



Onchan District Commissioners

Aim: To

LONE WORKER Policy and Guidance

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Policy Review - History:

Please be aware that a hard copy of this document may not be the latest available version, which is available in the Authority’s document management system, and which supersedes all previous versions.

Those to whom this policy applies are responsible for familiarising themselves periodically with the latest version and for complying with policy requirements at all times.

Effective from:	Replaces:	Originator:	Page X of Y
March 2020	New	Chief Executive	1 of 25
Management Team Approval:			
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History or Most Recent Policy Changes – MUST BE COMPLETED		
Version:	Date:	Change:

1. Introduction

While many hazards at work are relatively straightforward to identify and control, other aspects of workplace health and safety are less easy to define. One of these aspects relates to the risks posed to 'Lone Workers'. Employees such as Library staff, Property Maintenance staff, Housing Officers and Contractors do and will on many occasions, be expected to work on their own.

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 still apply. In these circumstances it is imperative that managers address those particular issues via the use of suitable and sufficient risk assessments.

This policy applies to all Onchan District Commissioners' employees and workplaces including Hawthorn Villa, Pennington Hall, Snugborough Depot, Heywood Court, Springfield Court and Harvey Briggs Library.

This policy links with and supports the Authority's Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

DEFINITION OF LONE WORKER

"Lone workers" are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision and are found in a wide range of situations. Some examples are shown in Appendix 1."

2. General Policy

The Authority will, so far as in reasonably practicable ensure that:-

- Employees who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time and protected from risks to their health and safety.
- The risks to employees' health and safety are identified by suitable and sufficient risk assessments of the work activities, and where appropriate control measures are introduced to reduce the risk to an acceptable level or within statutory requirements.
- Employees who believe themselves to be in serious or imminent danger and who for reasons of their own or another person's safety, remove themselves to a place of safety, will be supported by the Authority.

Department Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy within their Department as per the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

3. General Responsibilities

Onchan District Commissioners' general responsibilities are stated in the Authority's Health and Safety Policy statement.

All levels of management have a duty to ensure employees safety, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The Corporate Health and Safety Policy places a duty on all managers to make an assessment of the risks involved with all work activities. This includes lone working. Organisational responsibilities are as in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy as they relate to lone working.

4. Employee's Responsibilities

Health and Safety is the direct concern of all employees at all levels, and they are charged under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 with a duty of care for their own safety, the safety of fellow workers, and of any other person affected by the Authorities activities.

Employees also have the duty to co-operate with the Authority to enable it to carry out its responsibilities. Therefore, the Authority looks to every employee to maintain continuous safety awareness, be alert to existing and potential hazards and the need to minimise and report them.

5. Departmental Safety Codes of Practice and Manuals

Within ninety days of the implementation date of this Policy departments will be expected to produce their own Department guidance and safe systems of work in relation to Lone working to supplement this policy.

This guidance must be based on risk assessment.

6. Equalities

In line with Onchan District Commissioners' integrated equalities policy and the Equality Act 2017, a race and other impact assessments can be found at Appendix 4. Consideration must be given to any specific identified needs of disabled employees.

Age (young or old), gender and sexual persuasion of employees must also be considered where appropriate. This should be done via risk assessment.

7. Risk Assessment

Managers are to ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out prior to lone working activities commencing. This process should identify the hazards associated with specific lone working activities and will determine appropriate control measures which must be implemented.

Employees and Health and Safety Representatives should be involved in the risk assessment process as, in most cases, they will be aware of the hazards arising from work activities.

When carrying out the risk assessment particular consideration should be given to: -

- The remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- Any problems of communication
- The possibility of interference, such as violence
- Criminal activity from other persons
- The nature of potential injury or damage to health
- Previous incidents/accidents in relation to lone workers and their work activities
- The level of experience and knowledge of individuals
- Existing risk assessments and safe systems of work
- Anticipated 'Worst Case' scenario
- The nature of the activity i.e. enforcement action or client request?
- The availability of first aid facilities
- Hazards that may affect certain groups of employees due to race, gender, age, disability, sexual persuasion

Appendix 2 provides advice to employees and guidance for managers and supervisors who are responsible for employees who are required to work alone. The guidance covers such areas as:-

- Personal Assessment Advice
- Guidance for the Management of Lone Working
- Task Analysis
- Task Analysis – Aide Memoir

8. Information and Training

Employees and others are to be given all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with working alone. Employees are required to follow any safe working practices procedures or emergency measures put in place by the line manager. Where there are new or altered hazards are encountered the employee should make their own personal assessment of the risk. Should management before continuing. The line manager must update risk assessments/procedures in light of the new information.

All training and briefing records must be logged.

9. Violence, Aggressive and Threatening Behaviour

Where line managers are responsible for employees who are identified during the risk assessment process as being exposed to the risk of violence, aggressive or threatening behaviour, reference should be made to the policy on dealing with violence and aggression and departmental codes or practice/safe system of work.

10. Medical Fitness

Consideration must be given to ensure that lone workers are medically fit to carry out the work. Should the risk assessment identify hazards where a standard of medical fitness may be required, e.g. wearing breathing apparatus, working at heights, confined spaces, etc. management should consult the Department of Health and Social Care Occupational Health Team.

11. Permits to Work

In certain circumstances, particularly when the risks are considered high (e.g. confined spaces) or where specific legal requirements exist, a written 'Permit to Work' may be required, without which the activity may not take place. Copies of permits should normally be issued to everyone directly involved with the activity, e.g. the 'Lone Worker', the line manager/supervisor. Where time limits are a consideration, e.g. to control exposure to heat, fatigue or to ensure essential supplies such as breathing gases are not exhausted, the permit should state the required starting and finishing times or maximum duration of tasks.

12. Flagging Systems and Information Sharing

The available DPN flagging systems should be used to check and identify addresses before lone working activities commence. Consideration should be given to the potential limitation of information.

Lin Managers must, where appropriate, advise the District Surveyor of potential problem sites/locations so the flagging system can be kept up to date.

Departments/sections within the Authority should endeavour to share information about problem locations and communicate with, and seek advice/assistance from the Police where necessary.

13. Advice and Guidance for 'Lone Workers'

Employees should carry out their own 'Personal Assessment of Risk', before undertaking any activity which involves working alone (see Appendix 2). They should make themselves aware of any risk assessments/safe systems of work (procedures) carried out for that particular activity, and any other control measures introduced such as permit to work system, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required or information regarding the service user/client/site they are visiting.

Before starting work employees should be advised, if you have a feeling that something is wrong, rely on your senses/ professional judgement. Do not commence the task, but report back to your manager/supervisor to seek clarification or advice.

Appendix 3 provides detailed advice, guidance and suggested best practice for those employees required to work alone. Specific advice is provided on:-

- Safety in the workplace
- Safety in a client's home in the community
- Safety in the car/vehicle
- Safety in the street
- Safety in reception/interview areas
- Reducing the risk of provocation
- Dealing with violent and aggressive service users/clients
- Use of force as a means of self-defence.

Employees should also refer to the Authority's Policy on dealing with violence at work and the department codes of practice. This provides more detailed advice on how to recognise, avoid and deal with potentially violent, aggressive or threatening behaviour. Any employee who is physically assaulted, threatened or verbally abused in the course of their work should report this to their line manager and have the incident reported on the appropriate record form.

14. Serious and Imminent Danger

Employees who believe themselves to be in serious and imminent danger such as working at height with no edge protection or safety harness, using machinery that is unsafe or inadequately guarded or in danger of being physically assaulted, should, where possible, remove themselves to a place of safety. They should inform their line manager/supervisor of this and the reasons for taking such steps.

There may be circumstances such as care assistants in residential homes, who may be reluctant to remove themselves for fear of leaving a service user in danger of injury/physical assault. It is impossible to give precise advice for every situation, however a decision taken at the time in the interest of their own or another person's safety, will be supported by the Authority.

Employees in these circumstances should ask themselves the following. **“Should I be here, is it safe to remain, should I seek assistance?”** – if in doubt, leave and inform your manager/supervisor.

15. Monitoring

Line managers are to monitor the effectiveness of the control measures implemented as a result of the risk assessment process to find out how successful they have been. This will allow managers to identify those control measures and strategies that are not working, or which have unforeseen consequences, and modify or replace them here appropriate. There are two types of monitoring, which managers should carry out:-

a) Active monitoring

Line managers should ensure that systems and procedures are working without waiting until something goes wrong. It will confirm whether agreed procedures are actually being complied with by employees and whether they are workable in the individual circumstances and have the desired effect of preventing accidents or incidents.

b) Reactive Monitoring

Line managers should investigate all accidents, incidents and near misses so that everyone involved can learn from the experience. Line managers must ensure that employees understand the incident reporting and recording system and that all such incidents are reported to the Central Safety Section.

16. Monitoring

Departments should develop and introduce their own safe systems/procedures for lone workers.

Chief Executive/Clerk should ensure that risk assessments have been undertaken, recorded and where necessary remedial action implemented for all employees who are required to work alone. Records of the risk assessment identifying the significant hazards and control measures introduced may have to be kept for prescribed minimum period under specific Regulations. The control measures put in place will depend on the results of the risk assessment and information gained from monitoring, and should be commensurate with the identified risks.

This policy is effective from 17th April 2020

APPENDIX 1

EMPLOYEES WHO MAY BE CLASSIFIED AS LONE WORKERS

A wide range of employees may be classified as being lone workers.

All managers must complete an assessment of all work activities undertaken by their workgroup(s) to identify as lone workers.

Listed below are the main groups but not the only groups of employees who may be identified as lone workers:-

- Cleaners
- Housing Officers
- Reception Staff
- Safety Advisers
- Property Maintenance Manager
- Property Maintenance Officer
- Surveyors
- Library Staff
- House Managers
- Trades persons

In addition, it should be remembered what the definition of a Lone Worker is:-

“Those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision and are found in a wide range of situations”

It is appreciated that many employees may occasionally work alone, although this would not normally be their role. The policy still applies in this case.

APPENDIX 2

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYEES

Working Alone – Safe System of Work

Generic Approach

Personal Assessment Advice

Employees should carry out their own personal assessment of risk before undertaking any work activity. This should include as a basic minimum a consideration of the following:

1. Do you know where your work location is?
2. Is there a generic assessment for the task?
3. Do you have the protective equipment you may need?
4. Do you require specialist equipment?
5. Are there any specific controls for the task?
6. Does someone know the location you are going to?
7. Do you have a means of communicating with that person or others?
8. Have you booked out and informed your control of any time restrictions?
9. Have you informed your control of when you are expected back?
10. Do you know what to do should if an accident/incident occurs?
11. Have you vetted the person you are going to meet?
12. Has the situation changed from previous occasions?

On arrive at your place of work

1. Can you park safely – is signing in required?
2. Are there any mandatory requirements for the site?
3. Is the access to and from the site safe?
4. Are there suspicious persons in the near vicinity?

Guidance for the Management of Lone Working (Risk Assessment)

Task Analysis

1. Are there any hazards which you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm due to conditions of the work area? Is there a history of incidents/accidents involving lone workers? Additionally, have you considered the compound effect from a combination of hazards? Record each hazard and state how the particular risk associated with the hazards?

Task Analysis – Aide memoire

2. This list is not exhaustive, and should be used only as a Memory Jogger, by employees and managers to determine the maximum information about the task and working environment, and as an aid to producing the risk assessment.

1. Ability (personal)
2. Access and egress
3. Accidents
4. After hours
5. Aggression and violence
6. Animals
7. Cash
8. Chemicals
9. Communications
10. Competency
11. Complaints (Previous)
12. Electrics
13. Environment
14. Equipment – vehicles
15. Experience
16. Fire
17. First Aid
18. Ground conditions
19. Heights
20. Illness
21. Instructions
22. Ladders
23. Lighting
24. Machinery
25. Manual Handling
26. Nightwork
27. Noise
28. Parking
29. Permits to work
30. Protective clothing
31. Recording in and out
32. Remoteness
33. Restrictions
34. Road signs
35. Scaffolding
36. Specialist equipment
37. Signing
38. Test equipment
39. Time Constraints
40. Toilets
41. Tools
42. Training
43. Traffic
44. Trenches
45. Travellers
46. Trip/slip/fall hazards
47. Warning devices
48. Water
49. Weather
50. Written instructions

Where employees are visiting/meeting service users, clients or members of the public, managers must take into account any past incidents of violence, their attitude or known behavioural problems of the individuals.

Working alone can be additional risks to a work activity. Managers must establish clear procedures on what can and what cannot be done when carrying out a work task.

Managers must ensure that the lone worker has full knowledge of all known and considered hazards and the risk associated with a specific task. They must know the lone worker's whereabouts and have a means of communicating with them where appropriate. They should have contingency plans for any breakdown in communications or any other emergency which could develop. Consideration should be given to:

- a) The Lone Worker
- Have they had sufficient professional training and/or experience for the task? Have they the ability and qualifications to carry out the task? And they are medically fit, have suitable personality and attitude? Are there personal factors that may pose additional hazards? (race, gender, disability, age)
- b) The Task
- Are there any statutory requirements associated with it? i.e. confined spaces. Does the employee understand all hazards and risks associated with the task and the steps taken to reduce risks to the lowest extend reasonably practicable? Have modifications occurred in the task since it was last assessed or use a short cut? Are time scales realistic for completion of the task? Is the client a known alcoholic, drug addict, or has a medical condition or criminal behaviour, recognised by one of the authorities.
- c) Working Environment
- Is the environment/location or terrain of high risk or a known trouble spot? Could there be any rapid changes in climatic conditions or association with a severe weather climate? Does the nature of the environment place any limitations on the task or wonder, or does the remoteness or isolation require an experienced worker? Is criminal activity a consideration or interference or wilful damage a possibility particularly from children.
- Does the lone worker's activities impact on those of the premises being visited, i.e. for accidents or communications?
- d) Supervision
- How is this achieved, with what frequency, can contact be initiated by the worker or can it be initiated by the Supervisor. Levels of Supervision should complement information, instruction and training and provide guidance in situations of uncertainty. Supervision will depend on the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the employee. It is important that the supervisor stresses that where the lone worker finds themselves in a situation which is hazardous, to withdraw without fear or prejudice.
- e) Training, Instruction & Information
- Has the employee been informed and given all necessary and relevant information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks

involved whilst lone working? Is it recorded?

f) Communication

Should be commensurate with the risks involved. Should be easily and readily utilised. May include mobile phone, pager, personal alarm, hand held or vehicle two way radio. Is coverage complete i.e. is the phone/radio signal strength adequate? Decide on the frequency of communication? This may range from monitoring checks, regular pattern of calls or an automatic device if period signals aren't received.

Are records kept of where staff are, how long away, when returning, and the contact name and numbers of staff working away from base? What contingency plans for breakdown of communications are required?

Remember – communication can give false sense of security and may increase risk rather than reducing it in some circumstances.

g) First Aid

What is the location of the nearest first aid kit and availability of a competent first aider, for treatment of injuries.

h) Suitability of equipment

The selection and use must be in line with the requirements of Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. It is imperative that only the tools supplied by the employer are used and as instructed. Tools must have a planned system of maintenance. Standby equipment should be earmarked for emergencies in the event of equipment failure. Can the equipment be safely handled by one person?

i) Accident and Emergency Procedures

Are the physical and mental abilities of the individual capable of responding to the incident correctly and in the specific manner? What procedures are in place for reporting accidents/incidents. What action should be taken if an employee fails to call in or report back, who is to be notified? Who is the contact during out of hours work? Consider equipment failure, uncontrolled exposure to harm agents, illness, physical assault or vehicle breakdown.

j) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Determined by the risk assessment, and in line with the requirements of Personal Protective Equipment Regulations. Records should be kept of

all issued PPE and high level of supervision and control is necessary to ensure the constant use and good condition of this equipment. *This includes the provision of personal attack alarms.*

- k) Personal Preparedness Achieved through work planning and validation of procedures used.

- l) Double staffing Should a particular risk be incapable of being eliminated or reduced so far as is reasonably practicable, double staffing may have to be considered as part of a safe system of work. Additional advice should be obtained prior to work commencing.

- m) Transportation Can premises be reached by ordinary vehicles and will weather further affect this. Maintenance and Servicing of Vehicles: Are courses of defensive driving necessary?

- n) Contact with the Public or animals 92% of violent crime is related to direct contact with the public. Is cash to be handled? Is it feasible that an animal will be used to provoke an attack?

- o) Permits to work Particularly where risk is considered high and where specific legal requirements exist, some or all of the above procedures may be contained in a written permit to work and without which the activity may not take place. Where time limits are a consideration from exposure or fatigue the permit to work should state the start/stop time or maximum duration of the task.

APPENDIX 3

PERSONAL SAFETY ADVICE

SAFETY WHEN APPROACHING OR OPENING THE WORKPLACE

- When approaching the workplace, be alert. If you see a broken window, signs of forced entry, or insecure door, assume that someone is on the premises. Go to a safe place and telephone the Police immediately. Inform your line manager if necessary.
- **Do not go into the workplace to use the telephone**

SAFETY WHEN LEAVING OR CLOSING THE WORKPLACE

- Look outside to check that no-one is hanging around, If you see someone prowling or lurking outside, do not go out alone to check, stay inside and telephone the Police.
- If you are usually collected by car, wait until it arrives before going out. Similarly, if you are travelling by public transport, do not leave the workplace so early that you have to wait a long time for the bus or train.
- Check the premises are secure before you leave.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN DEALING WITH POSSIBLE CONFLICT SITUATIONS DURING A VISIT TO A SERVICE USER'S/CLIENT'S HOME

- Park your car so that it can be driven away easily.
- Park in a well-lit area near other vehicles if possible.
- Stay alert when approaching the property, look around the garden for obvious dangers such as dogs/prowlers etc.
- After knocking/ringing, stand back and to the side of the door.
- If you have to look through a letter box, do not look directly in, try to observe from the side or use a small mirror.
- Do not stand on the edge of the steps.
- Be careful of milk bottles/dustbins/lids or other potential weapons.
- Ask for any dogs or other pets to be secured where appropriate.
- Note the way in and out, type of catch/lock on the door and how to operate it.

- Assess situation and mood of Service User/Client.
- If in any doubt or you feel threatened do not enter, make an excuse and leave.
- Note any other people in the property and their mood.
- Only sit down when the Service User/Client does.
- Sit in an upright chair (easier to stand up and/or use as a defensive barrier). If you have to sit in an armchair or settee, sit on the edge near the arm, this will allow you to stand up more easily.
- Keep the exit door on your side of the room.
- Note any objects/items that could be used as a weapon.
- If the situation changes and you feel threatened, make an excuse and leave.
- Back out rather than turning your back on the Service User/Client.
- Try to leave the dignity – it may help any future dealings with the Service User/Client.
- If you are unable to leave, and the situation warrants, it may be necessary to take further action such as:-
 - Set off your personal attack alarm or scream/shout to attract the attention of others – this may distract the Service User/Client long enough to allow you to escape.
 - If physically threatened, try to use a barrier such as a table/chair (not as a weapon, but as a defensive measure).

SAFETY IN THE CAR OR OTHER VEHICLE

- Always lock your vehicle when entering and leaving it.
- Plan your route.
- Check you have not left your lights on when leaving your vehicle.
- Do not leave valuables, briefcase/paperwork etc on display in vehicle.
- Have your van/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 no one is hiding there – even if the doors were locked – use a torch if necessary.
- When driving, consider locking all doors except for the driver's door (where possible). In this way, if an accident occurs, you can be rescued, but if you feel threatened by a situation you can quickly lock your door.
- If you are followed in your vehicle do not get out, ensure that it is locked, flash lights and sound the horn to attract attention.
- Try not to park in dark, deserted streets or car parks. Whenever possible, make your car/van a social creature (safety in numbers).
- **NEVER** drive nose first into a parking space, reverse in so you can be ready to leave quickly if necessary.
- If you must use a multi-storey car park, try to park on the ground floor as stairs and lifts can be dangerous places. Have the correct change ready for the machine. Remember you can always drive your car right up to the ticket machine to get your exit ticket.
- Don't linger longer than necessary and keep alert at all times.
- Always carry a torch with you.
- If in difficulty and a stranger offers to help, do not get out of your vehicle – ask the person to phone for help. **(The safest way to help a stranded motorist is to stop at the next telephone and call for assistance).**
- If possible always travel on busy roads, avoid isolated areas.
- Be careful if someone flags you down on a quiet road. Make sure it is a genuine emergency before you wind down the window or unlock your door. If you are in any doubt, drive on and call the police.
- If you have been requested to stop by someone pretending to be a police officer and you have any doubts about them, i.e. they are in plain clothes, ask to see their warrant card before you open the window or door.
- Ensure your vehicle has sufficient fuel for the journey.
- Join a motoring/breakdown organisation such as the AA or RAC.

SAFETY IN THE STREET

- Do not wear identification badge when walking in the street.
- Be alert, walk with purpose and confidence: don't skulk in the shadows with hunched shoulders.

- Avoid short cuts through unlit or deserted areas such as alleys or waste ground.
- Do not overload yourself with packages or bags.
- Walk near to the kerb edge and away from buildings and alleys so that someone lurking in an alley has further to come to reach you.
- Whenever possible, do not walk alone.
- Walk facing the traffic so that a car cannot pull up behind you unnoticed.
- When walking along a street you may feel that someone is pursuing you on foot. Try crossing the road to confirm your suspicions. If you are still being followed then make your way to the closest place where people are likely to be, e.g. a pub, launderette or house with lights on. As soon as you can telephone the Police from a safe place.
- Kerb-crawlers: don't take notice – ignore them, continue walking briskly. If persistent, make a mental note of the car registration number, turn and walk briskly in the opposite direction. (It is more difficult for the kerb-crawler to reverse). If someone approaches for directions, don't let them get too close.
Keep your distance!
- Do keep your handbag/briefcase close to your body. If someone makes a grab for your bag, it is better to let it go rather than risk injury. Your personal safety is more important than your handbag or other belongings.
- If you must carry a large sum of money, divide it up and put some in your pocket or other parts of your clothing and some in your bag.
- Check books and cards should be kept separate.
- Do not carry your keys in your handbag – put them in your pocket.
- Avoid wearing jewellery.
- If you carry a mobile telephone, ensure that it is easily accessible and consider pre-setting your emergency call number. **Do not use your mobile phone on the street except in an emergency!**
- Carry a personal attack alarm – **regularly check the alarm function and condition of the batteries.**

SAFETY IN RECEPTION/INTERVIEW AREAS

- When dealing with a Service User/Client, remember, what may appear to be a trivial matter to you may be perceived by them as a real crisis.
- They will be looking for you to help, assistance advice etc, therefore try to be sympathetic, respect their feelings and show concern, it may help prevent a potentially violent situation from developing.
- Try not to keep people waiting for lengthy periods of time – if this is unavoidable, keep them informed of what is happening – ignore them (**even by accident**), could lead to an escalation of the situation.
- Interview room doors should be fitted with an appropriate window, so other employees can observe in cases of emergency.
- An “**Alarm System**” should be provided, with agreed procedures in place, and all employees should know what to do when the alarm sounds.
- The use of a “**Code Word**”, which can be used to warn managers and colleagues that a situation is escalating, should be the signal for support to be provided without alerting the Service User/Client.
- Seating arrangements should be such that employees are positioned near a door – this would allow quick escape route in an emergency.
- The provision of suitable toys for children to play with will help relieve their boredom and hopefully reduce tension while Service User/Clients are waiting to be seen.
- Careful selection of furniture and fittings is essential, consideration should be given as to their potential to be used as a weapon against employees or other people.

TO REDUCE THE RISK OF PROVOCATION

- Introduce yourself politely.
- Express clearly and concisely your reasons for being there and any actions you are taking.
- Avoid criticism of the person you’re talking to.
- Avoid unfriendly gestures.
- Leave yourself an alternative course of action.
- Show no fear/apprehension.

- Stay calm.
- Show sympathy (even if false).
- Keep talking (active listening – don't look bored or look away).
 - Remain engaged in conversation with the person.
 - Use the 'broken record' technique i.e. repetition of key statements

WHAT TO DO IF A DIFFICULT SITUATION OCCURS

Try to defuse the situation

- Listen and acknowledge that the person is distressed.
- Perhaps something can be done to help?

Help the person to feel in control of themselves

- Remain calm and don't take the aggression/abuse personally.

If you feel at risk from violence

- Leave the situation **IMMEDIATELY** and report the occurrence.

If unable to leave protect yourself

- Place barriers between yourself and the assailant – continue talking and tell the Service User/Client you mean them no harm
- Use reasonable force to protect yourself if absolutely necessary and only as a means of last resort.

Observe people's behaviour closely and be aware of nonverbal communication ('body language')

- ❖ Facial expression
- ❖ Eye contact
- ❖ Tone of voice
- ❖ Physical touch
- ❖ Appearance
- ❖ Posture
- ❖ Proximity
- ❖ Hand and foot movement

USE OF SELF-DEFENCE

The law in relation to the use of Self Defence was clearly described in the Appeal Judgement given in *Palmer v Regina* 1971 and still applies today. The judge stated:

- **“It is both good law and common sense that a man who is attacked may defend himself. It is both good law and common sense that he may do, but may only do, what is reasonably necessary. But everything will depend on the particular circumstances”.**

The following points should give some guidance on the legal use of force as a means of self-defence:

- Self-defence is permitted in law.
- Self-defence is permitted in law to the extent of what is **‘Reasonably necessary’ to stop the attack.**
- Self-defence is not permitted in law beyond what is **‘Reasonably necessary’** in time and degree to stop the attack.

WHAT IS REASONABLE FORCE?

- Each situation is different, and what may be deemed as reasonable force used to defend oneself when a drunken thug attacks you with a broken bottle in the street, may not be deemed as reasonable in a Social Services Day Centre when dealing with a Service User with learning difficulties.
- Extreme care must be taken in force as a means of self-defence, and if the only consideration is your own safety, then escape should be your first option.
- The use of restraint techniques (Control & Restraint) should only be used by those employees appropriately trained.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Corporate Health and Safety Policy and associated policies.