

Attendance at Meetings

Employees often have to work at night. It is possible that, depending on the nature and outcomes of a particular meeting, members of the public may leave feeling angry or upset. In these circumstances, employees should ask to be accompanied to their car or the nearest bus stop by colleagues or officers who also attended the meeting. If a taxi has been called, employees should always wait in well-lit areas, preferably inside the building or close to the main entrance.

Parking and General Car Safety



- Try not to park in dark, deserted streets or isolated car parks. Park under street lighting where possible.
- Always reverse into a parking space so you can be ready to leave quickly if necessary.
- Always lock your vehicle when entering or leaving it.
- Carry a torch with you.
- Have your car keys in your hand so you can get straight into the vehicle.
- Look around your vehicle as you approach in case someone is crouching down.
- Look inside before entering your vehicle to ensure nobody is hiding in the back (even if doors are locked).
- If you are followed in your vehicle, do not get out. Make sure your doors are locked, flash your lights and sound your horn to attract attention.
- Make sure your vehicle has sufficient fuel for the planned journey.

What to do if a serious situation occurs?



The clear advice to any employee who feels at risk from threats or physical violence at any time during a home visit is always to vacate the premises immediately and report the incident. If you are unable to leave immediately when a serious situation occurs, the following steps should be taken:

- Place defensive barriers between yourself and the assailant.
- Call 999 if possible!

- Continue talking to the client for as long as possible, reassuring them that you mean them no harm.
- Use reasonable force to protect yourself if absolutely necessary but only as a last resort.
- Set off your personal attack alarm (if you have one) and shout to attract the attention of others.

Reporting Incidents:

Depending on the severity of the incident, the employee involved should contact the Police. Even if an incident is not considered serious enough to involve the Police, it should always be reported using the [VA04 form](#). The completed form should be sent to the H&S team for further action. Remember, that by taking appropriate action, you may help to prevent a similar incident reoccurring!

Other General Considerations:

- Treat people with respect!
- Be conscious of people's body language.
- Be aware of ways to calm the person down if they are angry or frustrated. This may come from experience or through learning from other colleagues.
- Do not isolate yourself!
- Inform people where you are, how to contact you, who you are meeting and what time you are expected to be back.

If you believe your role requires specialist training in order to improve your existing skills then please contact Workforce Development for 'Resolution and Conflict Management' training sessions as well as trainer led sessions on 'Personal Safety'.

If you have any personal safety issues you must speak with your line manager at the earliest opportunity. For further information and guidance please visit the Councils document library or contact the Health and Safety Team on 01422 393067. For access to the 'Personal Safety' e-learning modules, please email Lee Broadbent. Please also refer to the 'Avoidance of Violence and Aggression' and 'Lone Working' bitesize leaflets for additional information.

Bite Size Safety!

Personal Safety for staff working out in the community

This leaflet gives a simple and basic outline of what employees must do to ensure they are safe when working alone out in the community. The full lone working policy and personal safety guidance is available to view and download on the H&S intranet page.

The information in this leaflet is provided to help you understand the risks associated with lone working, how to control the risk and the considerations that should be made to protect staff working in the community, along with information on how to report incidents if, and when, they occur.



Introduction

Working out in the community alone, or with colleagues, can be hazardous and some services do experience problems with violence, aggression, verbal abuse and threats. Thankfully within Calderdale, serious physical violence has been very rare. However, threats, abuse and low level physical violence are very upsetting and can leave long-term physical and mental scars for those affected. For many Calderdale employees, these risks are very real! However, with the proper assessment of risk and effective precautions in place, the hazards associated with this type of work can be controlled.



A printed version of this document is only valid until December 2024

Am I at Risk?

You are most likely to encounter problems with violence and aggression if your job involves dealing with:

- People who have a problem or complaint with the Council.
- People who see you as a threat!
- People who are ill or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- People who have become aggravated by a particular task you handle.

REMEMBER...The most dangerous approach is to assume that *'it will never happen to me!'*

What is 'lone working' and when is violence likely to occur?

The HSE define lone workers as *"those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."*

In certain geographical locations, such as towns and cities, you face a higher risk of violence simply because it is more commonplace. Working in the late evening, early morning or 'twilight' hours carries an increased risk of violence and verbal abuse because there are often fewer people around and there tends to be a greater number of people under the influence of alcohol and drugs than at other times of the day.

Personal Safety in Other People's Homes

For the vast majority of the time, working in the homes of clients is perfectly safe. However, the fact that you are alone with another person you don't necessarily know means that your safety may be at risk! Working alone in other people's homes presents a common risk of physical or verbal assault. Other risks may include dangerous animals or unsafe buildings and equipment. Fortunately, the likelihood of you coming to harm can be reduced dramatically by a careful risk assessment. Once completed, there are a wide range of precautions that can be put in place.



REMEMBER...It is the manager's responsibility to complete a documented lone working risk assessment but you always have a duty to protect yourself.

Home Visits

Before arranging a lone home visit, employees should always consider alternative options such as:

- Can contact be made via phone or email?
- Can a meeting be arranged in a suitable Council building?
- Can a meeting be arranged in a public place such as a community centre or café?
- Can a colleague or other person accompany you if a home visit takes place?

If a home visit is undertaken, the following general personal safety issues should be considered and planned beforehand:

- Check the Incident Register and with colleagues to find out if the person is known.
- Have a code word if you need to call a colleague in an emergency situation.
- Have an escape plan when you are in the house and take note if the client locks the door.
- Arrange the visit during normal working hours where possible.
- Ask for any dogs or pets to be secured where appropriate.
- After knocking/ringing, stand back from the door. Do not be tempted to look through the letterbox!
- Be aware of potential weapons.
- Not any other people in the property and assess their mood. Only sit down when the resident does and back out rather than turning your back to the resident.
- If you are in any doubt or feel threatened, do not enter! Make an excuse and leave!

Arranging Meetings

The room where a meeting is held should ideally have:

- A swift means of escape in an emergency. The room should have an outward opening door that cannot be locked from the inside, with a vision panel.
- No heavy or sharp items that could be used as weapons.
- Seating that is best set out at an angle of 45 degrees, so not to appear confrontational.
- A clear view of the reception or public area if possible.
- An alarm linked to reception and a personal panic alarm.
- A clear and agreed procedure for dealing with a call for assistance.
- Easy access to a landline.

There are a number of policies and procedures in place to protect staff which include:

- Policies that employees must not tolerate any form of violence and aggression. Posters are displayed in all corporate buildings with words to this effect.
- Procedures for reporting hate crime and incidents of violence and aggression.
- The 'Incident Register' which identifies members of the public who have the potential to be challenging. The register also states the controls to be adopted.
- Client risk assessment documentation.
- Information on counter-terrorism including access to the 'Stay Safe' video.

Controlling Serious Risk

There are a range of tools available to help control the risks employees may face when working alone in other people's homes and premises including:



- Mobile phones and personal alarms.
- Body armour for work alongside the Police.
- Tracking and alarm systems linked to 24/7 monitoring.

Other sensible procedural controls include:

- Visiting new/unknown clients in the daylight and preferably in pairs.
- Not entering a premise if you have grounds for suspicion.
- Not conducting meetings with another person in an unoccupied building. Use busy Council premises with security arrangements.
- Leaving immediately if an unexpected situation gives you cause for concern.
- Introduce 'whereabouts' boards and diary systems.
- Immediately contacting base if a visit takes longer than planned to let people know you are safe.
- **Have emergency numbers on speed dial if possible. Have a signal for colleagues e.g. In an emergency you phone a colleague and say something agreed like 'check the blue folder please' and they then call 999!**