

# SHIRLEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE HOME VISITING AND LONE WORKING POLICY

This policy relates to the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints
- Confidentiality policy and guidelines
- Publicity and marketing

Document Control

Amendment History

<b>Version/Issue Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Remarks/Reason for change</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
1	October 2014	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	To be ratified by the governing body	October 2015
2	October 2015	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2016
3	October 2016	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2017
4	October 2018	Nicky Cook & Katie Coomber	Review	October 2019

## Home-visiting and Lone Working

### 1. Statement of intent/policy statement

Shirley Children's Centre recognises that on occasions staff may work alone in the community visiting homes, meeting family members in non-public places and, sometimes, do this out of hours.

### 2. Aim/purpose

Shirley Children's Centre will:

- Give practical advice to Children's Centre staff on keeping safe when working in the community and in the office
- Advise staff how to behave if they find themselves in hazardous situations
- Comply with current legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) that places the duty on the employer to make the workplace safe and without risk to health, as far as is reasonably practicable. In addition to this, individual employees have a responsibility to help themselves to stay safe

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to everyone in the centre including staff, volunteers, families and visitors. 'Staff' includes both those employed by the Croydon Council as well as those from other agencies (e.g. Health, Home start and faith groups etc) who provide services for the centre, as part of the multi-agency framework. This also applies to staff from the statutory and non-statutory sector; the latter includes private, voluntary and independent groups.

### 4. Legal context

This policy is covered by:

- The Children Acts 1989 & 2004, Adoption & Children Act 2002
- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Governance Guidance for Best Start Children's Centres and extended schools 2007
- Best Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005 & 2006
- Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 & 2018
- Early Years Foundation Stage Principles 2007: **Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments**
- Every Child Matters: change for children 2004. Outcomes: **Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve**

### 5. Mandatory systems and procedures

#### **Risk assessment**

This is a vital part of reducing any potential risk to staff, and it should be clear to referring agencies that they have a duty to advise the Children's Centre of any known risk at the point of referral. If there is any doubt over the safety of a lone home visit, then alternative

arrangements should be made. This could involve meeting in a more public place or attending with a colleague.

If a significant incident, or a 'near miss', occurs then this should be written up in the Centre's Health and safety logbook with a report made and submitted to the children's centre manager.

### **Information sharing**

The Children's Centre Manager will ensure that all staff members are trained on how to share information appropriately in accordance with the appropriate information sharing protocol.

### **Personal safety equipment**

Staff should have the following:

- An ID badge. This must be worn, and displayed, at all times and shown when visiting a family's house. In the event of this being lost, it is the staff member's responsibility to inform the centre manager who will inform the Head of School and local authority.
- A mobile phone (home visiting staff only). It falls to each staff member to ensure that this is kept charged and operational. This should be left on and within reach during visits. It may be appropriate to keep the phone set so that the number is withheld; in this way the number is kept safe from families
- A personal alarm (home visiting staff only). As above, they should be kept within easy reach during a visit. These are used to create surprise in an attacker and to alert any passers by if there are any. However, as soon as it is activated immediate action is needed; its effect may not necessarily last for more than a few seconds

### **Office procedures**

- Weekly activity/diary sheets are kept which include dates, times, name and post code of visits. This information is available to admin staff, colleagues and the centre manager
- If visiting plans, running order or delay occurs then it falls to the staff member to phone the office with an update of his/her movements
- Admin staff will telephone the staff member on the mobile if they have not confirmed completion of home visit within **15** minutes of the due time
- If appointments finish after 5 pm, then prior arrangements should be made so that a colleague is briefed to expect a call from the worker when the visit has ended. The Children's Centre Manager must be informed if this does not happen, so that in an emergency s/he can contact the staff member's family or the Police and the Local Authority.
- The centre should maintain an up-to-date contact list for all staff, and it is advisable for the centre manager to hold a copy of this at home in case of an emergency. It is the Children's Centre Manager's responsibility to keep this up-to-date.

## **Personal responsibility**

All staff members are responsible for keeping themselves safe as far as reasonably possible, and this is emphasised during the induction process for new staff.

This involves:

- Being conscientious about filling in appointment diaries and reporting back to the office once visits have been concluded
- Ensuring that vehicles are kept in good working order, with an adequate fuel supply and first aid kit. For rural winter conditions a spade and blanket should be included
- Taking note of weather conditions, reports of road problems and allowing a realistic time for all journeys
- Parking in well-lit and visible areas where possible
- Being aware of exit doors in homes and positioning oneself close to them
- Not accepting any aggressive behaviour, either physical or verbal. If the situation does not feel comfortable, either before or after entering a home, then it is acceptable and professional, to make an excuse and leave promising a follow up appointment
- Arranging visits during daylight hours if possible
- Informing the admin staff of any personal change in contact details i.e. address, next of kin and phone numbers

## **Practical advice for home visits**

Most homes are problem free, but safety rules must be adhered to on every occasion. Aggressive and violent behaviour can be caused by people feeling that their private lives and home space is being intruded upon. It is always important to stress that you are there to help.

Unless the visit is related to Child Protection concerns and a Social Worker may accompany the centre staff member, remember that home visits can be offered but not imposed on a family. Most families appreciate home visits and respond positively to a visitor who shows a genuine interest in them and their family.

Do not assume that the family will understand, or remember, the reason for the visit, so give a full explanation at the beginning. It is always good to clearly outline the background and purpose for the visit. Parents have a right to respect and to expect that visitors will not judge them about how or where they live.

Any cultural or religious beliefs or customs will need to be observed, and this might involve some initial research before visiting.

Before going:

- Read any records on the family and ask any other agencies/colleagues for relevant information
- Consider the risk assessment, office procedures and personal safety equipment process described above
- Choose a visiting time that combines the safety advice with making it suitable for the family; i.e. arranging to go when they might normally be collecting children from school is not always ideal

## The visit

- Arrive on time and phone in advance if you anticipate being late
- Ask for the person by his/her full name and show your ID badge
- Do not enter the house if the person you are expecting is not there
- Let them know, honestly, how much time you anticipate needing with the family
- Wait to be invited in, or at least ask if you may enter
- Acknowledge that this is their home and let them lead the way
- If you feel uneasy about entering then withdraw and report the incident to your manager
- Check as you enter how the front door lock works
- Take only what you need into the house since you may have to leave in a hurry and do not spread your belongings around
- Take special care with confidential documents
- Study your surroundings and check the exit. Try to sit with a view of the door or close to it
- Try not to carry cash or valuable items on you. If this is unavoidable, then keep them out of view
- Try to make your visit a pleasant experience for the family you are visiting. Say 'hello' to the child/ren and any pets; remember that some discussions may not be appropriate for children to witness. You may wish to ask for dogs or other animals to be put in another room.
- Try to establish an atmosphere of trust; it will help the meeting if the family feels comfortable
- Try not to react to dirty or smelly surroundings
- Remain alert. Watch for changes of moods, movements or expressions and use your initiative
- Remember that you are a guest in their house and that you represent Shirley Children's Centre
- Think about your body language and choice of verbal language
- If you need to make notes during the visit then explain this and seek their agreement. Be prepared to show any notes to the family and explain why you have noted these points. Keep them as brief and relevant as possible. Ensure that the family know they will receive copies of any action plans and policies they have signed.
- Thank the family for allowing you into their home
- Recap on the purpose of the visit
- Try to set an agenda and stick to it; however, be prepared to listen to other issues which might arise, but don't lose the primary focus for your visit
- Provide an opportunity for the family to express their concerns and views
- At the end of the visit explain what future action you will take if this known
- Before leaving the house have your car keys ready in your hand

- Ensure that you can lock all your car doors from the inside easily if you need to arrange equipment if possible. If not, the drive away immediately and park in a safe place elsewhere

#### If problems arise

- Speak calmly and with confidence
- Acknowledge the family's feelings
- Use humour only with care; it must not trivialise or ridicule people's feelings
- Do not promise anything that is undeliverable
- Be honest and realistic
- Do not physically enter someone else's personal space if it can be avoided
- If you feel upset, or in danger of losing control, withdraw
- If a person grabs your bag or wallet, then let it go
- If you are prevented from leaving then try to control the situation and do what you must to protect yourself
- Once you are outside and you think that you are being followed when walking, cross the road to check. If this is the case, then head for the nearest public place and call the Police
- If a car stops and you feel threatened use your alarm and move away to safety

#### After the visit

- If nobody is at home leave a card or note asking the family to contact you, or explaining that you will call again
- Ensure that you have an accurate record of the meeting, and also remember that the family is entitled to know the contents of any paperwork
- If necessary, pass on any relevant information to colleagues and/or other agencies

## **6. How are we going to make sure that this happens?**

### Implementation, methods

The supervision process will be used to check that each staff member who visits families at home is comfortable with this procedure. New staff will not undertake community visits alone until they have completed the appropriate training and has been approved to conduct home visits by their line manager. If necessary the centre manager will accompany any new staff member to assess their competency for home visits.

## **7. How will we check this?**

### Monitoring and reviewing

- It is the responsibility of the Children's Centre Manager to monitor and review the effectiveness of all policies relating to the centre
- The Children's Centre Manager will review and update this policy as needed each review cycle as stated on the policy
- The Children's Centre manager will update and amend this policy and its procedures in line with any emerging and relevant government or Croydon Council guidance

**8. For further information please contact:**

Nicky Cook or Katie Coomber  
Interim Universal Services Coordinator  
Shirley Children's Centre  
34 Lilac Gardens  
Shirley  
Croydon  
CR0 8RN  
Email: [info@shirleychildrenscentre.org.uk](mailto:info@shirleychildrenscentre.org.uk)

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping staff, volunteers, families and the management committee informed/trained and up-to-date with procedures, the centre can avoid the need for complaints.

However, the Children's Centre Manager is the first point of contact should any queries arise over this policy and its related procedures.

**Policy Endorsement**

This policy is agreed and signed by the governing body of Forest Academy School

## Appendix 1

### Incident Reporting Form

Shirley Children's Centre	Incident Report Form
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Reporter:	Date:
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Nature of Incident (please tick)	Verbal	Physical	Other
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\* Racial incidents must be reported on a separate Racial Incident Reporting Form

Who was involved? (please include any witnesses)	Staff	Parent/Carer	Child

Please provide a brief report of the incident using initials for names

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

  
  

First Aid/medical attention required? Yes/No (If yes, please see accident report)

To whom was the incident first reported?			
Who is investigating the incident?			
Are parents to be informed?	In person	Letter	Phone call
Implications for Health and Safety (please list)			

**ACTION POINTS** (Please include any written statements – signed and dated)



October 2018

Shirley Children's Centre	Incident Report Form
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Reporter:	Date:
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Witness Statement	
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Name:	Time:
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## Shirley Children's Centre

### Racial Incident Report

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Racial Incident Against	
Ethnicity	
By	
Ethnicity	
Reported by	

#### Nature of Incident

#### Action

Investigated by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Emergency Procedures for Staff if there is a problem**

If any staff member is on their own in the office or on a home visit and believe there to be imminent danger, they must leave immediately.

### **Code word used for dangerous situations which means the police must be called**

If you find yourself in a dangerous situation and you are in contact with a staff member, please state clearly that you believe you are in a dangerous situation but only if it is safe to do so.