

YOUTH UNITY CIC

Safe Working Practices Policy

Safe Working Practices Policy
Reviewed – Jan 2021
Review Date – Jan 2022
Reviewed by – Director of Operations

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This document sets out the approach of Youth Unity CIC with regard to maintaining the safety of staff when working with service users. It contains a policy statement (Part One) and procedural guidance (Part Two). The functions of each are set out briefly below.

Part One

The Policy Statement. The policy statement sets out the broad framework of principles within which the particular area of work will be carried out. It sets out the organisation's broad style and approach to the issues, including any aims and guiding principles.

Part Two

Procedural Guidance. The procedural guidance sets out the details that staff will require to carry out their roles. It also sets out the specific tasks involved in undertaking this area of work and identifies who is responsible for carrying them out.

Related Policies:

- Risk assessment and management
- Referral, initial assessment and interview.
- Health & Safety
- Confidentiality
- Protection from Abuse
- Incident Management
- Bullying & Harassment of Service Users Policy
- Out of Hours Policy

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1 Part One – Policy Statement

1. Client working situations may span a range of seriousness and potential for danger and it will depend on the judgement of the staff members how these situations are approached. The following guidelines should assist staff in their safe work and / or dealing with difficult behaviour needs. There should be an ongoing process of assessing risk in relation to working with service users and in the community. This may relate to any type of work and does not always mean that you are alone – you may for example be co-facilitating a group but still require a risk assessment.
2. Youth Unity CIC makes a commitment to staff that buddies on the lone working system should recognise that this ensures staff feel safe and looked after so they should be careful to follow process, as should line managers when debriefing staff following incidents. However joint visits do not guarantee safety or override the need for risk management.
3. Two members of staff should conduct visits/key meetings if there is **any doubt** about the safety of the visit. Youth Unity CIC must prioritise the safety of staff when safe working.
4. Any concerns about risk management or lone working should be brought to the attention of a senior member of staff immediately.
5. Staff are not expected to place themselves in any unnecessary danger, and any concerns should be discussed with the line manager.
6. Risk situations may span a range of seriousness and potential for danger and it will depend on the judgement of the staff members present at the time as to how the situation is best dealt with. The following guidelines should assist staff in responding to incidents but each case should be dealt with as deemed appropriate by the staff involved at the time.
7. Risk situations will include incidents where a service user, a violent partner or a visitor to an Youth Unity CIC premises:
 - Verbally threatens or intimidates staff or others
 - Physically threatens or intimidates staff or others
 - Attempts to assault staff or others physically
 - Carries out a physical assault on staff or others

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- Brings a weapon onto a premises (whether or not its use is attempted)
 - Lone or joint visits or general meetings where there arises cause for discomfort
 - Someone prevents you from leaving a situation
8. Staff should be aware of the need to remain calm in difficult situations and the need for dynamic risk assessment skills when handling any situation.
 9. Dynamic risk assessment is essential at all times, irrespective of the verbal or written risk management plans made. This is because situations and circumstances can change so your ability to recalculate risk 'on the go' is essential.
 10. Sites which are used frequently should have an overarching site risk assessment which all staff should be aware of who use that venue.

2 Part Two – Procedural Guidance

2.1 General safety off-site

- Do not carry your house keys and anything showing your home address and telephone number. If both are snatched, it is advisable to have your locks changed immediately.
- Always carry your mobile phone and ensure the battery is charged. Do not carry phones or other valuable equipment in your hands as this can encourage street robbery.

2.2 Buddy System

- For during office hours, a designated buddy, normally a member of the general administrative team, will keep the safe working phone on their person and ensure that the battery is charged. They will allocate this to another if they are not available. All staff members should ensure that the designated number is stored on their mobile phones. The number for daytime (9.00am – 5.00pm) safe working is 07703 882 190.

- In line with the earlier policy statement, use of the buddy system may relate to any type of work and does not always mean that you are alone.

You are required to record all appointment details in the 'Safe Working' electronic calendar in order that the Buddy is aware of your movements. Please ensure this is done in time for them to monitor you i.e. if you have a meeting at 9 a.m. this should have been recorded the previous day.

Please note: When sharing a calendar appointment with the Safe Working electronic calendar group, **IF** your meeting is beginning or ending outside of the core hours of Monday – Friday 9.00a.m. to 5.00p.m. (This is because on the outlook group appointment the On-call staff/buddy can see the On-call calendar but not both the Safe Working and On-call together. So, for their ease these appointments need to appear in the On-call calendar.) The appointment details you need to include are:

- Name of the person you are meeting with and/or Modus ID
 - Location of the meeting (including where from and to if this is a walk)
 - Whether this is a joint visit
 - Start and expected finish time of appointment
 - Parking location (where relevant)
 - You must ensure that your personal details are up to date with the Finance & HR Administrator, including your car registration
-
- If you are left alone in a refuge or office for a period of time then you should use the buddy system, especially if you are working late, and irrespective of whether this is your normal place of work.
 - The buddy phone must be kept available for emergency calls. All check-in calls should be as brief as possible, and texts are acceptable. Buddies must ensure that they respond, and give their name when answering the phone. However, if you do not receive a reply to your text, YOU MUST TELEPHONE. Staff should notify their line manager if a buddy fails to acknowledge communications. In the event of no response from the buddy you must ensure you speak to another member of staff.
 - It is the buddy's responsibility to identify who will take that role in their absence and notify the group via the electronic calendar.

- If your appointment overruns you should notify the buddy by voice call. It is perfectly acceptable to advise your client that you need to do so. Texts are not acceptable in this instance for safety reasons.
- All staff should always carry out a mental PET risk assessment ('Place, Environment, Task' - **see Appendix 1**) for all external appointments. PET risk assessments guides should be displayed in all offices. If the risk is higher than standard you must complete a lone working risk assessment form (**see Appendix 2**) which must be attached to the relevant appointment on the Safe Working calendar.
- Staff must phone in or text as appointments start and finish. If you have back-to-back appointments, you must call the buddy to advise them of your change of location. The buddy will monitor your progress and know if you have not called in at any point. **Staff must also phone or text the buddy when they are back on site.**
- Any evening appointments, or appointments which are incomplete at 5pm, will be monitored by the out-of-hours on-call worker. The on-call worker will then assume the responsibility of the daytime buddy. The name of the on-call worker is shown on the Safe Working calendar. **To contact the buddy before 9.00 am or after 5.00 pm please call the out of hours buddy mobile phone number 0747 899 1115**
- Any weekend appointments should be recorded on the Safe Working AND On-call calendars before 4.00 pm on Friday so that the On-call worker can be made aware of them in good time.
- The buddy will endeavour to contact you if you have not called in to check out of your appointment within half hour of the specified time. You must take this call. If there is no answer the buddy will speak to your line manager or your immediate colleagues to ascertain any additional information about your visit and then decide on appropriate action - this may be in consultation with the CEO or other available manager(s). The emphasis will though be on making a speedy decision so that time is not lost if you are in potential danger.
- If you feel that your personal safety is at risk you should call the buddy phone and, during the conversation, you should use the phrase "**red folder**". This will indicate that the buddy must call the police and direct them to your location.
- You should not hesitate to make an emergency call first if that is necessary.

- If you feel uncomfortable in any situation it is best to leave and trust your instinct. You can review after, and think about how you managed the risk.

2.3 Home Visits

Please note that this section does not relate to the collection of donations from donors' residential premises. Staff collecting donations should, however, follow the standard safe working process. Volunteers who collect donations at the request of Youth Unity CIC staff should make telephone contact with the buddy at the start and completion of each collection, giving name/address/duration details.

Home visits are exceptional for high risk families, but may be usual in refuge resettlement/outreach. All home visits must have an associated risk assessment. This may be a one off for refuge resettlement/outreach providing circumstances do not change. In addition to the safety measures in the previous section, staff making a home visit must take the following precautions which should lessen any associated risks:

- A Home Visit risk assessment (**see Appendix 3**) must be completed and attached to the relevant appointment in the Safe Working calendar. This will enable you to anticipate potential problems. If there is any history of violent or aggressive behaviour, you must either arrange for the service user to meet you at a safe location or, if a home visit must be made, take a colleague with you.
- Traceability: inform the buddy of your arrival at and departure from the property. If there is no signal, walk away from the property until you get a signal and then inform your buddy of the lack of signal.
- Always carry an Youth Unity CIC identification card with you.
- Take only what is essential into the property; leave handbags, briefcases and so on elsewhere. Avoid taking anything that you would not wish the person to see or read. Do not carry your house keys and anything showing your home address and telephone number. If both are snatched, it is advisable to have your locks changed immediately.
- Always trust your instincts. If you reach a property but feel concerned, do not go in. You should either call your buddy and inform them of your concerns and then either:
 - conduct the interview at the front door

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- arrange a future appointment at a safe place or when you can return with a colleague.
- Ensure that you are familiar with the layout of the property or block you are visiting.
- Let the service user lead the way and avoid entering a room first. Where possible, sit nearest the way out but without your back to the door. Avoid being blocked in by the service user.
- Check the type of lock on the front door. If the service user locks the door, check that the key is accessible, or request that they do not.
- Try to avoid reacting to the property itself, for example, if it smells, is untidy or dirty.
- Terminate the visit and leave the property immediately if you start to feel uncomfortable.

N.B if a risk assessment is completed you should state 'Risk assessment attached' on your Safe Working calendar entry.

2.4 Visiting Other People's Premises

Going to conduct business on other people's premises is, to an extent, like going to other people's homes. It is their territory, not yours and you may be more or less welcome depending on the nature of your visit. The points made in the previous section also apply to visiting other premises.

Groups are often conducted at other premises and should be covered by a safe working risk assessment. Please ensure you conduct or are familiar with the appropriate one for that venue.

Where a venue is used regularly, for example, a court house the team should make a site risk assessment (**Appendix Two**). These should be stored in a folder of the same name on the Team Site and all teams should be informed of their existence. N.B. these assessments should also be mindful of accessibility issues, for example, the availability of ramps for wheelchair users.

2.5 Drop-in services

Follow the protocol for visiting at home, ensuring that there is a line of communication to another member of staff and that they are aware if you are alone with a member of the public. Please use the buddy system when facilitating these services. All one stop shops should be covered by a risk assessment. Please ensure you are familiar with this, or conduct one if necessary.

2.6 Travelling in a Vehicle

1. Put all valuables out of sight, under a seat, or preferably in a locked boot. The theft of handbags from front seats is frequent in large towns. If transferring items to the boot of a car for safe-keeping, do so at the beginning of the journey and not on arrival as this could draw unwanted attention.
2. Keep doors locked and windows closed when driving in town. Lock your car when you leave it, even if you only go to pay for petrol on a garage forecourt.
3. Plan your route in advance and take maps. Try to stay on main roads. If you need directions ask in a garage or shop.
4. Make sure that you have change or a phone card in case of emergencies.
5. Do not give lifts to strangers. If someone seems to be in trouble, only stop if you are convinced it is a genuine matter. Otherwise drive on to a police station and report it or stop in a safe place and call the emergency services.
6. If a missile is thrown at your vehicle do not stop, but drive on to a police station and report it or stop in a safe place and telephone the police.
7. Before stopping and getting out of your vehicle, make yourself aware of what is going on. After dark, if possible, park in a well-lit and busy place. When you park in daylight, consider what the area will be like after dark.
8. Have your key ready when returning to your vehicle, ensuring that you always approach it from the rear, or walk around it to make sure that there is no one in it before you open the door. Where possible, reverse park into a space so that you can see if someone approaches the car while you are getting into it or sitting in it.

2.7 Evening Meetings

Appointments taking place outside normal working hours are treated the same as daytime appointments except the buddy will be the on-call employee.

2.8 Counselling Room

When taking appointments in a counselling room, counsellors should use the buddy system.

2.9 Playroom

The play worker should have a mobile available in the playroom with the buddy number and all parents' contact numbers stored in it.

2.10 Reviews

Any significant event or 'near miss' will be considered and a debrief will be carried out to assess the risks involved and lessons that can be learnt from them and actions needed to avoid similar incidents in the future. These outcomes will be disseminated to the whole staff team at the earliest opportunity. Please complete an incident report for a near miss (see Incident Management Policy and Process).

2.11 Youth Unity CIC Charity Shop

Charity Shop staff who are on the shop floor should carry the handset for the telephone with them at all times. The handset should have the buddy phone pre-programmed into it.

Charity Shop staff should avoid forming personal relationships with clients, in case this creates risk for them or the staff/ volunteer.

It seems very unlikely that a perpetrator will come into the shop unless they are shopping, especially if relationships with clients are avoided. As this is a retail environment there may also be other people who pose a risk. All Charity Shop staff should read the dealing with challenging behaviour guidance (below).

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In the case of volunteers, there should be at least one senior volunteer, if there are only volunteers available. For the fundraising staff and charity shop staff, they should use the Safe Working policy as for all other staff members.

If someone does come into the shop who makes staff/ volunteers uncomfortable.

1. Advise them that this is a shop and you have no knowledge of or contact with the support work of the organisation, if they are asking about this.
2. Offer them the telephone number of the organisation 01843 269 400 if they wish to speak to someone.
3. If you are concerned about anyone's behaviour, respectfully ask them to leave. If they refuse to do so, advise them that you will have to call the police if they refuse to do so.
4. If they are aggressive or confrontational please make yourself safe by going to the donations room and locking the door. Call the police. The contents of the shop are secondary to your personal safety.

Under no circumstances should you lock yourself in the safe room.

2.12 Contact from alleged perpetrators

The purpose of the organisation generates the risk that those who are alleged to be perpetrators of abuse could attempt or establish contact with members of staff. This procedural guidance covers the risk of face to face confrontation in any form and should be applied equally to alleged perpetrators. However, it is also possible that they may phone or contact by email. Any email contact should be forwarded to the line manager before a response is made. The line manager will support the staff member with any further contact that arises. Contact with the organisation by phone should follow the guidance below but it is also fine to forward the call to a senior member of staff. Key points to remember:

- The individual will know the nature of the organisation by the time they contact. We must ensure that staff and client confidentiality is protected from that point.

- It is important not to disclose to anyone information about a client if you have not checked their credentials. For example, if someone phones and states that they are a professional but you are not aware of them or their involvement in a case, you should always take their number and call back. Wherever possible, this should be via their organisation's reception/switchboard for confirmation that they are who they say they are. All professionals will appreciate the reasons why we have to do this.
- Should someone phone and state that they are a family member then you should not disclose whether you are aware of a client of that name, unless you have been given explicit consent by the client to do so.
- If someone calls and is angry or distressed and declares themselves to be the ex-partner of the client then you should advise them that they are not welcome to call (without agreeing or disagreeing to their claims) and that they should desist from doing so. They should also be advised that if they continue the Police will be called. This should then be discussed with a line manager, who will take any further calls.

2.13 Challenging and Aggressive Behaviour

2.13.1 Dealing with Violent and Aggressive Situations

N.B. This guidance applies in all services and out and about in the community too. Violent and aggressive situations may span a range of seriousness and potential for danger and it will depend on the judgement of the staff members present at the time as to how the situation is best dealt with. The following guidelines should assist staff in responding to incidents but each case should be dealt with as deemed appropriate by the staff involved at the time.

You should remove yourself from a situation which feels or becomes threatening. Identify in work locations a 'safe' room you can go to; when out and about walk away from threatening or aggressive behaviour.

Potentially violent and aggressive situations will include incidents where a service user, a violent partner or a visitor to Youth Unity CIC premises:

- Verbally threatens or intimidates staff or others
- Physically threatens or intimidates staff or others

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- Attempts to assault staff or others physically
- Carries out any form of physical assault
- Brings a weapon onto the premises (whether or not its use is attempted)

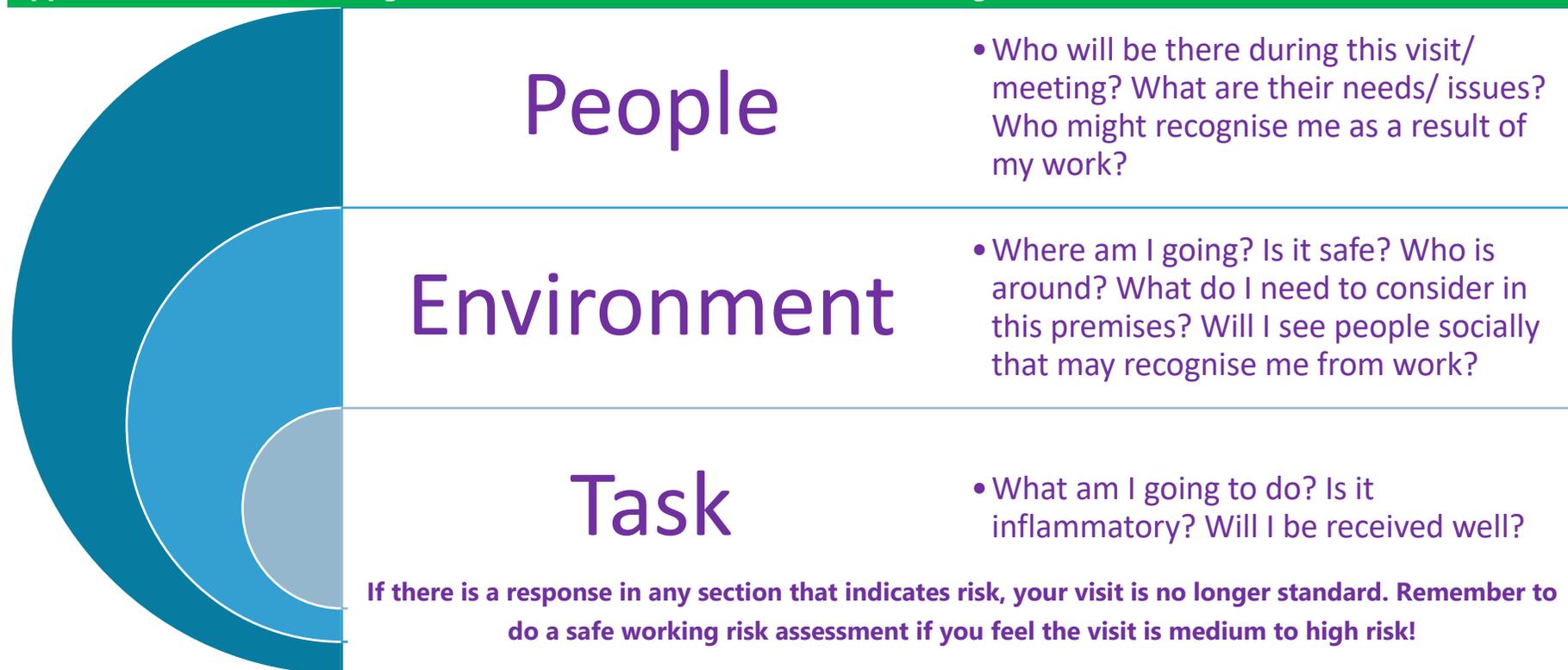
If a potentially violent or aggressive situation develops, staff members should take the following steps:

1. **Quickly assess the incident in terms of whether it is safe to intervene.** If it appears unsafe to intervene (for instance, the aggressor has a weapon or is otherwise unapproachable and/or the staff member is working alone and feels unsafe) they must contact the Police by dialling 999 and summoning emergency assistance, or use the panic alarm within the main office (located at eye level on wall to right of door as enter the room). It is activated by pushing two fingers simultaneously into the bottom of the box. If possible, the staff member should ensure that they and other staff and service users present could be safe until the Police arrive. This may be possible by moving into an area which is lockable or evacuating the premises.
2. **Contact on call when lone working,** never deal with a difficult situation alone. Even if you are co-working you can still use the 'red folder' code to the buddy if necessary.
3. **If it appears safe to intervene, attempt to calm the aggressor down** and get them to start talking about what the problem is. If there is more than one aggressor (for example where a physical fight has occurred or appears imminent), staff should work together to separate the aggressors and attempt to calm them down in separate locations if possible. Listen with boundaries, it may not be the right time to reason when tempers are high, but be clear about the limits of acceptable behaviour.
4. **Remember that aggression breeds aggression.** If you choose to intervene you should adopt a non-confrontational stance. Do not step towards an aggressor, and speak in a calm, even voice. Do not allow yourself to become involved in an argument. Try to be of assistance, but ensure that they understand that you will have to contact the police if they persist with aggression.
5. **Reassure other service users that the situation is under control and that they are safe,** once the immediate situation has been dealt with by either staff or the Police. If anyone has been injured during the incident, staff members present will need to ensure that they can receive emergency medical treatment if required.

6. **Debrief the staff members involved.** The line manager or another senior member of staff present at the time will need to carry out this debriefing. They must:

- ④ Check whether anyone has sustained any injuries and seek medical attention for them if they have.
- ④ Record details of the incident (refer to **Incident Management Policy**) with the staff member, including details of any injuries.
- ④ Assess whether there is a need to report the incident to the Police if they have not already been involved.
- ④ Support the staff member to come to terms with the incident if they have been upset or shaken by it.
- ④ Review and update the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan of any service user(s) involved to ensure that they fully reflect Youth Unity CIC ' knowledge and experience post-incident.
- ④ Review the response to the incident as a way of learning lessons from it. This will include assessing whether policies and procedures provided adequate guidance, whether they were followed correctly, and identifying any improvements needed to ensure safety in the future such as additional staff training or a review of the operational framework of the project. This review will not take place immediately after the incident but should follow on within a reasonable time period.

Appendix One – Safe Working P.E.T risk assessment – standard risk meetings



Appendix Two: Safe Working Risk Assessment - medium/ high risk 1-1 meetings & regular venues

Hazards	Risk to whom	Existing controls	Assess risk and identify action required		
			Probability & Severity	Rating	Action needed
People					
Environment					
Task					

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Appendix Three: Home Visit Risk Assessment

A home visit risk assessment form must be completed for every home visit.

Part 1 VISIT DETAILS			
Employee Name:		Name of anyone accompanying employee & their organisation:	
Date of visit:		Start/finish time of visit:	
Service User name/number:		Address:	
Part 2 RISK DETAILS			
PEOPLE: Who will be there during this visit/ meeting? What are their needs/ issues? Who might recognise me as a result of my work?			
Name of perpetrator(s):		Location of perpetrator(s) if known:	
Additional people risk factors/information:			
ENVIRONMENT: Is the venue safe? Is it isolated? Who is around? What do I need to consider in this premises? Will I see people socially who may recognise me from work?			

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Environmental risk factors/information to consider:	
TASK: What am I going to do? Is it inflammatory? Will I be received well? What alternatives are there to a home visit?	
Task risk factors/information to consider:	
Part 3 CONTROL MEASURES TO REDUCE RISK (Must be agreed with immediate line manager or another senior manager). These are in addition to mandatory calling in at start and end of visit. Please ensure your mobile phone is fully charged.	