



Bracknell Forest IASS Lone working policy

Lone working with children and young people

IASS recognises that, during the course of their work, it may be necessary for employees to work alone (on a one-to-one basis with a child or young person). This may occur as a regular part of an employee's working practice or may occur on an occasional basis. In either situation, it will arise from the understanding that this is the most appropriate and effective way of working with a particular child or young person. The safety of children, young people and workers is paramount and IASS is committed to minimising the risk of lone working for its employees.

Procedures

When meeting alone with children or young people, the following procedures should be adhered to:

- Staff working directly with children and young people must have a current Enhanced DBS check.
- Any staff members conducting lone working and their line manager must be familiar with their local safeguarding and child protection policy and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidance for managing safeguarding concerns.
- Staff members must ensure from the outset that the child or young person understands that their meetings are confidential, but there are limits to confidentiality in line with safeguarding practice (see IASS confidentiality and safeguarding policy for details). Staff members should never agree to keep 'secrets' and must ensure that children and young people understand this position.
- Staff members must ensure, from the outset of the work, that the child or young person understands the boundaries of what the worker and the service can offer, and what they cannot offer. The child or young person should know that support may be time-limited and will cover specific matters relating to the child or young person's special educational needs or disabilities. The child or young person should be supported to access other services to meet other needs.
- If indicated, the child or young person should be asked to provide emergency contact details and medical information before the meeting starts. This information needs to be stored securely and the child or young person must understand that this information will only be used in case of emergency.

- Children and young people should be seen when other members of staff are at hand, in the same building. This can include other staff members outside of the IAS Service, such as school or children's centre staff.
- Another member of staff, in the same building, should be identified and informed that the meeting is taking place. The location, time and expected length of the meeting should be recorded in a central place, for example an electronic calendar.
- The staff member should not physically touch the child or young person. In some exceptional circumstances, such as a child or young person with a visual impairment needing guidance, or a child or young person needing support to walk (linking arms, for example), a staff member may need to touch the child or young person to support them appropriately. In these circumstances, the child or young person should always initiate touch, although this can be suggested by offering your arm to support them or asking them if it is alright to guide them. If you need to touch the child or young person, then touch their hands, arms or shoulders only.
- Staff members must be mindful of maintaining professional boundaries with the child or young person. They should not share unnecessary details about their personal lives, and should not seek unnecessary details of the child or young person's personal life. The staff member should not give gifts to the child or young person. As with all service users, staff members should use their professional judgement with regard to accepting gifts from children and young people. A parting gift from a service user may be acceptable, but regular gifts will compromise impartiality. Staff members should consult with their line managers, if they are unsure and follow BFC procedures.
- Staff members should not have contact with children or young people outside of work. This includes contact via social media. If a child or young person initiates contact outside of the service, it should be explained to them that this is not allowed by the service and contact should be ended.
- Children or young people should be invited to attend meetings in professional settings where other members of staff are at hand, such as their school or college. Lone home visits or meetings in the community should be avoided. If exceptional circumstances occur which warrant the need to visit a child or young person at home without their parent or carer present, then members of staff should visit in pairs or in partnership with another professional involved with the child or young person, such as a teacher or SENCO.
- If, during the course of your work, concerns are raised that the child or young person may present a risk to others, then the child or young person should be asked for permission to speak to someone who knows them well in order to better understand their support needs. The nominated person should be asked to clarify if there are any risks or concerns related to seeing the child or young person alone, without details of the specific IAS request being shared. Explore the options and make best endeavours to resolve how best to support and work with the child or young person safely. If necessary, the child or young person can be seen with another colleague or professional present.

If you have explored all the options and attempted to be as flexible as possible without finding a safe solution, then consider remote support via email or phone. If the child or young person refuses permission for a nominated person to be contacted (for example, their teacher, support worker or probation officer), and there is reasonable cause for concern, then the service manager should make a decision based on professional judgement of whether face to face contact should be refused.

HOME VISITS

If needed, a service user may be offered a home visit or a meeting at the IASS place of work. Due to time constraints, home visits are rarely offered. The following guidelines should be followed wherever possible in relation to a home visit or meeting:

- Check best time for a home visit or meeting – what other arrangements will the employee need to fit in with – e.g. homecare, nursing care, social work visit;
- Explain what will happen when the employee visits. Set a time limit to your visit if possible so the parent knows what time to set aside;
- Ask the service user to have any necessary or relevant paperwork at hand for the appointment. If at all possible confirm the appointment by email/letter with details of the paperwork needed. Check that the parent will be able to read any correspondence, e.g. that there are no issues in connection with poor eyesight, visual disability, language problems, etc.

Office cover

Before arranging a home visit or meeting check that your absence from the office will not cause significant gaps in office cover.

Procedures before you undertake a home visit

- Make sure that at least one other employee knows where you are when undertaking a home visit. It is essential that the initials of the person you are visiting is recorded and an estimated time frame is entered in the calendar before leaving for the visit. All home visits should have an estimated duration;
- If a home visit is being conducted en-route to the office and as the first piece of work for that day, employees must ensure that the above details are entered the day before or leave an answer phone message;
- On no account should a home visit be conducted without following the procedure in the first point above;
- If you have any personal safety concerns you should not make a home visit. An office visit could be offered, if appropriate.

For employees and volunteers offering home visits out of office hours, they must notify a colleague, friend or relative of where they are going and the expected duration of the visit. It is the responsibility of the individual to notify their colleague, friend or relative when they have finished their visit and it is the responsibility of that person to contact the individual if they have not heard within the specified time.

Travelling to appointments

When driving, keep doors locked and park your car in well-lit areas. Only get out of the car when you feel safe to do so. If you see an accident/incident or someone tries to flag you down,

consider whether it is safe; if necessary, indicate that you will go for help or telephone (either on mobile or drive to a call box). If you think you are being followed, do not stop, try to alert other drivers (using lights/horn), drive to a busy area and alert the Police. If approached when you are stationary, keep doors locked, only open window down slightly so that you can hear them. If you are in any doubt about the situation, drive away. Do not leave valuables on view.

If the car breaks down and you have a mobile phone, call the recovery service and stay in the car with the doors locked until assistance arrives. If you do not have a mobile you should attempt to locate a phone box if you feel it is safe to do so. If it is not safe to leave the car, try to attract help and ask them to make a telephone call for you. Keep the door locked and remain alert. If possible, use nearside doors and seats. Keep all valuables out of sight.

In line with the Health and Safety policy, do not use your mobile phone when driving. Pull over in a safe place before answering or making a call. When using public transport stay downstairs and within sight of the driver. If you feel unsafe in getting off at a particular stop, then stay on the bus until it is safe.

When walking, wear clothing that does not restrict your movement and try to keep at least one hand free, if possible; do not laden yourself down with bags or packages as it makes you less mobile. Try to keep to well-lit areas and, if there is no footpath, walk facing towards on-coming traffic. After dark, avoid poorly lit subways, waste ground, alleyways and poorly lit blocks of flats. Do not be tempted to take short cuts through potential problem areas, even if you are in a hurry.

In the home

If you have any personal safety concerns when you arrive for the appointment, do not proceed; apologise and leave. A new appointment can be arranged subsequently. Always leave your mobile phone switched on and on silent mode. Service-users should not have their meeting interrupted by text and voice-mail messages. Employees must take full responsibility for ensuring batteries are fully charged.

On arrival, take a moment or two to check exit routes. Ensure your option to exit is visible and accessible at all times. If you are sitting in a private home, if possible, choose the seat nearest the door so that your exit can not be blocked. If during the visit you become uneasy or uncomfortable with your surroundings, perhaps due to the arrival of another person, make an excuse (such as you've just received an urgent telephone message from the office that you've only just noticed on your mobile, or you need to put more money on the parking meter), apologise and leave. A new appointment can be arranged subsequently.

If you have any problems during a home visit that causes you to require assistance, then phone the office or another colleague. This will alert whoever takes the call that you are in difficulty and appropriate action will be taken. Only use this in emergencies and as a last resort if you are unable to exit the property. If the parent attempts to leave you alone in the property regardless of the length of time or attempts to leave a child in your care, explain that our policy does not allow employees to remain in a private home alone or to provide any form of care or supervision to children.

Completing the visit

If the visit takes longer than anticipated, then you must telephone the office and let them know how long you expect the visit to last. At the end of a home visit, ensure that the parent is aware of all our services as well as information relevant to the visit and has been handed the appropriate literature.

Parent's safety

If you are concerned for the parent's health and safety for whatever reason, speak to your manager.

Revised and updated Jan 2021 & Jan 2022
Reviewed 2023 and 2024 and 2025 and 2026