



Eden Gate Newport

- **Improving communities by tackling homelessness and substance dependence**

Lone Working & Violence at Work Policy

April 2016

1 Introduction

It is in everyone's interest to contribute to reducing the threat of violence, harassment and intimidation to staff, volunteers and service users.

EDEN GATE is keen to protect against the potential threat to its employees and volunteers in what is, unfortunately, a social climate where violence is becoming more common. Indeed, employers have a statutory duty, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to take reasonable steps to protect employees from danger including that associated with violence at work and the potential problems associated with lone working.

Although incidents of violence, harassment and intimidation are few, we must be aware of the potential risk to our employees and volunteers who work in a variety of situations within the wide field of the voluntary sector. In many cases lone working is an absolute necessity for a variety of reasons whereby staff/volunteers have to make home visits because of the client group they work with. These are potential risk areas. We are also aware that in the event of assault, the threat of violence can cause great distress and could lead to both short and long-term damage to health. Staff/volunteers also have a duty of care not to endanger themselves or their colleagues.

2 Policy & Guidelines

2a) Lone Working

EDEN GATE staff/volunteers often have to work alone; this may mean opening up a community centre or village hall to prepare before a meeting, or packing away equipment and locking up after a meeting. Some home visits may necessitate travelling to challenging environments.

Think clearly about possible potential risks when working alone. EDEN GATE does not expect anyone to go into a potentially dangerous situation or to otherwise knowingly put themselves at risk. Protection of the person is always paramount to the protection of property.

All staff/volunteers must enter their destination and return times on the 'in/out' board. A telephone contact/mobile number should also be available.

Points to remember when working alone:-

- Could the meeting be held in EDEN GATE Offices?
- Make sure another member of staff or a responsible person knows where you are going.
- Arrange to contact base by a certain time
- Make sure you know the area - if not, find out. (information, risk assessment)
- Know the destination, know where to park, (in light, risk assessment)
- Know the client - are any records available? (information, risk assessment)
- Be aware of any attitudes or traits. Ask someone, (information, risk assessment)
- See if it is possible to accompanied
- Carry an identity badge
- Carry a personal alarm
- Try not to carry a bag or briefcase (better to carry a bundle of papers)
- Carry a torch
- Check your car, inside and out, on return

2b Violence at Work

- i)** EDEN GATE will take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent violence at work. This will include the provision of safe systems at work and appropriate training.
- ii)** In the event of any incidents of violence EDEN GATE will provide appropriate support and assistance to the victim.
- iii)** EDEN GATE does not expect any member of staff to go into a potentially dangerous situation or otherwise knowingly put themselves at risk.

- iv) Protection of the person is paramount to the protection of property.
- v) Members of staff/volunteers should take whatever action they believe necessary to deal with a violent incident.
- vi) Successfully managing potentially violent situations will safeguard everyone. It is recognised that the overall objectives of the policy cannot be met by minimising contact with the public.

3 Procedural Guidelines for the effective management of Lone Working Problems and Incidents of Violence at Work

3a Working Alone

Those who are involved in working alone should think clearly about the possible risks and undertake the following precautions: -

- i) Make sure a responsible person knows your itinerary
- ii) Report in to office/responsible person at planned times
- iii) Arrange for someone to meet you at the venue. If this is known to be a high- risk situation, e.g. meeting with a family member regarding a child protection issue, and the person who has arranged to accompany you does not arrive, then do NOT proceed
- iv) Make sure someone stays with you to pack up etc
- v) Carry a personal alarm
- vi) Carry a mobile telephone
- vii) When you have to work alone in the office, you should take extra care, and where possible lock the main entrance door until other arrangements can be made
- viii) If in doubt about your safety, dial 999 for police. **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO RING THE POLICE**

3b Home visits (assuming they are absolutely necessary)

As above, plus

- i) Check client information. Any potential risk? (see 3a iii)
- ii) Be aware of attitudes, traits or mannerisms that might annoy client
- ii) Is it possible to be accompanied?
- iii) If in any doubt, do not go.

3c Violence, including verbal abuse

- i) Be aware at all times.
- ii) Look out for signs of possible violence e.g. foul language, body language, loss of control
- iii) Try to diffuse situation - try and remain calm
- iv) Avoid confrontation
- iv) Try to calm irate callers (they might have a good reason to be irate because of being 'passed on')
- vi) Do not accept verbal abuse on telephone - threaten to terminate call

4 Responding to Aggression

If you do encounter violence you should try and get away from the source or summon assistance. You are allowed by law to use reasonable, minimum force to protect yourself and to enable you to escape from danger. EDEN GATE has no regard for the safety of any equipment in the event of threat to personal safety. EDEN GATE is only interested in the safety of its employees.

Employees who respond to a call for assistance are not expected to use physical intervention unless a colleague is being physically assaulted and the employee chooses to intervene. In this situation and subject to the use of minimum, reasonable force, EDEN GATE will provide support and assistance in the event of legal action being taken against an employee.

5 Cars

- i) Staff/volunteers must make sure that their cars are insured for use at work.
- ii) Staff should not carry clients in their cars. In exceptional cases, where there is no option but to transport clients staff must try and be accompanied by another colleague and/or take all steps to ensure personal safety.
- iv) Do not leave brief cases, handbags etc in the car
- iv) Lock the doors when stationary e.g. at traffic lights, in traffic jams.
- v) On evening visits park your car in a well-lit place.
Beware of late returns to multi-storey car parks
- vi) Check your car, outside and inside, on return.

6 Effective Management

6a Assessment of Risks

Prepare your own Risk Assessment and use your judgement where appropriate.

6b Record Keeping

- i) Anyone involved in a violent incident must complete an agreed report form (and also fill in the standard accident book). All incidents must be reported to the Director.
- ii) Records of incidents will be used to evaluate and review procedures.
- iii) Some individuals may be reluctant to report incidents of aggressive behaviour which makes them feel threatened or worried. Be reassured that the purpose of the report system is to make work safer in the future.

7 Preventative Action

EDEN GATE will take all practicable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees and achieve a safer workplace.

These will include:

- Measures to improve work systems
- Provision of alarm systems
- Provision of additional protective equipment where necessary, e.g. remote control door locks, panic alarms etc
- Seeking to reduce the risk of violence
- Redesigning work areas
- Increased training

8 Training

Not all violent incidents are unavoidable. With effective training employees can learn to diffuse potentially violent situations and to minimise risk. EDEN GATE will place a high priority on providing this training to employees identified as being at the greatest risk such as lone workers, front line reception etc. This will include lone working, breakaway techniques and any other relevant training.

9 After Care

Management must provide time to adequately support individuals who experience violence or abuse at work. Victims will need to talk through their experience as soon as possible after the event. Counselling or referral to a specialist counselling service will be offered where appropriate. Other staff/volunteers, not directly involved, may also need counselling, guidance or training following a disturbing incident.

10 Staff Duty

EDEN GATE is in business to provide a service for its customers. We do not expect staff/volunteers to put up with verbal abuse, threats of violence, or actual violence. However, in the event of a situation, individuals will be expected to act in the best professional manner and do their utmost to diffuse the situation.

11 Conclusion

Incidents of confrontation are extremely rare because of the professional approach of individuals and the extremely good relationship with client groups and with the voluntary sector in general. This policy on Lone Working and Violence at Work is not intended to alarm staff/volunteers in any way. We have to make individuals aware of what could happen and to prepare them should a situation arise - we would not be adhering to our duty of care if we did not.

Associated Documents

Safeguarding Policy

Policy last updated: April 2016

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