Lone Working and Personal Safety Policy

Supportive Bridge Ltd | Community Support and Healthcare Staffing | Bradford, England

POLICY AT A GLANCE

- **Almost all our shifts are worked alone,** early in the morning or in the evening. This policy is how we keep workers safe when no colleague is there.
- **Someone always knows where you are.** Your rota is held in the office, and you log in and out of every shift.
- **If you feel unsafe, leave.** Get to a safe place, call 999 if needed, then call the office. You will never be criticised for leaving.
- **Never enter a home** that feels unsafe, where there is a stranger you were not told about, or where you smell gas or see fire. Step back and ring the office.
- **No reply at the door?** Follow the no-reply procedure in section 8. Never assume the person is out.
- **The on-call manager is available at all times** that shifts are running. The number is on page 1.
- **Tell us about every near miss,** not just the times something happened. That is how we stop the next one.

SERVICE DETAILS (fill in before issuing)

Registered Manager	
Nominated Individual	
Office phone and office hours	
On-call number (out of hours)	
Monitoring system used (app, phone log or call monitoring)	
Date issued	
Next review date	

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy explains how Supportive Bridge Ltd ("Supportive Bridge", "we", "us") protects workers who work on their own, and what workers themselves must do to stay safe.

1.2 Lone working is not against the law, but an employer must assess the risks and take reasonable steps to control them under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. A lone worker must not be at greater risk than anyone else.

1.3 Our workers visit people in their own homes, often before dawn or after dark, sometimes in unfamiliar areas, and usually with no colleague present. This policy exists because that is normal for us, not exceptional.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Supportive Bridge Ltd operates two arms, and this policy applies to both: our **healthcare staffing service**, supplying care and support workers to care homes, hospitals and other providers; and our **community support service**, where our own support workers visit adults and older people in their own homes, including council housing, on morning and evening shifts, to support them with daily living.

2.2 Supportive Bridge does **not** provide personal care. Personal care is a regulated activity under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and we will provide it only if and when we are registered with the Care Quality Commission. Our support workers provide non-personal support such as companionship, meal preparation, shopping, domestic help, prompting, and support to get out and about. This policy is written to meet both local authority provider assurance requirements and the standards we will be assessed against at CQC registration.

2.3 It covers anyone working alone: support workers on shifts in people's homes, staff travelling between homes, supervisors carrying out visits or spot checks, and office staff working alone in the office or out of hours.

2.4 Where a worker is supplied to a client organisation, that organisation's lone working arrangements apply on site, and our worker must report any concern to that organisation and to our office the same day.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Nominated Individual	Makes sure lone working is properly assessed and resourced, including the cost of on-call cover, two-worker shifts and any monitoring system. Reviews incidents at least quarterly.
Registered Manager	Makes sure every home and every worker has a current risk assessment, that rotas are safe and realistic, that on-call is always covered, and that incidents are investigated and acted on.
Office and on-call staff	Know who is working where and when, respond to missed log-ins, answer calls promptly, and escalate when a worker cannot be contacted.
Field Supervisor / Care Coordinator	Assesses homes, checks safe working during spot checks, and briefs workers on any risk before their first shift with a person.
Lone workers	Follow this policy and the risk assessment, log in and out, keep their phone charged and with them, tell the office about any change or concern, and put their own safety first.

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4. RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Lone working risks are assessed in three ways, and all three must be in place before a worker starts a shift alone:

- **the home:** the Home Environment Risk Assessment covers access, lighting, parking, the area, pets, others in the household, any history of aggression, and whether the shift is safe for one worker or needs two (see our Health and Safety Policy);
- **the person:** the support plan and risk assessment record anything about the person that affects worker safety, including distressed behaviour, confusion, alcohol or substance use;
- **the worker:** individual factors such as pregnancy, a health condition, being new to the area, or being newly qualified, with adjustments recorded.

4.2 Risk assessments are reviewed at least every 12 months, and immediately after any incident, change in the household, or change in the person's needs.

4.3 Where a risk cannot be safely managed by one worker, two workers are arranged, the shift is moved to daylight hours, or the service is withdrawn. Cost and staffing pressure are never reasons to send one worker into a situation assessed as needing two.

5. BEFORE THE SHIFT

5.1 Workers must:

- check the rota, the support plan and the risk assessment before going to a home for the first time;
- carry a charged mobile phone, the office and on-call numbers, and their ID badge;
- wear appropriate clothing and shoes, and carry nothing that identifies where they are going to anyone watching;
- tell the office if they cannot work a shift, rather than swapping it privately;
- plan the route and parking, and park where the car can be driven away easily, facing out where possible;
- keep car doors locked while driving, keep bags out of sight, and never leave paperwork or a phone visible in the car.

5.2 Workers must not take a friend, partner, child or pet to a shift, and must not give a person their personal address or personal phone number.

6. LOGGING IN AND OUT

6.1 The office must always know who is in which home. Every worker logs in on arrival and out on leaving, using the system named on page 1.

- if a worker does not log in within **15 minutes** of the shift start time, the office or on-call manager calls them;
- if there is no answer, the manager calls again after five minutes, then calls the person's home if there is a number, then the worker's emergency contact;
- if the worker still cannot be reached within **30 minutes** of the expected log-in, a manager travels to the address, or, where there is reason to fear for the worker's safety, calls the police on 999;
- if a worker does not log out within 30 minutes of the expected end time, the same escalation applies;
- the office keeps a record of every escalation and what happened.

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6.2 At the end of the working day, the last worker on shift confirms they have finished. The on-call manager checks all shifts are closed before standing down.

7. ARRIVING AT A HOME

7.1 Workers should:

- look at the property as they approach, and not enter if anything looks or feels wrong;
- knock or ring and announce themselves clearly, show their ID, and wait to be invited in;
- if a stranger answers, or someone is there they were not told about, not enter; step back and call the office;
- when inside, stay aware of the way out and avoid being in a position where their exit is blocked;
- not enter if they smell gas, see smoke or fire, or see signs of a break-in; move away, call 999 as appropriate, then the office;
- ask for any dog to be secured in another room before entering, and not enter if it is not.

8. NO REPLY AT THE DOOR

8.1 A person not answering may simply be out, or may have fallen or become unwell. Workers must never leave without following this procedure:

NO REPLY PROCEDURE

1. Knock and ring repeatedly for at least two minutes, and try any doorbell and knocker.
2. Call the person's landline and mobile from outside the door, and listen for it ringing inside.
3. Look through accessible windows from public areas, without entering the garden of a neighbour, and call the person's name through the letterbox.
4. Check for signs: curtains, lights, milk or post uncollected, the car present.
5. Call the office or on-call manager. Do not leave the property while you are speaking to them.
6. If there is a key safe and the support plan authorises entry, enter and check on the person, announcing yourself loudly as you go.
7. If the person is found unwell or injured, call 999, stay with them and then call the office.
8. If there is no key, or entry is not authorised, the office contacts the family or emergency contact. If there is reason to believe the person is inside and at risk, the office calls 999 and asks for forced entry. The worker stays at the property until told otherwise.
9. Everything is recorded, including times, and the person's next shift is checked.

8.2 Workers must never walk away from a no-reply without speaking to the office.

9. KEYS, KEY SAFES AND ENTRY

9.1 Key safe codes are confidential, held securely in the office, and given only to workers who need them. Workers must not write codes on paper carried in a bag, share them with anyone, or keep them after they stop supporting that person.

9.2 Workers must shield the key safe when entering the code, close it properly, and report any key safe that is broken, sticking or visible to passers-by.

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9.3 Where our workers hold a physical key, it is signed out and in, kept separately from anything identifying the address, and returned immediately when support ends. Lost keys or a disclosed code must be reported to the office at once so the lock or code can be changed.

10. DURING THE SHIFT: STAYING SAFE

- keep the phone on the person and charged, not left in a bag in another room;
- if the atmosphere changes, or someone becomes angry, stay calm, do not argue, do not block the doorway, and make your way out;
- leave immediately if there is any threat, weapon, aggression, or if the worker simply feels unsafe;
- never intervene physically in an argument or between other people;
- if a person or another household member is under the influence of alcohol or drugs and behaving unpredictably, leave and call the office;
- do not accept gifts, money, alcohol or lifts, and do not carry out tasks outside the support plan.

10.1 **Leaving is always the right decision when a worker feels unsafe.** Managers will support that decision every time, and will never ask a worker to return to a home they have had to leave until the situation has been reviewed.

11. AFTER AN INCIDENT

11.1 Every incident and near miss involving worker safety is reported to the office the same day and recorded under our Incident and Accident Reporting Policy.

11.2 The Registered Manager will:

- check the worker is safe and offer support, including time out and a debrief;
- arrange medical attention where needed, and report to the police where a crime has occurred;
- review and update the risk assessment before the next shift at that home;
- consider whether two workers, a change of time, a change of worker or withdrawal of the service is needed;
- report to the HSE under RIDDOR if the injury is reportable;
- consider a safeguarding referral where the person we support may also be at risk.

11.3 Workers will not lose shifts or income because they reported a safety concern.

12. WORKING ALONE IN THE OFFICE

12.1 Office staff working alone, including early, late or at weekends, tell a colleague or manager, keep the door secured, do not admit anyone they are not expecting, and confirm when they leave. Lone office working is avoided where possible for visitors' appointments.

13. TRAINING AND SUPPORT

13.1 All workers complete lone working and personal safety training before working alone and refresh it at least every two years. Training covers risk awareness, de-escalation, the no-reply procedure, and this policy.

13.2 New workers shadow experienced colleagues before working alone, and are not sent to a home assessed as higher risk until they are experienced and the Registered Manager agrees.

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13.3 Lone working is a standing item in supervision, so that workers can raise concerns about particular homes, areas or times.

14. MONITORING AND REVIEW

14.1 The Registered Manager reviews log-in compliance, escalations, incidents and near misses monthly, and checks that risk assessments are in date. The Nominated Individual reviews this at least quarterly.

14.2 This policy is reviewed every year, and sooner after any serious incident or change to our working patterns.

15. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, Regulations 12, 13, 17 and 18
- HSE guidance INDG73: Protecting lone workers
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust: personal safety guidance for lone workers
- NICE guideline NG21: Home care

16. RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

Related policies: Health and Safety; Incident and Accident Reporting; Safeguarding Adults; Missed and Late Visits; Entry to the Home and Key Safes; Positive and Safe Support; Staff Training and Competency; Business Continuity; Driving and Transporting People; Whistleblowing.

Forms: Home Environment Risk Assessment; Lone Worker Risk Assessment (Appendix A); No Reply Record; Incident Report; Key and Key Safe Register.

17. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date	Approved by	Role	Reason
1.0			Nominated Individual	New policy for local authority assurance and CQC registration

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APPENDIX A: LONE WORKER RISK ASSESSMENT

Complete for each person's home before a worker attends alone. Review yearly and after any incident.

Person: _____ Address: _____ Assessed by: _____ Date: _____

Consideration	Findings	Controls and actions
Shift times: are any in darkness? Which?		
Area and parking: lighting, distance from car to door		
Access: key safe, keys, intercom, stairs or lift		
Who else lives in or visits the home?		
Any history of aggression, threats or abuse (person or household)		
Alcohol or substance use in the household		
Pets, especially dogs		
Person's health: distressed behaviour, confusion, falls		
Mobile phone signal at the property		
Can this shift be worked safely by one worker?		
Agreed check-in arrangements for this home		
Any adjustment needed for a particular worker		

Overall: this home can be supported by ONE worker / TWO workers (circle). Reason: _____

Signed (Registered Manager): _____ Review date: _____

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