Royal Medical Benevolent Fund

**PERSONAL SAFETY & LONE WORKING POLICY**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The RMBF believes that all staff and volunteers have the right to work free of the fear of violence and aggression and is committed to reducing the risks to staff and volunteers that are associated with lone working.

Working alone is not inherently unsafe and our staff and volunteers do not, in comparison with other lone workers, face unnecessary high risk. However the RMBF takes safety seriously and aims to provide the necessary tools and awareness to create the safest environment.

The RMBF has a responsibility to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary. In turn, all staff and volunteers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others in lone working situations by following RMBF guidelines on lone working and visiting.

**The Policy**

* The RMBF provides appropriate information and guidelines for staff and volunteers on lone working
* The RMBF provides training to develop volunteers ability to anticipate risks and to manage and deal with them appropriately
* All off site lone working meetings and home visits must be appropriately planned
* Staff and volunteers will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to identify their whereabouts whilst on RMBF business
* All incidents/accidents/near misses will be reported back to their line manager/Volunteer Programme Manager

Staff and volunteers share the responsibility for achieving these policy objectives. This document is intended for use as a reference guide and also contains advice to help staff and volunteers to work more safely. This advice is not exhaustive, nor is it a substitute for safe systems of work. It is essential that staff and volunteers co-operate to develop simple and practical systems.

**What is lone working?**

Lone working describes any situation whereby someone is not working alongside or near to other staff or volunteer.

Potentially this could include any member of staff attending off site meetings/conferences and volunteers visiting applicants or attending meetings/events on behalf of the RMBF.

Due to the nature of some of the volunteer tasks, there are occasions when an individual will be in a situation where they are visiting alone, sometimes in remote or isolated areas.

Given some forethought and a few simple precautions, the slight risk of something happening to them can be reduced to a minimum.

**Basic requirements for all lone workers**

* Take care of your own safety and that of others affected by your actions or inactions
* Comply with risk assessments and safe systems of work
* Report any shortcomings in systems of work to your line manager/Volunteer Programme Manager
* Complete RMBF Lone Working Incident Report Form in the event of incidents or near misses

**Working alone away from the office/home**

Before leaving your normal office base/home, staff and volunteers should

* Leave details of where you plan to go, approximate times when you expect to be there and details of any meetings/visits you have arranged (including the name of the person you are meeting)
* Take your mobile phone - check it is fully charged and (for pay-as-you-go), has sufficient

credit; leave it switched on; do not use it whilst driving

* Carry a personal alarm (if you have been provided with one) and ensure that you know how to use it
* Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there

are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated farm, adverse weather conditions for driving)

* Contact the office (or other person) to tell them about any delays or changes to your schedule
* Make contact by telephone at specified times, if you agreed to do this
* Return to or contact the office, or other person as agreed, when you have safely

completed your work/visit

Please remember that these procedures are there to protect you.

Travelling by car - this might include travelling long distances to unfamiliar areas

* Plan your route and take appropriate maps
* Ensure that the vehicle is in good order and that you have sufficient fuel; take warm

clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather

* Keep valuables out of sight; female staff and volunteers should not leave obvious signs that the driver is female (handbags, coats etc) on the seats
* Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit; when

returning to the vehicle, check the back seat

* Carry a mobile phone for emergency use
* Do not pick up hitchhikers
* Carry a torch at night
* If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on

Travelling by public transport

* Plan your route (outward and return) in advance
* Try to avoid travelling alone late at night
* Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits
* Have your fare / ticket ready and separate from other valuables
* Try to keep one hand free
* Sit downstairs on double-decker buses
* Try to avoid falling asleep

Travelling in isolated areas / late at night

* Wherever possible arrange meetings so that they are completed during daylight hours
* If you have to go to an evening meeting, be aware of safe parking areas, particularly after dark

Staying away in hotels

* Staff/volunteers should book hotels with restaurant facilities to avoid having to leave the premises after dark, if this is a concern
* Park in well-lit areas
* Keep your room locked; use the chain if there is one
* If possible, avoid rooms with additional access from the outside (ground floor, adjacent

to fire escapes)

* Do not invite anyone into your room or enter their room unless you know them well
* If there is a noise outside your room, do not investigate, call reception for assistance

**Visiting applicants in their own homes – for full information and guidance please see RMBF visiting guidelines. Other advice:**

Before the visit/meeting

* Think carefully about how you are going to handle a potentially difficult meeting in order

to reduce the likelihood of conflict

* Try to avoid after-hours meetings/visits

During the visit/meeting

* Ensure your behaviour is honest, fair, even-handed, considerate and helpful; never be

aggressive back, this is how anger can escalate into violence; don’t be patronising

* Minimise an applicant’s frustration by responding promptly and showing that you care

about their problem

* Show that you are paying attention; listen and hear what the applicants have to say

If somebody starts to get angry

* Make reasonable efforts to control the situation
* Postpone the visit, if considered necessary, to cool the atmosphere
* Stay calm; try to stay relaxed; don’t become rooted to one spot; move about

occasionally; try to look at something you are discussing rather than at the aggressor

* Listen carefully, even to abuse; agree where possible
* Ask yourself if you are the best person to deal with the situation
* Offer an angry person a range of options from which to choose: in that way he or she will find it difficult to stay angry
* If you are unable to control the situation it is better to leave

If you have been provided with a personal alarm, keep it where it is easy to use; it may be possible to use it to frighten the aggressor (for this reason, alarms can be effective in remote areas, where there may be no one within earshot).

After a violent or potentially violent incident volunteers should contact the Volunteer Programme Manager/Caseworker to review the incident and agree courses of action including any further support or counselling. Any such review will be treated as apriority.

**Staff only: Entering or working alone at Kings Road, Wimbledon**

* Consider whether it is necessary / appropriate for staff to work alone
* Undertake a separate risk assessment for key holders, to include procedures for

emergency call outs

* Ensure that staff have appropriate means to raise an alarm (e.g. phone or mobile phone, panic alarm); that someone is available to respond in the event that an alarm is raised, and that they know how to respond
* Consider whether there should be a regular calling-in procedure

**Kate Sheppard**

**Volunteer Programme Manager August 2016**