



**Department of Community and
Children's Services**

**Policy and Guidance on
Lone Working**

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Index

	Page
Policy	
Introduction (purpose and scope)	4
What the Law says	4
Definition of lone work	5
Responsibilities:	5
– City of London	5
– Managers	6
– Employees	6
Further information	7
Procedure	
Introduction	7
How should Managers keep their staff safe?	8
What is a high risk activity?	9
Assessment of risk	9
Planning	10
Working at night	10
Violent and aggressive behaviour	10
Issuing lone worker equipment	11
Security of buildings	11
Personal Safety - general	13
- Be aware of the environment	13
- Be aware of yourself	14
- Be aware of other people	14
Out-of-hours working	15
Example Visit and Check in Procedure	16
Monitoring Calls - Alerting a colleague to danger	16
Emergencies - general	17
Reporting	17
Lone working visit - flowchart	18
Related	19
- Policies and Procedures	19
- Related Forms	19
- Training	19
Further information	19

Departmental Statement of Intent

Colleagues

The Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) is aware that lone working forms a core part of the business of the Community and Children's Services Department and acknowledges the risks to staff that working alone may present.

The DLT recognises that there may be an increase in potential risks associated with lone working and that assistance may not be readily available in the event of an incident. In order to minimise the risk to staff Risk Assessments and sensible controls should be in place prior to work commencing.

The City values the health and safety of its employees and seeks to help ensure that they are not put at risk unnecessarily whilst working alone.

I expect all of you to play your respective roles in minimising the risks associated with lone working order to ensure this department remains a positive, healthy and environment for staff.

Ade Adetosoye
Community and Children's Services Director

Introduction

Managers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their staff and the health and safety of those affected by their work. This includes the organisation and control of lone workers.

Staff also have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with Managers in order to meet Health and Safety obligations.

The aim of this policy is to provide background information on working alone including information on who is affected, why people work alone and the hazards of working alone, and to suggest practical solutions and strategies for staff to enable them to work in safety.

This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone at any time during the course of their work. It does not replace The City's overarching Health and Safety policies, but seeks to compliment and reinforce them, and should be read in conjunction with the corporate policies.

Corporate policies are placed on [The City's H&S pages](#).

What the Law says

The City of London is aware of its legal responsibilities under the law in respect of employees and visitors (including contractors) who work alone on its premises, and/or on City of London (CoL) business.

There are two main pieces of legislation that apply:

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: Section 2 sets out a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999: Regulation 3 states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work.

Under Health and Safety legislation there are no absolute restrictions on working alone, it will depend on the findings of a risk assessment.

Definition of Lone Work

A person is alone at work when they are on their own – when they cannot
Within this document, ‘lone working’ refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of individuals or in their own home, or may be the only staff member present in an office or other establishment maintained by the City of London or by one of its partner agencies. They will be physically isolated from colleagues, and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

A person is alone at work when they are on their own, when they cannot be seen or heard by another person and when they cannot expect a visit from another worker or member of the public for some time.

Lone Workers are at risk from a number of threats, including:

- Physical or verbal assault
- Injury as a result of an accident
- Abduction
- Robbery

- Harassment
- A feeling of being isolated

Responsibilities

Managers

1. Ensure that all legal requirements relating to lone working issues are identified and minimised
2. Identify those lone working situations where the law specifies safe systems of work to be followed and to implement these systems accordingly
3. Ensure that all workers are provided with a copy of The City of London's lone working policy and procedures.
4. Provide all necessary equipment, instruction, information, training and supervision, in order to meet the legal and other requirements relating to lone working.
5. Ensure that job descriptions and safe systems of work clearly state what is required in the course of the employee carrying out their duties.
6. Carry out risk assessments (see the third Edition Code of Practice for General Risk Assessment — available from the Corporate Health and Safety Section) and establish suitable systems to monitor the conditions of solitary workers to ensure that the risks are eliminated or controlled.

Employees

It is the responsibility of employees to:

1. Ensure that the lone working and other departmental procedures are followed and adhered to.
2. Report any personal medical conditions which may make need to be taken into consideration working alone
3. Co-operate with their employers in the discharge of their legal obligations
4. Ensure that they are aware of risks associated with the task and take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work
5. Attend training as required
6. Be aware of developing situations and avoid risk where possible
7. Report incidents and near misses using the incident reporting procedure

8. Alert colleagues to any residents/situations that could cause potential problems to a lone worker.

Further Information:

Health & Safety Executive leaflet 'Working Alone in Safety, Controlling the risks of solitary work': www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

Procedures

Introduction

Working alone work carried out by staff working in Community and Children's Services Department and involves working with residents, service users and members of the public whose behaviour can be unpredictable, especially if the outcome of enquiries or conversations with staff is not the message that they wish to hear. For this reason it is essential that all staff who work alone, be aware of and adhere to the lone working procedures to ensure their safety.

Working alone is an acceptable option providing that the recommended measures, and any controls deemed necessary following risk assessments, are in place and followed.

Apart from staff being confident that they are capable of doing the job on their own the three most important things to be sure of are that:-

- The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which they are being exposed and has the authority to suspend work where necessary.
- The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.
- Someone else knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and that there is a protocol for regular communication.

How should Managers keep their staff safe?

In addition to and expanding upon the requirements set out in the lone working policy, Managers should undertake the following steps to ensure staff and resident safety:

1. Identify and meet training needs in relation to lone working at induction.
2. Ensure that if solitary workers have made them aware of medical conditions which could increase their vulnerability when working alone, that risk assessments are done with the workers condition in mind, and appropriate measures are put in place where necessary.

3. Ensure that solitary workers have access to adequate first aid facilities and that mobile workers carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.
4. As far as reasonably practicable ensure that staff are not put at risk.
5. Establish clear guidelines to set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone, specifying how to behave in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training.
6. Put practical procedures in place to remove or minimise risk taking account of foreseeable emergency situations in addition to normal working conditions.
7. Establish emergency procedures in respect of lone working and ensure that solitary employees and contract workers are trained how to implement them.
8. Fully investigate incidents and near misses, and ensure that these are reported to the Incident Line (0207 332 1920) in accordance with [APPROPRIATE POLICY](#).
9. Identify methods available to raise an alarm or obtain assistance, and where it is deemed necessary provide a mobile phone or other security device.
10. Ensure that any equipment provided is properly maintained.
11. Regularly review and update procedures and risk assessments relating to Lone Workers as necessary.

What is a High Risk Activity?

- Visiting service users for the first time that have been referred to the department as needing assistance that may have problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, mental health problems, be in debt, etc.
- Visiting people to discuss financial matters, arrears of payment etc.
- Working out of hours to effect repairs to property.

- In the estate offices the Customer services Assistants often have to deal with residents who may be unhappy with some of the aspects of service received, situations can become heated.

Assessment of risk

The purpose of the risk assessment is to establish two main facts whether the work can be done safely by an unaccompanied person, and what arrangements are in place to ensure that staff who work alone are not put at greater risk than staff who work together.

1. In formulating an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:
 - the environment – location, security, access
 - the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances/high risk factors
 - the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
 - history – any previous incidents in similar situations
 - any other special circumstances
2. All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary
3. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.
4. While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern

Planning

1. Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.
2. Plans for responding to individual service users who present a known risk should be regularly reviewed and discussed with the staff team. (See Safer Working Practice)
3. Communication, checking-in and fall-back arrangements must be in place.

4. The team manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.

Working at Night

Estate Officers and Scheme Managers should record any emergencies dealt with at night in the office diary, and a note should be made in Orchard. In the case of floating support their line manager should be notified at the first available opportunity and a record of the incident made in Orchard. An incident form (IR1) should be completed and sent to their line manager. Please see the Incident Reporting Policy for further information and guidance.

Violent and Aggressive Behaviour

The City of London has a zero tolerance approach to violent or aggressive behaviour towards its staff from residents, visitors or colleagues. Housing staff are not expected to confront any potentially violent or volatile trespassers. All such incidents should be immediately reported to the police and the staff members line manager.

Issuing lone worker equipment

The City of London will ensure that any employee undertaking lone working activities will have access to a lone worker safety pack. The pack contains information on personal alarms and instructions on how to use them, practical advice on personal safety and what to do when working in other people's homes, a mobile telephone that should be working and charged fully at all times when on City of London business and a first aid pack which must always be available.

Lone workers should read the HSE leaflet '[Working Alone](#)'. It is also suggested that lone workers read and refer back to the leaflet from the Suzie Lamplugh Trust 'Handy Home Visits Guide (G35)'. A copy of this will be provided on request.

Security of buildings

1. Estate Officers and Scheme Managers are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.
2. Alarm systems must be tested regularly.
3. Key codes for access should be changed from time to time, and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected.
4. Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the building they are visiting and with the exits and alternative exits.
5. If there is any indication that a building has been broken into, a staff member must not enter alone, but must wait for back-up.
6. In buildings where staff may be working with people in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

Personal safety (department specific)

1. Before working alone, a dynamic assessment of the risks involved should be carried out in conjunction with one or more relevant staff members as necessary. Visits should be arranged during the course of the normal working day where possible.
2. If it is thought that a threat could present itself the service user should attend the office for interviews or, if this is not possible, joint visits should be undertaken.
3. Staff must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.
4. Staff are required to use their outlook calendars to record where they are visiting and how long they anticipate being away from base.

5. staff such as floating support workers, who work to a pre-planned programme of visits, should inform their line manager or other suitable colleague if they deviate from the programme.
6. Staff should undertake all steps to ensure their safety and should never put themselves at risk. If there is any prior doubt over a workers safety they should consider alternative options to lone working (Assessment of risk point 3).
7. Staff working in the community should be issued with a mobile phone or other security device; they are responsible for checking that it is charged and in working order. Personal alarms may also be provided.
8. At all times whilst working alone staff should listen to their instincts and remove themselves or avoid a situation/potential situation at the first opportunity. Staff should always use their personal security devices if they feel threatened or worried, and should not be concerned about raising a 'false alarm'.
9. Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
10. Staff are required to check in with the office if they are going home after their last visit of the day.
11. If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.
12. Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to take into account include:
 - staffing levels and availability – developing links with a residential establishment may be the best out of hours solution
 - the identified risks
 - measures in place to reduce those risks
13. Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

Personal Safety (general)

It is not wise to rely on alarm systems or breakaway techniques to get you out of trouble – there are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place, like recognising potential dangers, and taking positive steps to reduce risk, for yourself and for service users in your care.

Be aware of the environment

- Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.
- Make sure that your car (if you use one) and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported/dealt with.
- If your work takes you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for high crime rates, arrange to check in when the visit is over, or work with a partner.
- If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes.
- Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings you control.

Be aware of yourself

- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic, inflammatory or patronising.
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.

Be aware of other people

- Take note of their non-verbal signals.
- Be aware of potential triggers.
- Don't crowd people – allow them space

- Don't make promises
- Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- Listen to them, and show them you are listening.

Practical guidance for scheme staff undertaking home visits or carrying out daily rounds

Each individual should gain as much information about the patch as possible to alert themselves and others of areas of concern. This information should be verbally communicated to all relevant staff and documented. Each individual should share concerns about an area, family or individual with colleagues. If in doubt of whether resident information can be shared with a contractor, staff should refer their concerns to the appropriate line manager.

Staff conducting home visits should:

- Not be alone if a problem has been identified with the family or resident.

If this is the case: -

- An up to date risk assessment must be available and a decision made by the Sheltered Housing or Estate Manager about whether visits should be made.

During the visit staff should

- Make sure that their mobile phones/safety devices are switched on
- Carry a personal alarm (where provided)
- Use stairs rather than lifts unless the situation dictates otherwise
- Always be vigilant
- Wait to be invited in or ask if they can enter the property if the staff member considers it safe to do so
- Watch for changes in mood, movements or expressions
- Avoid confrontation. If a potentially hazardous situation looks likely, or staff feel uncomfortable with a situation – leave if possible, or use your personal safety device.
- Ensure you are always closest to the exit

- Check as they go in how the front door locks
- Avoid panicking in unusual situations
- Have an understanding of how to deal with aggressive behaviour

Out-of-hours working

Out of hours work should only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances and/or as agreed with a manager unless unforeseen circumstances dictate otherwise. Any staff member working out-of-hours (late nights/bank holidays/weekends) should check in with the service provider providing emergency cover for the area in which they are working.

In the case of general needs properties this will be **CONTACT AND NUMBER**

In the case of Sheltered Housing properties this will be:

- City of London Almshouses **CONTACT AND NUMBER**
- Harman Close **CONTACT AND NUMBER**
- Isleden House **CONTACT AND NUMBER**
- Mais house **CONTACT AND NUMBER**

Any staff member providing cover on the out-of-hours rota should check in with ????????

Example Visit and Check in Procedure

When travelling away from the office, staff on visits should inform their manager or nominated member of staff of the following:

- Destination
- Estimated time of arrival
- Return time
- Mode of travel
- Alternative plans if necessary

An example of a check in procedure is:

- Use Outlook to record where you are going
- Identify one main person to be the nominated point of contact
- Agree how frequently the lone worker will check in
- Notify nominated point of contact of changes to plans (delays with transport, cancelled meeting etc.)

- Ensure phones/personal safety devices/other equipment is taken and in good order.

It should be emphasised that staff must check in and check out with the office if they are not returning after/between visits. It is also vital to have hand over procedures should shift/duty workers change.

Whilst lone working devices may be used it is important to realise that normal check in/checkout procedures must still be in place and used.

Monitoring Calls - Alerting a colleague to danger

During the course of a monitoring call whilst you are on a visit, if you feel like you are in danger (or are in danger) you will need to alert your colleague without inflaming the situation. To do this, you will need to use a pre-agreed sentence or sentences. When you are asked ‘are you OK/is everything OK?’ if the situation is such that you require intervention you should respond with one of the following answers:

If you need the police (there is a situation but you are unhurt) – ‘I’m OK but I may be running a bit late, please let Mr Peel know, I was due to be with him next.’

If you need the police and an ambulance (there is a situation and you are hurt) – ‘I don’t feel great and I won’t be able to make it to my next appointment, please let Mr Peel know, I was due to be with him next.’

Which sentence you use will determine the emergency services response.

Mr Robert Peel was the founder of the Metropolitan Police.

Emergencies – General

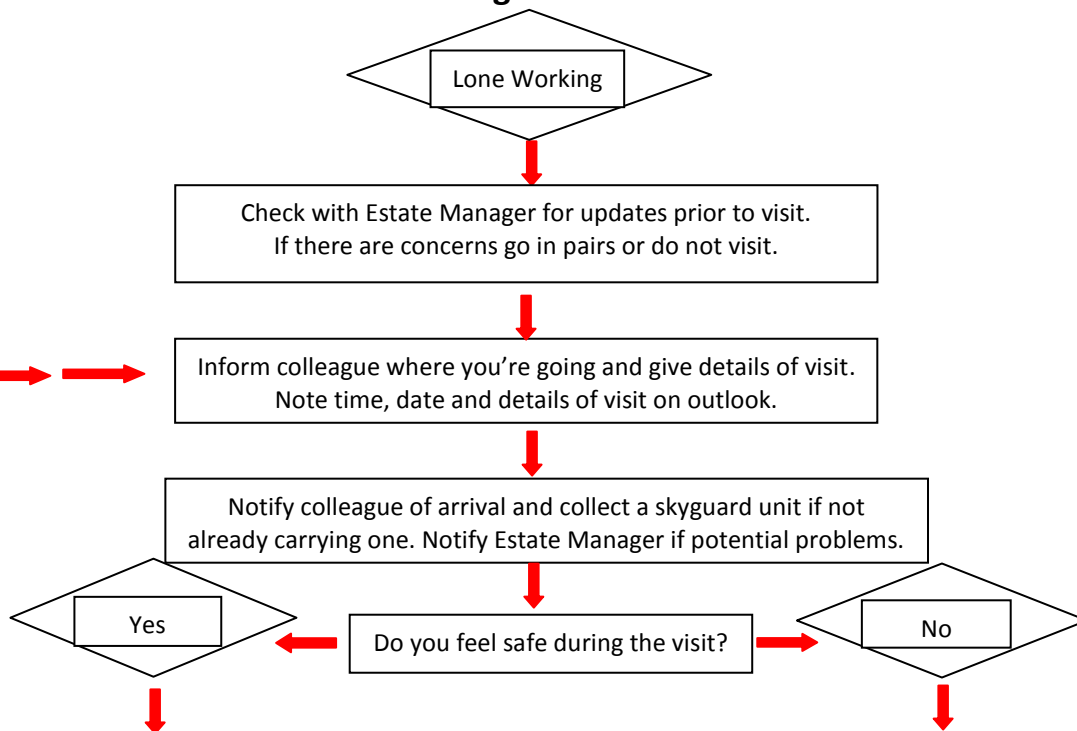
In the event of a major emergency contact the appropriate emergency services, the duty Resident Estate Officer or the Guildhall switchboard on 020 7606 3030.

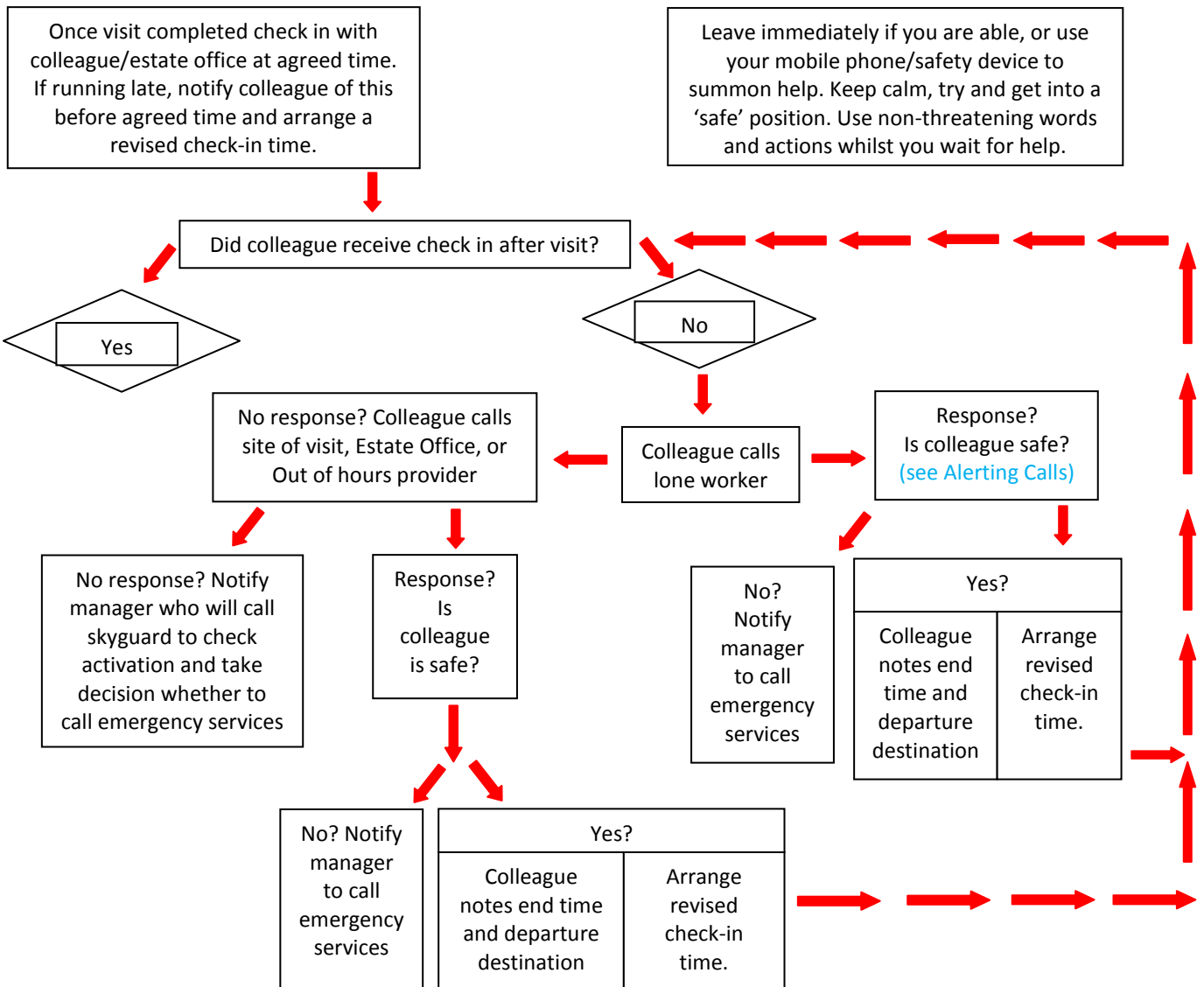
If an employee has any concerns about their welfare and security this should be raised with the Supported Housing Manager as soon as possible. If they feel they are in immediate danger they should call 999 or 112.

Reporting

1. Should an incident occur, the reporting and de-briefing should follow the guidance in the Serious Incident Reporting Policy.
2. The staff member's line manager should be informed of the incident as soon as practicable, and take over the monitoring process.
3. [Post incident response reporting guidance](#)

Lone working visit - flowchart





Related Policies and Procedures

- Serious incident reporting policy
- Challenging behaviour policy
- [Incident reporting](#)
- [Health and safety](#)

Related Forms

- IR1

Training

- Risk assessment

- Body language
- Mastering difficult conversations
- Anti-social behaviour
- Breakaway and disengagement skills
- Challenging behaviour – older people and learning disabilities
- Difficult, disturbing and dangerous behaviour
- Lone working and risk assessment
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Breakaway and self-defence

Further Information

For further advice or information please contact the departmental Health and Safety manager June Bridge on 020 7332 1327, email june.bridge@cityoflondon.gov.uk