**LONE WORKING POLICY**

**WORKING ALONE IN THE COMMUNITY**

Tracing Lone Workers

Traceability is important in keeping you safe when working alone in the community. Tracing is different to tracking- it is simply ensuring that someone knows where you are and what you are doing, and most importantly, knows exactly what to do if you do not return or check in at the expected time.

**Remember...**

It is important not to rely on a tracing system- it will not help prevent a difficult situation from arising. It may help to raise the alarm if you do not return, or make it a little easier to summon help if you need it- but it does not make you invincible. You should still ensure that you do all you can to stay safe, and never enter situations where you think your personal safety may be compromised- if in any doubt, DON’T...

Probably the most applicable tracing system for BMCN volunteers is the “Buddy” system. A “Buddy” system involves letting your partner/friend know what time your appointment is, and when you expect to leave. Confidentiality is an issue- so leaving the details of where you are going (address/tel. no.) can be left in a sealed envelope, only to be opened if you do not return. If you cannot use the “Buddy” system for any reason, then call the Co-ordinator/deputy both before and after your visit.

**How long are you going to be?**

If possible, ensure you leave information regarding the expected length of the visit. If you are going on somewhere else, let your “Buddy” know. If your plans change, pass this information on. Ideally, visits should take place during normal working hours, although some individuals may prefer a weekend visit by mutual agreement.

**Anything unusual about a particular visit?**

If for any reason there is something out of the ordinary about the visit- perhaps you are expecting it to be difficult, or are aware that there may be a stranger present- please discuss this with the Co-ordinator/deputy before you go. It may also be helpful to leave this information in a sealed envelope for your “Buddy”.

**Key Information about you that should be kept on file- and updated as necessary**

Contact Telephone numbers- home/mobile/next of kin or people you live with.

Car Details- make/model/colour/Reg No.

Medical Information- any health issues that may effect you whilst lone working.

**Checklist Questions**

Do I need to make this visit?

Have I left relevant information with a “Buddy”?

Have I done my personal safety checks?

Do I have a mobile- fully charged- with emergency numbers to hand/programmed in?

Di I feel confident to go?

Unless you can answer **yes** to all the above- or have instigated appropriate other measures to mitigate any risk- you should not go. Liaise with the Co-ordinator to solve any potential issues **before you leave.**

Remember that, although a mobile phone may be useful to summon help, it will not prevent an incident. Do not let a mobile phone make you complacent- coverage can be very patchy!

**Driving**

Make sure you have emergency kit in the car appropriate for the visit and the time of year- for instance: a warm coat, bottled water, torch, spare change, phone charger. Consider equipping yourself with a First Aid Kit and a Personal Alarm.

Joining a vehicle recovery service can be a wise move. Check their identity when they arrive to assist.

Plan where you are going to park before you go. If safer to do so, park as close to your destination as possible. If dark, consider the street lighting.

When approaching your car, be aware of your surroundings; have your keys ready, and check no-one is in the car before entering.

Make sure that any valuables are concealed from sight.

Keep car doors locked if appropriate (i.e. stop/start traffic).

If you break down, call for assistance, be aware of your surroundings and only get out if it is safe to do so.

“Road Rage” can often be diffused by not responding to aggression. If another driver forces you to stop and then gets out of his/her car, stay in your car, keep the engine running and if you need to, reverse to get clear.

When parking in a Car Park, consider where the entrances and exits are. Try to avoid having to walk across a lonely car park to get to your car. Park away from pillars/barriers. If possible, reverse into your space so you can drive away easily.

**Walking/Out and About**

Try to avoid carrying lots of stuff unnecessarily- it can hinder you. If possible, keep at least one hand free.

Consider carrying a personal alarm.

Remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

A confident appearance- walking tall, normal pace, arms relaxed- will make you look less vulnerable.

Try to avoid danger, rather than confront it- keep to well-lit/busy areas and avoid danger spots where possible.

Walking away from an argument can be a simple but effective way to prevent an incident.

**Valuables**

Carry the minimum necessary when working- and avoid the overt display of valuables.

Your safety is more important than your possessions- if someone tries to steal them, it is safer to give them up.

Do not attempt to recover stolen goods yourself- contact the police.

**Working in other people’s homes**

Before you arrive, consider exit strategies in case of need. Thinking about these in advance will help recall in times of stress. For example “I’m sorry, I have left some paperwork I need in the car”. This could give you valuable time to de-stress or call for assistance.

Be mindful of the fact that you are entering someone else’s territory- your presence could unwittingly pose a threat in certain circumstances.

Be prepared to show ID, explain your reason for visiting, and wait to be invited in.

Conduct your own “Dynamic Risk Assessment” on the doorstep before entering. If you feel at all uncomfortable, make an excuse and leave. Trust your instincts.

Do not enter the premises unless the person you expect to meet is there. If they are not, say you will return later or re-arrange the appointment for another day.

Give the individual you are visiting an indication of the intended length of your visit (usually no more than about an hour), and stick to it.

As you enter, make a note of how the door opens and closes, so that you can leave quickly if necessary.

Take note of your surroundings and possible exits. Consider sitting in a chair nearest to the door.

Take in only what you need- avoid spreading things about- this could give the impression that you are taking charge of the surroundings (don’t forget this is their territory); it would also slow you down if you needed to leave in a hurry.

If you are uncomfortable about any animals in the room with you, ask to have them removed.

Try not to react negatively to dirty or smelly surroundings- this could give rise to bad feeling. If you have concerns about such issues, discuss these later with your Co-ordinator.

**Look at what you are wearing**

Avoid wearing a long scarf; be careful about jewellery, particularly around your neck; dress appropriately.

**Remember: The earlier you spot a potential problem, the more opportunities you have to avoid it.**

**PLAN- PREPARE- LOOK CONFIDENT- AVOID RISK- NEVER ASSUME IT WON’T HAPPEN TO YOU!**