

## **Lone Working**

The SGTS has a duty to ensure your health, safety and welfare while you are volunteering. We recognise that at any given time you may be working alone as a volunteer.

We have a responsibility to assess the risks to lone workers and to take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary. You should also take reasonable care of yourself and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone. Much of your voluntary work will be undertaken as a “lone worker”

A recognised definition of “lone working” is when a volunteer is operating out of sight or hearing of other volunteers, without close or direct supervision, such as

- Undertaking errands by yourself such as delivering medication or shopping
- Undertaking errands outside normal working hours
- Being a volunteer driver taking a client as a passenger to an appointment
- Helping a client in his or her house with no-one else present

The definition covers staff volunteers in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures.

### **Potential Hazards of Working Alone**

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses may occur when there is no-one to call for help or no First Aid available
- Fire
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone

### **Measures to reduce the risk of lone working**

We undertake the following measures to reduce the risk of lone working:

All our call-handlers are asked to make a note of any potential risks to our volunteers when they take calls from clients. Potential risks, for example, might include

- Infections
- Access to a clients house including risks from pets
- Misunderstandings when handling a client’s money
- Aggressive behaviour by a client
- Time of day/night

If the call-handler has any specific concerns, these will be discussed with you, and if necessary, other members of the SGTS team, before you undertake a “good turn” so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

If you are concerned that you may be unsafe working alone in any context, you should discuss your concerns beforehand with one of the call-handlers or the volunteer co-ordinator. A risk assessment of the situation will then be undertaken as appropriate.

If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by you, arrangements for providing help or back up will be put in place, or the work reassigned to another volunteer where appropriate, or for the “good turn” to be undertaken at a different time of day or week.

In any situation where you feel unsafe whilst working alone, you should remove yourself from that situation immediately, and report your concerns to one of the call-handlers or the volunteer co-ordinator.

SGTS volunteers are by definition not under constant supervision. We endeavour to ensure that you understand the risks associated with your work and the relevant safety precautions by providing safety advice on induction and updates when necessary

Regular contact by phone may be appropriate and we recommend that you have your mobile phone available at all times and update us if you change your mobile phone number.

Having your mobile phone with you at all times means that you can seek help in the unlikely event that you become unwell while undertaking a “good turn” or in the event of any other emergency.

You must ensure that violent incidents are reported to ensure that the risk can be communicated to all. The risk of violence may not be directly people-related, it may be associated with environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents.

In the unlikely event that we need to provide a service to challenging clients, the SGTS undertakes to provide training and guidance to those volunteers involved.

## **Conclusion**

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of volunteers in general, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors.

We ensure that measures are in place to reduce risk and that expectations have been communicated to call-handlers and volunteers regarding lone working and appropriate training provided when required.

All volunteers are responsible for following any safety advice issued by the SGTS and should take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with undertaking “good turns”.

Likewise, the SGTS welcomes feedback and concerns from volunteers regarding any safety issues.