting, managing challenging behaviour, protection from abuse and health and safety.

- Ensuring that all staff who are involved in undertaking lone working or outreach with service users who have mental health problems are aware of the increased risks of stalking that they face, and the key steps they can take to reduce these risks (see Appendix 1).
- Evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of procedures and risk assessments in the aftermath of an incident, especially when weaknesses or failures are identified in those procedures/risk assessments, and discussing their findings with staff, for example in a team meeting or evidencing the communication with a signature sheet.
- Ensuring that their Line Manager and the Risk/Health & Safety Manager are notified within 48 hours if a lone working incident occurs. The Designated H & S Officer is Kingsley Iroegbu kingsleyiroegbu@gmail.com

5.2. Line Managers should use the Home Visiting: Checklist for Managers (Appendix 2) as a guide to ensure they have the appropriate controls in place for all lone working delivered by their staff.

5.3. **Staff members delivering lone working or outreach services are responsible for:**

- Accurately recording expected start and finish times of all lone working and outreach working prior to delivering each session, along with either the venue from which they will be working or the service user they will be working with, if they are supporting one individual in a variety of locations. Any changes to this information must be communicated to colleagues as soon as possible.
- Ensuring that any of their personal information held at the service, e.g. their car registration number and emergency contact details, is kept up to date.
- Where applicable, when working out of the 'base' signing in and out using the local procedure in place, either a wipe board or a book. Ensuring that details of their destination and expected return time are documented.
- Using the call-in systems properly immediately before the session and also when sessions have been satisfactorily completed or in case of any problems.
- Ensuring that they can be contacted throughout the duration of every lone working and outreach session (see Section 6.6).
- Working with a regard for safety at all times.
- Informing their colleagues of any changes to person centred or health and safety risk assessments that may affect lone working/

outreach support.

- Informing their line manager of any changes to their personal information, or changes which may impact on them lone working e.g. pregnancy, illness, disability.
- Checking mobile phone signal coverage whilst delivering lone working or outreach services, and agreeing a course of action with their manager if they are to be providing services from an area in which they may be unable to get a signal.
- The use of text messaging to inform staff of their whereabouts or safety should be discouraged as it is not reliable and has the potential to be misleading.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1. Before any lone working or outreach services away from a service base are delivered, the following must be in place:

6.1.1 A relevant Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan to cover that session of work. For outreach work from a specific location with multiple service users, a Health and Safety risk assessment for the session and venue will be necessary, whereas for work with an individual service user, either in a single location or across multiple locations, it may be possible to cover the risks associated with providing outreach support to them in their Person Centred Risk Assessment. These Risk Assessments should be signed off by either the CEO or Deputy CEO. See also Level Trust's Core Policy for Person Centred Risk Assessment and Risk Management.

6.1.1. Before any lone working is carried out, a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check shall be in place for staff members through HR pre-employment at the point employment commences.

6.1.2. There should be a lone working or outreach induction for all staff members who will be lone working or delivering outreach services. This will include training in safe lone working and outreach working (including the General Lone Working Guidelines - Appendix 3), personal safety, use of Level Trust's call-in system and the local lone working procedure that is specific to the service.

6.1.3. A system for recording start and finish times and venues of all lone working and outreach work (including addresses of individuals visited in their homes) and communicating any changes to these. If staff are supporting one individual in a variety of locations, the name, address and contact details of the service user they will be working with, should be recorded, along with the expected start and finish times of the session.

6.1.4. A call-in system

6.1.5. Emergency procedures (including how to exit a situation, how to use the call-in system to signal an emergency and what the response will be).

6.1.6. A way of ensuring that staff can be contacted at any time whilst lone

working or delivering outreach services. For street work and home visiting, a mobile phone is necessary, which should be audible throughout, unless this is disruptive of the service, in which case the phone may be set to 'silent'. If phones are on silent or reception is patchy, phones must be checked for messages periodically and at the end of the session. For outreach services delivered from the premises of a partner agency and lone working at home, in a service or office, it would be acceptable to rely on a fixed telephone, provided that someone will be available to answer calls at all times.

7. PROCEDURE FOR MISSING EMPLOYEES

7.1. 1st Stage

7.1.1. If a member of staff has failed to make an expected phone contact, or is late back from a visit they must be contacted by telephone. Depending on the level of risk identified for the task or person, the response may be immediate or delayed for an agreed time period, not to exceed 1 hour (1/2 an hour if they have been working directly with service users).

7.1.2. If it is not possible to contact them on the agreed phone number, staff should attempt to call them at any other locations to which they may have returned, or on any other phone numbers on which they may be contactable (such as their home number or personal mobile phone or the service user's home number to which they may have returned).

7.2. 2nd Stage

7.2.1. If it is not possible to get hold of the staff member on any of the possible telephone numbers, an escalation response is required.

7.2.2. In the first instance, attempts must be made to contact the most senior member of staff on duty, who will decide whether to alert the police.

7.2.3. The police take very seriously calls indicating that a person could be in physical danger and therefore give these calls highest priority. However, the police regard wasting of police time as very serious, and this could result in criminal charges.

7.2.4. If the senior member of staff decides that it is necessary, the police are to be made aware of the fact that a staff member has failed to contact the organisation and is therefore thought to be in danger.

7.2.5. Finally, the senior member of staff on duty should attempt to contact the Chair of the Board- Altaf Hussain AXH@lutonsfc.ac.uk

8. LONE WORKING IN AN OFFICE BASE

8.1. Staff should only lone work in the Level Trust office in exceptional circumstances. It should not be the 'norm' to have one staff member working from the Level Trust office, unless adequate security and monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure the individual's safety.

8.2. Opening and closing a building can be a particularly high risk activity, so staff should only open or close office buildings on their own where there is a visible presence of several members of the public who could assist if the need arises, or where a specific risk assessment for opening or closing of the building has previously been completed and all of the necessary control measures have been put in place.

8.3. When opening or closing a building has been assessed as high risk, employees who have the responsibility for closing the building on should follow the designated procedure identified in the completed Risk Assessment when they have locked up and left the premises.

8.4. When lone working in the Level Trust office, staff should make use of all available safety features (intercoms for doors/locking doors, locking all windows).

8.5. When lone working in an office, staff must avoid undertaking any potentially high-risk activities, for example working at height or entering walk-in cupboards in which there is a possibility of getting trapped (unless it is absolutely necessary to carry out a particular task immediately).

8.6. When lone working in an office, staff should avoid undertaking any activity that cannot be safely completed by a single person (e.g. lifting a heavy object).

8.7. Visitors to an office building in which staff are lone working should only be admitted if they are known or have an appointment. Staff should not admit service users to an office building in which they are lone working, unless the service user is registered as a volunteer with Level Trust.

8.8. Staff must have access to a telephone at all times. If a member of staff is lone working in a room without a fixed telephone, they should carry a mobile phone.

8.9. There should be a nominated person to call in case of any problems, who will be available to come to the office building or make the necessary calls to the relevant authorities if an in- person visit is not possible.

9. LONE WORKING AT HOME

9.1. Staff who are regular home workers, as defined in their contracts, should be provided with the same health and safety advice as those working in an office. This should include a DSE assessment, home working health and safety risk assessment, guidance on correct posture, safe use of equipment and the need to take regular breaks.

9.2. Staff who are not contracted to work from home, but wish to work from home on occasions, must be authorised by their line managers before each occasion.

9.3. Occasional lone working from home is not usually a high risk activity and provided general safety precautions are observed, no additional control measures should be necessary.

9.4. Workers at the 'base' should know that staff members are working at home, and staff should inform the base if this changes.

10. Workers must be contactable by mobile or fixed telephone at all times.

11. STREET WORK AND WORK FROM A POP UP UNIT

11.1. Any 'street' or 'detached' work involving multiple service users, including work from a pop up unit, should be delivered by a minimum of two people, where possible. This could be two Level Trust workers or one Level Trust worker accompanied by a volunteer or staff from another agency/charity.

11.2. Workers should stay together for the duration of the session.

11.3. For the purposes of making the outreach service accessible and promoting the safety of staff, a regular rota for outreach services should be developed and circulated. This should detail places and times of all sessions, as well as the services that will be offered.

11.4. The service manager should investigate other agencies/charities with an interest in the areas in which outreach work is to be delivered, and should liaise with any relevant bodies. This would include the owners/managers of any private venues such as stations, car parks or markets.

11.5. Any changes to the outreach rota should be communicated to relevant staff as soon as possible. Amended times and venues should be recorded in writing at the service, with the 'call-in' person specifically informed.

11.6. Staff working together delivering street work should agree a (preferably non-verbal) signal to be used in case of serious concerns. When the signal is given, the session should be terminated and the location left as soon as possible.

11.7. Staff should travel to the session together, and should travel away together until reach a pre-agreed destination or return to base. Staff who are not returning to base should 'call-in' following the arrangements that are in place at the service.

11.8. As well as reporting incidents to the Designated H & S Officer, incidents should be recorded locally and shared with other agencies/charities delivering street work, so that a picture of 'high-risk' areas and individuals can be built up.

12. VISITING A SERVICE USER IN THEIR OWN HOME

12.1. The Home Visiting: Checklist for Managers and Staff (Appendix 2) should be used and in inductions with staff who are new to Home Visiting. The checklist should be reviewed at least annually.

12.2. **Initial home visits to unknown service users**

12.2.1. Prior to undertaking an initial home visit to an unknown service user, staff must make use of all available information to assess the risk of visiting that individual in their home.

12.2.2. If the referrer has supplied adequate information to enable a detailed assessment of the risks of visiting the individual in their homes to be made, and this assessment has indicated that the risks are low, an initial home visit may be undertaken by a single member of staff.

12.2.3. If adequate information to undertake a detailed risk assessment is not available, or if an assessment indicates that risks are high, two members of staff should attend the initial home visit. Both members of staff do not necessarily have to be employed by Level Trust, for example a Level Trust worker could undertake the initial home visit accompanied by a member of staff from the referring agency/charity.

12.2.4. If two members of staff are required for an initial home visit, but it is not possible for operational reasons for two members of staff to attend, arrangements should be made to meet the individual in a public area or another venue where there are other sufficient other people around for the risks to be significantly lower.

12.2.5. Initial visits should include a brief visual check of the environment, including exit routes and areas of the property in which escape routes could be blocked, so that future sessions can be delivered safely.

12.2.6. Following the initial visit, both staff members should undertake a detailed Health & Safety Risk Assessment for future visits to the individual's home as well as a Person Centred Risk Assessment for the individual to be visited.

12.2.7. If the risk assessment indicates that the risks to staff of visiting that individual are low, future visits can be carried out be a single member of staff.

12.2.8. If the risk assessment indicates significant risk of visiting that individual in their home, the CEO/Deputy CEO should decide whether to continue to offer a service to this individual in their home, in which case two staff members would be required, whether to offer the service in an alternative location or whether the individual will not be offered a service at all.

12.3. **Subsequent home visits and home visits to service users who are already known to the service**

12.3.1. Wherever possible, all visits should be arranged with the service user in advance.

12.3.2. If support is to be handed over from one member of staff to another, whether temporarily or permanently, the outgoing member of staff should introduce the new member of staff to the service user, wherever possible.

12.3.3. Home visits to service users who are aged under 18 years may be undertaken by a single member of staff, providing that a risk assessment has been undertaken and the service manager is satisfied that all necessary control measures are in place.

12.3.4. If a staff member arrives at a service user's home to find other people present who were not expected to be there, they should consider whether to continue with the session, or whether it would be preferable to offer to come back another time or ask for the visitors to be moved to another room for the duration of the session.

12.3.5. Any visits undertaken by individual staff members should be made following Level Trust's general lone working guidelines (Appendix 3).

13. WORKING FROM NON-LEVEL TRUST VENUES

13.1. A single staff member can deliver services from another agency as long as sufficient staff from the host agency or other organisation(s) will be present at all times.

13.2. Where practicable, Level Trust staff should avoid carrying out lone working in another agency's premises.

13.3. Before sending any staff member to work from another venue, the employee's line manager should check the health and safety of the venue, and ask to see the agency's health and safety policies and relevant Risk Assessments.

13.4. The employee's line manager is responsible for ensuring that the host agency is aware of the nature of the work that will be offered by Level Trust whilst using their premises.

13.5. Line Managers are responsible for resolving any issues relating to Health and Safety before sending a staff member to work from another venue.

13.6. Line Managers must not allow staff to work from any other venue where the level of safety is not at as good as that in their Level Trust base.

14. RELATED LEVEL TRUST POLICIES

14.1. Health & Safety Policy

14.2. Core Policy for Health, Safety and Welfare Risk Assessments

14.3. Person Centred Risk Assessment and Risk Management

14.4. Incident and Accident Reporting Policy

14.5. New and Expectant Mothers Policy

14.6. Safeguarding Policy

15. MAIN RELEVANT LEGISLATION

15.1. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Regulation 3) 1999 states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk. It is implicit that duty holders are competent to undertake the assessment. This level of competence will depend on the complexity of the hazards and knowledge of the activity. These must be recorded and reviewed as necessary. Risk assessments are a proactive approach to look at how accidents could happen in each service and how we can prevent them. To ensure that the assessments are comprehensive, the work activity, work area and human factors must be assessed.

15.2. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

15.3. Legally, Level Trust must coordinate and cooperate with the landlord of the building. This means alerting the landlord in writing of any hazards that they will need to address.

16. GETTING HELP

17. Assistance with the implementation of this policy can be sought from Jennie White (jennie.white@leveltrust.org

18. FURTHER INFORMATION

18.1. HSE: Work-Related Violence - Lone workers case study: http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/conclusions.htm#2

National Stalking

Helpline The Suzy

Lamplugh Trust

APPENDIX 1: GUIDELINES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF STALKING

Staff undertaking lone working or outreach work with individuals who suffer mental health problems face an increased risk of being stalked.

There are a number of key steps that can be taken to reduce the risks of staff coming to harm as a result of being stalked.

In addition to the other requirements of this policy, all line managers of staff who work directly with service users should:

- advise staff to use unlisted home addresses and telephone numbers
- take seriously any employee reports of feeling threatened or fearful
- address stalking behaviour promptly with security measures
- advise staff to keep their personal information and contact details secure, so that it cannot be seen or accessed by service users
- vigorously enforce zero tolerance for aggression, intimidation or violence. If a client is intimidating or threatening, the police should be called and charges pressed
- maintain contact with advocacy groups and charities familiar with stalking behaviour so that employees can be referred to them for support.

Additionally, employees who think they may be being stalked should:

- tell both their line manager and other trusted individuals that he or she is being stalked. This encourages support for the victim and prevents friends and family members from inadvertently disclosing information to the stalker
- cease contact with the stalker immediately as it tends to reinforce the behaviour
- seek help from the police
- keep a record of the stalker's intrusions and save evidence of stalking behaviour, such as answering machine tapes and notes. Without clear evidence, prosecution is difficult.

Taken from "Protecting Staff: Take Action on Stalking" (Health Service Journal, 26 July 2007)

APPENDIX 2: HOME VISITING: CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS AND STAFF

Are staff who undertake home visits:

a. Fully trained in lone working and any other necessary areas (e.g. managing challenging behaviour, health and safety)?

b. Briefed about the areas where they work?

c. Aware of attitudes, traits or behaviours which can annoy clients?

d. In possession of all available information about the client from all relevant agencies/charity?

Have they:

a. Read through all relevant Person Centred Risk Assessments, Health and Safety Risk Assessments and Risk Management Plans?

b. Left an itinerary?

c. Made plans to keep in contact with colleagues?

d. Got the means to contact you – even when there may not be anyone present at the service?

e. Got your telephone number (and you theirs)?

f. Got a sound grasp of Level Trust's strategies for safe home visiting?

Do they:

a. Leave the name, address (including postcode) and telephone number (where available) of all service users they are visiting?

b. Inform the nominated staff member of the approximate time they expect the session to last?

c. Contact the nominated member of staff immediately before the session, when the session has ended, or if there are any problems during the session?

d. Carry a mobile phone that can be connected to the nominated member of staff immediately by speed dial?

e. Carry forms for reporting incidents?

f. Appreciate the need for this procedure?

g. Know how to terminate sessions effectively in case of increased risks?

h. Know how to control and defuse potentially violent situations?

i. Appreciate their responsibility for their own safety?

j. Understand the provisions for their support made by Level Trust?

(Taken from the HSE's guidance for the Health Service on Violence)

APPENDIX 3: GENERAL LONE WORKING GUIDELINES

1. Undertaking Lone Working Health and Safety Risk Assessment

1.1. Lone Working Risk Assessments should identify situations in which the risks may increase to a level at which sessions will be terminated, and how a safe termination of the session can be achieved.

1.2. Lone Working Health and Safety Risk Assessments should include an environmental assessment of the locations in which lone working will be delivered and the existing control measures (e.g. panic alarms and escape routes).

2. Guidelines for staff who are lone working

2.1. Staff should not enter any situation in which they feel their safety is compromised. Staff have a duty to protect their own safety first.

2.2. Situations which leave the staff member at higher risk of harm or allegations of misconduct should be avoided at all costs.

2.3. When working with service users who are in heightened emotional states or under the influence of drink or drugs, staff should be aware of the increased risks and be prepared to terminate the support session if the risks increase.

2.4. **When lone working with service users, staff should always sit nearest the exit and within reach of any emergency alarms.**

2.5. Staff should dress appropriately and with safety in mind. For example, only stud earrings, hair tied back, appropriate shoes and no clothing that could be seen to be provocative.

2.6. When lone working, staff should be particularly sensitive of the need to observe service users' private spaces and observe professional boundaries. If they feel that there is ever any question of these boundaries being tested by the service user, this should be recorded and discussed with their line manager.

2.7. When lone working, it is especially important to ensure that the physical environment is kept tidy and any entrances or exits free from clutter. Any potential weapon e.g. knives should be kept out of sight or locked away if appropriate.

2.8. Lone working staff should not intervene in any incident in which violence and aggression between two service users is taking place. If necessary, they should summon assistance from the designated member of staff or the police.

APPENDIX 4: LOG OF TESTING

This form should be used to document the testing of the 'call in- emergency code' system. The system should be tested at least every six months.

Call in System check sheet		
Date	**Tested by**	**Comments**