

# Health and Safety

**Date reviewed:** September 2009  
**Next review due:** September 2011



## Purpose of Policy

Voluntary Action Westminster's policy is to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all its employees, volunteers and service users. It will provide such information, training and supervision, as its staff, volunteers and service users need to meet this end. This commitment does not replace the responsibilities of user organisations to their own employees, volunteers and service users. The policy, where appropriate to the **physical building** shall cover VAW's Chapel Street offices only. The policy will follow compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974).

## Responsibilities

The Management Committee of Voluntary Action Westminster will hold the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. The committee will take collective responsibility for drawing the attention of staff to any health and safety matters that may need to be discussed and/ or acted upon.

The Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Westminster will be delegated responsibility for ensuring the compliance of Health and safety regulations and policy at the organisation's premises of 37 Chapel Street.

The Chief Executive, with the support of another staff member, will carry out a risk assessment of the work place as and when required. Risk assessments will be carried out after any change in layout of the office, after the introduction of new equipment into the office environment or on the request of the management committee. A risk assessment will also be conducted for any member of staff who is pregnant.

A nominated staff member will monitor the effectiveness of the Voluntary Action Westminster health and safety policy. The monitoring will look at the number and type of accidents and incidents occurring and the understanding and knowledge of the policy by staff, volunteers and service users.

A nominated member of staff , with the support of the Chief Executive, will investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences in the workplace.

A nominated member of staff , with the support of the Chief Executive, will investigate any complaints by any member of staff relating to Health and Safety or welfare at work.

The Chief Executive will make representations to the Management Committee on matters arising out of any investigations.

The Chief Executive will ensure that all members of staff have read a copy of the Health and Safety policy.

A nominated member of staff will establish and maintain an accident book.

The named first aiders who hold any personal information will keep that information strictly confidential.

## Duties

Staff, volunteers and service users have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy by:

- Working safely and efficiently and without endangering the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues or the general public
- Familiarising themselves with the policy statement and general health and safety arrangements
- To inform named first aiders of any aspects of their medical history which they feel may be relevant in case of accident
- To use proper procedures for cleaning up body fluids
- Using appropriate care in the use of dangerous substances in line with the COSHH Regulations
- Logging all accidents in the accident book (kept in the middle cupboard, near Central Services - blue folder)
- Logging all maintenance that may of risk to other employees in the Maintenance book (kept in the middle cupboard, near Central Services)
- Bringing to the notice of the Chief Executive any potentially dangerous circumstances that the employee is unable to put right.

All organisations that use Voluntary Action Westminster's premises are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all their workers, volunteers and service users.

## Reporting Arrangements

An accident book will be set up and maintained by a nominated member of staff. This will serve as a register for all accidents and injuries occurring at work. The register will include the date of the accident, name, address and occupation of the person injured, nature of the injury, place where the accident occurred and brief description, name of person recording the incident and names of any witnesses.

Voluntary Action Westminster will, in line with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, report any fatal accidents, major injury, dangerous occurrence, accidents causing incapacity for more than 3 days and work related diseases to the local authority's Environmental Health Department.

A written record of the accidents as mentioned in point 2 will be kept for at least 3 years.

## Training

A nominated member of staff will undergo suitable training in the field of Health and Safety and advise staff of job safety and accident prevention.

The Chief Executive will recommend any training that may be necessary under the direction of the Management Committee.

## Compliance with Regulations

Electricity at Work Regulations 1991, Workplace (Health and Safety) Regulations 1992, Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992, Working Time Regulations 1998

Voluntary Action Westminster will provide for the maintenance of its buildings, equipment and systems.

Guidance on how to use equipment will be available to all staff, volunteers and service users. It is the responsibility of staff, volunteers and service users to ensure that they are familiar with the instructions for operating equipment before doing so.

Voluntary Action Westminster will not accept any liability for accidents resulting from the misuse of equipment or using incorrect equipment for a given task.

Stairs, Corridors and workplaces will be adequately lit and kept clear of obstruction. Furniture, furnishings, fittings, walls, ceilings, kitchens and toilet areas will be cleaned regularly. Rubbish will be stored in suitable receptacles. Floors will be kept clear of all obstacles which might impede access or egress. Workplaces will be effectively ventilated and maintained at a temperature of at least 16c degrees. If the office temperature falls below 16c degrees then staff members will be allowed to leave the office and work from home. Voluntary Action Westminster will ensure that windows can be shaded if required.

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.

Staff should avoid manual lifting where at all possible. All staff should use aids which are available to reduce the risk of injury, e.g. a trolley. Staff should not put themselves at risk by attempting to lift heavy loads which

could be divided into smaller quantities or by lifting heavy and awkward loads. When lifting in a team take instructions from one person only. Any member of staff feeling a strain should stop immediately and record the incident in the Accident Book. To continue may result in more serious injury.

#### Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

Any member of staff or volunteer will be deemed a VDU 'user' under the regulations if they meet the following criteria:

- They depend on the use of a VDU for their job; or
- they use the VDU for a continuous period of over one hour on a regular basis.

Identified members of staff will be allowed a 5-10 minute break away from the VDU after one hour of continuous screen/ keyboard use.

Identified members of staff will be given regular eye checks every 24 months at Voluntary Action Westminster's expense. Voluntary Action Westminster will consider meeting the cost of corrective lenses only if any deterioration is as a direct result of the use of a VDU.

Full consideration will be given to members of staff who request to be allowed a period of time where they will not be expected to use a VDU for medical reasons. These reasons include pregnancy, upper limb pains, discomfort to hands, arms or shoulders as well as eye and eyesight problems and headaches.

Voluntary Action Westminster will ensure that workstations comply with the relevant regulations.

#### The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 1988

Voluntary Action Westminster will identify all hazardous substances used in the workplace. Wherever possible Voluntary Action Westminster will replace hazardous substances with those less harmful. Voluntary Action Westminster will provide adequate storage facilities for all hazardous substances. Voluntary Action Westminster will provide adequate training or instruction on the use of substances as required.

#### Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations

A first aid box is provided in the Voluntary Action Westminster kitchen area.

The names of the first aiders are clearly marked and displayed on the notice board on entrance to main office.

The named first aiders should be informed in case of accident and they will be responsible for calling the emergency services if required.

All named first aiders will undergo basic first aid training, which will be updated at least every 3 years. Other staff will also be encouraged to undergo basic first aid training.

#### Working Time Regulations 1998

A worker must have at least a 30 minute break if working more than six consecutive hours a day. It should be a break in working time and should not be taken at the end of or before a working day. This is to allow enough rest for each employee from their daily work, as well as a break from their positions.

#### Fire, bomb and other emergencies.

Voluntary Action Westminster accepts a duty to take adequate precautions against fire and other emergencies. Voluntary Action Westminster will provide information about actions to be taken in such emergencies.

Emergency exits and routes will be clearly marked. Emergency exits and routes will be kept clear at all times. Notices concerning emergency and evacuation procedure will be clearly displayed. All Voluntary Action Westminster staff, volunteers and user groups will be made familiar with their individual roles in case of emergency, the location of emergency exits and the location of fire fighting equipment.

Fire drills will be carried out by Voluntary Action Westminster on a regular basis. The Fire extinguishers and fire alarms will be checked at least annually.

Voluntary Action Westminster will insure as precautions in case of fire:

- staff have a safe means of escape, kept free from obstructions and clearly marked;
- everyone knows what to do if a fire starts, especially how to raise the alarm. Display fire action instructions and have a fire drill periodically;
- the fire alarms work and that people can hear them everywhere over normal background noise;
- there are enough extinguishers, of the right type, to deal promptly with small outbreaks of fire
- staff know how to use the extinguishers;
- you keep all extinguishers serviced, maintained and checked on a regular basis.

## Contractors

The health, safety and working practices of the employees of contracted companies remain the responsibility of their direct employers.

## Personal Safety

The main doors of the Voluntary Action Westminster building will remain securely closed at all times.

Voluntary Action Westminster staff will be informed of safety procedures concerning personal safety and the use of the attack alarm fitted in the building.

In case of an unreasonable, aggressive customer a member of the Senior/Strategic Leadership Team or other appropriate manager should be consulted immediately unless unavailable. It will be made clear to all Voluntary Action Westminster staff and volunteers that it is not their responsibility to confront violent users and or intruders. In these cases the police should be called.

## Lone Working

### Definition and Purpose

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The definition of a lone worker is any individual who, in the process of carrying out their duties on behalf Voluntary Action Westminster, may find themselves working alone or in an area isolated from colleagues. This will include:

- Those on home visits
- Members of staff who work from home
- Those working out of hours or returning to the site after hours
- Members of staff working separately from others

Voluntary Action Westminster recognises that some members of staff are required to work by themselves for significant periods of time in the community, in isolated work areas and outside office hours. Thus the purpose of this policy is to protect staff, as far as reasonably practicable, from the risks of working in these circumstances, and to reduce the number of incidents or injuries to staff members relating to lone working.

Voluntary Action Westminster will provide such information, training and supervision, as its employees need to meet this end.

## Principles

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- Voluntary Action Westminster takes seriously the welfare, health and safety of all members of staff.
- Voluntary Action Westminster believes that violence towards staff is unacceptable and that staff members have the right to be able to perform their duties without fear of abuse or violent acts. No member of staff should consider violence or abuse to be an acceptable part of their job, and Voluntary Action Westminster aims to take action against those people who harass, abuse or assault its employees,
- There are a number of different situations wherein members of staff are required to work alone and it would be impractical to address each individually. This policy aims to set out a basis on which managers and staff can minimise the risks of working alone. Any team which implements lone working will prepare a procedural document which sets out practical systems to protect lone workers. This should be read in conjunction with the policy
- This policy is designed to support and strengthen any existing lone working policies already operating through joint working in partner agencies, for example Children's Centres.

## Responsibilities

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Voluntary Action Westminster recognises that it has an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), for the health and safety and welfare at work of its staff. The Management Committee will hold the overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

The Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Westminster will be delegated responsibility for ensuring compliance with it, and for reporting associated security management issues to the Management Committee.

Senior and Line Managers within Voluntary Action Westminster teams or projects where there will be lone working will have responsibility for identifying hazards, assessing the risks and implementing practical measures to avoid or control the risks. They will also be responsible for ensuring that all staff members are aware of the policy, promoting and supporting it and sharing learning from any incidents with the wider management team.

All members of staff undertaking lone working have a responsibility to make themselves familiar with procedures, to follow them and to take reasonable steps to protect their own health and safety and that of others. This includes the reporting of incidents or concerns to the relevant line manager and ensuring that their whereabouts, contact details and time of expected return are known to colleagues when undertaking lone working.

## Procedures

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Managers within teams where lone working either happens or is being considered will carry out risk assessments, bearing in mind that personal safety is likely to be the highest additional risk factor. High-risk activities may include:

- Work within isolated areas;
- Work within known high risk areas;
- Working/visiting families in their own homes;
- Working alone in the office;
- Working with people who have a history of known risks e.g. violence and/or aggression;
- Staff carrying equipment or valuables;
- Staff travelling between site/homes/offices;
- Staff handling cash and/or banking.

The risk assessment will provide an indication as to whether the work can or cannot be done safely alone. If the risk assessment indicates unacceptably high levels of risk then the work should not be undertaken, unless further safe working arrangements are implemented, for example, meeting in a public place or in exceptional circumstances to have two people visiting together.

Factors to consider when carrying out the risk assessment include:

- Does the activity need to be carried out alone?
- Should the activity be specially authorised before lone working can begin?
- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a record or history of violence, aggression, verbal and physical abuse or racism at the location?
- Is there a potential risk of violence/aggression?
- Are there drug, alcohol or mental health issues to be considered?
- Does the task being undertaken with the person have the potential to cause them to become angry?
- Is there a safe way in/out for one person?
- Can a building be secured to prevent entry but still maintain sufficient emergency exits?
- Can one person adequately control the risks of the job?
- What training is needed to make sure staff members are competent in safety matters, and have they received it?
- How will the person be supervised?
- Are people especially at risk in the lone working situation due to their gender, disability, age, race, religion or sexuality?
- Are new, inexperienced or younger staff members especially at risk if they work alone?
- What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or if there is an emergency?

- Are there systems in place for contacting and tracing those who work alone?
- Will the work be taking place out of hours?

Details of the risk assessment should be recorded on paper or a retrievable electronic database.

If lone working is considered necessary, procedures will be in place to monitor lone workers to ensure that they remain safe, these may include:

- Regular contact between the lone worker and a manager or colleague, whether by telephone or face to face
- Use of mobile telephones and code words to alert colleagues to danger
- Procedures designed to raise the alarm if contact is lost with a lone worker
- Regular checking of safety devices such as personal alarms, to ensure that they still work.

If a crime has been committed or any person feels threatened or in danger, then the police should be called immediately, either by the employee at risk or their colleagues and full co-operation is to be given to them.

In the event of an incident involving a member of staff the relevant manager should immediately ensure that the employee receives any necessary medical treatment and/or advice. He or she and the employee's colleagues should offer listening support and the availability of any confidential counselling should be made clear to the member of staff whenever appropriate.

One aim of this is to reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents by learning about any unforeseen risks, deviations from policy or protective factors. Learning can then be cascaded through the organisation.

## Reporting Arrangements

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All members of staff should familiarise themselves with the accident and incident reporting procedures in use within their team.

Staff should report all incidents to their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

Staff should also report 'near misses' where they feel threatened or 'unsafe' even if this was not a tangible event or experience. Failure to report an incident may put others at risk.

## Training

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The Management Committee will ensure that all members of staff being asked to undertake lone working have access to training in personal safety and that this is updated at appropriate intervals.

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