

MindOut LGB&T Mental Health Project

Lone Working and Personal Safety Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Policy

1.1 MindOut has a legal and ethical duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff while they are at work. We are responsible for assessing the risks to lone workers and will take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary.

1.2 As a voluntary organisation working with people with mental health issues MindOut may face both general risks to the successful delivery of its services and particular risks to and from individuals or groups of individuals.

1.3 All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and must follow all procedures outlined in this document. All staff will receive training at induction on safe working practices.

1.4 Safe working practices include good practice with regard to maintaining professional boundaries as outlined in MindOut's Conduct Policy.

This policy applies to all paid members of staff and volunteers who work with service users and members of the public.

2. Preparation and Review

This Revised Policy has been prepared by the Director and was approved by The Board of Trustees.

It will be reviewed every 3 years by the Director. Should the amendments be substantive, the Director will ask the Board of Trustees to approve the revised policy.

3. Related MindOut Policies

Conflict of Interest
Conduct Policy
Health and Safety
Supervision and Support
Harassment and Bullying
Risk Management and Strategy

4. Legal Background for this Policy

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
HSE Lone Working Guidelines

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5. Lone Working

5.1 Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those “who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. They may include:

- people working separately from others in a building
- people who work outside “normal” hours
- people who work away from their fixed base without colleagues, e.g. visiting people in their homes.
- people who work at home

5.2 Lone Working Procedure

5.2.1 MindOut will consult with staff and will review working practices on a regular basis to ensure that they feel safe in the course of their duties and that they are not knowingly exposed to circumstances where this may be in doubt. Any concerns will be discussed in supervision and team meetings.

5.2.2 Lone workers (including volunteers) have a responsibility to communicate with the Team Leader and/or the Director on a weekly basis regarding their whereabouts and activities (including all lone working appointments) using an online or paper diary system. Changes to previously agreed activities or location of work must be communicated to the Team Leader /Director.

5.2.3 Mobile phones will be provided for all Lone and Outreach workers with the agreement of the Director.

6. Home Visits and one-to-one appointments

6.1 Where possible workers should arrange to meet clients for one to one appointments at the MindOut office, health service or a public venue. However sometimes home visits are the only way to ensure clients can access a service.

6.2 Where potential risks are identified a risk assessment will be carried out with the client concerned. Before arranging a home visit workers should consider any potential personal and environmental risks to the visit. (See Risk assessment form – Appendix A.) All workers will receive training and information on risk assessments as part of their induction training.

6.3 Where it is not possible to find out prior risk assessment information or where a potential risk has been identified then the initial home visit must be arranged with two staff members. All joint home visits will be agreed beforehand with the Team Leader (or Director).

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6.4 When workers are carrying out home visits on their own - arrangements must be made to contact a named person or the Director after the visit. If the worker has not returned or made contact at the agreed time then the named back up person will attempt to ring the worker on their mobile. Where this has not been successful and there are continuing concerns about the whereabouts of the worker the named person will speak to the Director and may call the police for back up.

6.5 Where workers are seeing clients elsewhere (e.g. hospital wards, community centres), they must ensure their safety by making sure they are aware of the safety and alarm arrangements within the building. Workers must always ensure that other staff are aware they are in the building and their purpose.

7. Running Groups, Activities and Public Events

7.1 MindOut Groups

MindOut runs peer support groups throughout the week in a variety of locations. The Team Leader/Director is responsible for agreeing safe working practices (as outlined in this policy).

The Team Leader will undertake an assessment for all clients wishing to join the group work service which includes risk assessment questions (see Appendix B). If there are any concerns about an individual client they may not be permitted to join the group work service.

7.2 Public Events

MindOut frequently undertakes promotion activities and events involving the general public as well as service users and staff. Before undertaking such events the Team Leader/Director will consider any potential risks and will have a risk plan in place if appropriate. If the event is external the Director should contact the council regarding any permits/risk assessments required i.e. public marches, rallies. They should also check with MindOut's insurance company to ensure the activities within the event are covered by our policy.

8. Security Procedures in MindOut Premises

8.1 MindOut staff should not meet clients without back up unless the client has had a risk assessment.

8.2 An appropriate security procedure will be agreed for each premises where MindOut services are delivered. This will include use of personal alarms where appropriate and having access to another MindOut staff member on the premises (for face to face work) or available by telephone contact.

8.3 Pre-arranged back-up procedures will be made prior to booking face to face appointments with clients to ensure there is another member of staff in the building to act as back up. The worker holding the appointment must communicate with their

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identified back up to let them know they are going into or have finished the appointment. The designated back up person will be aware of the time workers are seeing clients and be alert to the time they are due to finish. Where appropriate an alarm will be used by the worker.

The back-up person is responsible for not leaving the site/area whilst an appointment is in process or for ensuring the responsibility is passed to a colleague if the designated back-up person has to leave.

8.4 Access to Support

If a member of staff has any concerns about their safety then they must prioritise their personal safety, remove themselves from risk and use emergency services if needed. Staff can contact either the Team Leader and/or Director to discuss safety issues or to report a safety incident. They will specify if they are not contactable by mobile for given periods of time. MindOut will ensure that staff are clear who to contact in case of sickness or annual leave of the Team Leader or Director. Staff can also use peers as a valuable resource for advice and de-briefing.

9. Reporting of Incidents and Accidents

9.1 All staff must report all incidents and accidents to the Director and/or Team Leader. The Director will debrief and review any procedures and practices that arise from incidents and accidents as appropriate, as soon as is feasible after the incident/accident and in supervision. Written records of incidents and accidents must be provided as soon as possible after the incident or accident. Written records of serious incidents and accidents will be kept in line with our Health and Safety Policy.

9.2 After a serious incident/accident workers will be offered extra support if they wish. This could include external supervision, access to counselling or extra line management supervision in line with the Staff Support and Supervision Policy.

MindOut will review annually all recorded incidents and ensure any changes of procedures are put in place.

10. Breaches of Safety Procedures or Boundaries

Due to the potential risks to staff, service users and the organisation, serious breaches of this policy and procedures outlined above will be treated as a serious matter and may result in action under the MindOut's disciplinary procedures.

Appendix A - Advocacy/casework Risk Assessment Form

<p>This form will need to be completed if there is a known risk about an individual or if a member of staff is doing a home visit where insufficient information is known about the client.</p>		
Nature of risk	Please tick if risk applies	More details and Action Taken if appropriate
Are there any risks that you feel we should know about before offering you advocacy/casework support? By risk we mean behaviour that could cause distress, harm or damage to others, yourself or the environment.		
Do you have difficulties managing anger?		
Do you have any difficulty controlling your behaviour, eg do you become abusive, verbally or physically?		
Do you self harm?		
Do you use drugs or alcohol ?		
Have you thought about or attempted suicide?		
Have you been involved in violence at home?		
Do you feel at risk of harm from other people?		
Do you have any pets?		

Is your home and the surrounding neighbourhood safe?		
Are you aware of any child protection issues?		

Client name	
Assessment date	
Assessment completed by	

Appendix B – Group work Assessment Form

<p>Have you ever attended a support group before? Yes No</p> <p>Why are you interested in joining a MindOut peer support group?</p>
<p>Do you have any hopes or expectations about being in a peer support group?</p>
<p>Have you thought about what you might find difficult about being in a peer support group?</p> <p>What might help?</p>
<p>Giving people time to speak and listening to others is very important in a group. How do you feel about this?</p>
<p>What are your feelings about being in a group with other people who need support?</p>

<p>Do you self harm? Yes No</p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>Do you have difficulties managing anger? Yes No</p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>Do you use drugs or alcohol? Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>Have you ever thought about or attempted suicide before? Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>Are there any risks that you feel we should know about before offering you a place in one of our groups? By risk we mean behaviour that could cause distress, harm or damage to others, yourself or the environment.</p> <p>Violent behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Information:</p> <p>Verbal abuse <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

Domestic violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Measures/Actions agreed:	
Risks from others	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Equal Opportunities form completed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information for clients form given	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place in group/on waiting list offered	<input type="checkbox"/>	Group contract signed/given	<input type="checkbox"/>

OUT of the BLUE

How often do you think about suicide?

What sort of things do you do when you feel suicidal?

How do you feel about speaking and listening to others about suicide?

Are you supporting someone who is suicidal?

Have you ever been bereaved by suicide?

<p>Who do you speak to about suicide and what support do you get?</p>
<p>What type of support would you like to be offered if you are feeling suicidal?</p>

Assessment date	
Assessment completed by	