Title of Policy:	**Lone Working**
Section:	**Health and Safety**

Purpose

Lone working can be satisfying and rewarding but carries risks. Carers Choices has a significant obligation to do all that it can to protect the safety of its care workers whilst carrying out their duties, and this policy provides a wealth of advice and guidance which will help achieve this aim.

Statement

A lone worker is usually defined as:

Someone who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision.

Consistent with this definition, Carers Choices employs many lone workers (referred to hereon as Carers) who carry out essential tasks within the community. Carers are subject to the same risks as any other worker – however for Carers the risks are greater, as working alone increases vulnerability. Combine this with the fact that the great majority of homecare workers are female, and in uniform, then the subject of lone working reaches even higher significance, for the Carer, and for Carers Choices, which must do all it can to minimise the risks involved and ensure the health and safety of its employees.

Carers Choices will endeavour to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all of its employees, and has prepared this policy statement (in consultation with, and the input of, Company staff) in order to educate and inform its employees of the risks associated with lone working, how to reduce these risks, and how to stay safe at all times. This duty of care owed by Carers Choices is complimented by the duty each employee has

to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations. Carers Choices will confirm with each member of staff that from a medical perspective (physical and mental) they are capable of working alone. Where necessary, the advice of a medical practitioner will be sought. Carers Choices will ensure that adequate insurance is arranged to cover the risks involved in lone working.

All employees must read this policy statement and guidance note and heed the advice it contains. The policy applies equally to staff who are office bound, but who may, on occasion, be working alone.

Procedure and Guidance

Travelling to and from Clients' homes

By car:

- Before setting out, Carers should ensure that they have adequate fuel for their journey, know the route they should take and that their vehicle is in a safe condition and is properly maintained.
- They should give themselves enough time for the journey to avoid rushing or taking unnecessary risks.
- Items such as bags, cases and other equipment should never be left visible in the car. These should be out of sight, preferably stored in the boot of the vehicle.
- Carers should always hold the vehicle keys in their hand when leaving premises, to avoid being distracted by searching for them when outside.
- A visual check should be made of the outside of the vehicle. The inside of the vehicle should also be checked for possible intruders before entering.
- Once inside the vehicle, all doors should be locked, especially when travelling at slow speed, when stationary at traffic lights and when travelling in high-risk areas. Some staff may understandably feel that a locked door may prevent them from escaping or receiving help in the event of an accident. However, modern vehicles and rescue techniques make this less of a factor than it may seem.
- Carers should always try to park close to the location that they are visiting and should never take short cuts to save time. At night or in poor weather conditions,

they should park in a well-lit area and facing the direction in which they will leave. They should ensure that all the vehicle's windows are closed, and the doors locked.

- Carers should avoid parking on the driveway of the property they are visiting as their vehicle may be blocked in, delaying or preventing escape. The Health and Safety Executive's safe driver training programmes advise that Carers should reverse into car parking spaces so that the door can act as a barrier.
- Carers driving alone, especially after dark, should not stop, even for people who may appear to be in distress or require help. Of course, some assistance should be given, and the Carer should stop in a safe place and contact the emergency services as appropriate.
- If followed, or concerned that they might be being followed, Carers should drive to the nearest police station or manned and well-lit building, such as a petrol station, to request assistance.
- In case of vehicle breakdown or accident, Carers should contact their manager or colleague immediately. If they need to leave the vehicle to use an emergency telephone, they should put their hazard lights on, lock their vehicle and ensure that they are visible to passing traffic.
- Carers should not display signs such as 'nurse on call' as this may encourage thieves to break into the vehicle to attempt to steal drugs, for example.
- Carers should avoid having items in their vehicle that contain personal details, such as their home address.

On foot

- Planning before a journey should include determining the safest route highlighting known areas of concern, including any crime hotspots. Planning should include the actions Carers should take if they require assistance, how to safely carry personal possessions and equipment and what to do in the event of a theft.
- When setting off, Carers should walk briskly, if possible, and not stop in areas that are unknown to them (for example, to look at a map or ask for directions). If they require assistance, they should go into a safe establishment, such as a police station, petrol station or reputable shop and ask for directions or, if necessary, to call for assistance from their manager or a colleague
- They should avoid using mobile phones overtly in any area (they should make a note of the phone's SIM number in case of theft) and, if carrying equipment,

should ensure that this is done using bags that do not advertise what they are carrying.

- Carers should stay in the centre of pavements, facing oncoming traffic. They should remain alert to the people and environment around them, staying on well-lit paths and areas if possible. They should avoid waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, particularly at night.
- If someone attempts to steal what they are carrying, they should relinquish the property immediately without challenge. If carrying a handbag or similar, they should consider carrying their house keys and mobile phone separately.
- It is important that any theft, or attempted theft, is reported both internally and to the police as soon as is practicable and safe to do so. The Carer should make a note of the date, time and descriptions of events and attacker(s), as soon as they are in a position to do so and retain it safely until it is requested by the police.

By Taxi

- Whenever possible, a taxi should be booked in advance from a reputable company and the driver's name and call sign obtained.
- If a taxi has not been booked, the Carer should use the number of a reputable cab company – ideally saved on fast dial in their mobile phone – and find a safe place to wait. As a last resort, they should go to a taxi rank to hail a cab.
- They should never use a minicab, unless it is licensed or a registered hackney carriage. When travelling, they should sit in the back, behind the front passenger seat.
- They should be aware of child locks and central locking (although most black cabs will have locked doors while in transit) in the taxi.
- They should not give out personal or sensitive information to the driver (either through conversation with them or while talking on a mobile phone).

By Public Transport

- Before using public transport, Carers should have a timetable for their route. They should give their manager or colleague details of their intended route and mode of transport. If they have to vary their route or experience a significant delay, they should inform the relevant individual.

- Carers should ideally wait for transport at a busy, well-lit stop or station. If they have to wait in areas that are not well lit and/or deserted, they should be vigilant at all times.
- They should always try to sit near the driver while on public transport, preferably in an aisle seat.
- They should also familiarise themselves with the relevant safety procedures and sit near the emergency alarm.
- They should avoid empty upper decks on buses and empty train compartments (and also avoid these situations if there is only one other passenger).
- If threatened by another passenger, they should alert the driver/guard as soon as possible and follow pre-planned procedures for ensuring their own safety.

Escorting Clients

- Before a decision is taken to escort a Client, a full risk assessment should take place. This should consider the safeguards that need to be in place before and during the escorting process.
- Consideration should be given to the physical and mental state of the Client when planning an escort, and to whether they are capable of being transported.
- The level of staff experience and their qualifications, and the number of staff needed to manage the Client during the transfer should be taken into account.
- The type of transport to be used should also be considered. Staff who escort Clients using a contracted taxi service should still be considered Carers and the necessary precautions taken.
- If there is a need for a Carer to escort a Client, they should always seat the Client behind the front passenger seat and ensure that their seat belt is fastened. This will enable the Carer to operate the vehicle safely. There have been reported incidents of Clients seated as front-seat passengers grabbing at handbrakes and steering wheels while being transported.
- Carers should not escort a Client by car if there are any doubts about their safety in doing so and alternative arrangements should be made. Carers should not agree to transport a Client's animals.
- If a conflict arises (or a Client becomes aggressive), the Carer should pull over into a safe place and exit the vehicle – if possible, ensuring that the keys are removed. They should follow local procedures, which may involve calling the police, their manager or a colleague.

Working alone in the Home

Prior to the first visit, Carers should review any comments regarding health and safety issues relating to the Client's home which have been made as a result of the initial risk assessment and incorporated into the Client's Plan of Care. If the Client has been given prior advice on removing a hazard, (or implementing a control measure) then this must be checked before the start of care.

Dynamic risk assessment

A dynamic risk assessment can be defined as a continuous process of identifying hazards and the risk of them causing harm and taking steps to eliminate or reduce them in the rapidly changing circumstances of an incident. The dynamic risk assessment involves staff:

- being alert to warning signs of possible danger.
- carrying out a '10-second risk assessment'; if staff feel there is a risk of harm to themselves, they should leave immediately.
- placing themselves in a position to make a good escape, i.e., where possible, being the closest to an exit.
- being aware of all entrances and exits.
- being aware of the positioning of items, including those belonging to the Carer (scissors, etc.), that could be used as a weapon.
- making a judgement as to the best possible course of action – for example, whether to continue working or withdraw.
- ensuring that when they enter a confined area or room, they can operate the door lock in case they need to make an emergency exit.
- avoiding walking in front of a Client, and not positioning themselves in a corner or in a situation where it may be difficult to escape.
- remaining calm and focused during an incident in order to make rational judgements.
- being aware of their body language (as well as that of the Client), as there is a risk of exacerbating the situation.

Recognising warning signs

Carers need to recognise the risks presented by those who are under the influence of alcohol/drugs or are confused, or where animals may be present. Being alert to these warning signs will allow the Carer to consider all the facts to make a personal risk assessment and, therefore, a judgement as to the best course of action (for example, to continue with their work or to withdraw). At no point should the Carer place themselves or their Clients at risk or in danger.

Dealing with animals

The presence/behaviour of animals is something which is to be discussed as part of Carers Choices' initial Client Assessment process. Clearly if animals are a potential source of danger, then arrangements must be put in place, and agreed with the Client so that no problem should exist upon any homecare visit. This may include a temporary relocation of the animal prior to a visit, or placement of the animal in an alternative room within the home, for example.

If a Carer is confronted by an aggressive animal on a visit to an address, they should not put themselves at risk. If necessary, they should abandon the visit and report the incident in accordance with agreed procedure.

Training

Carers Choices will ensure that all Carers working alone in the Community have received, or will be provided with, training in relation to the health and safety aspects of lone working, and that they understand what is expected of them in relation to maintaining their personal safety.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees have responsibilities under health and safety legislation. Carers should:

- Take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety and other people's safety
- Be confident that they are capable of, and comfortable with the tasks they are being asked to undertake alone. If not, and for any reason (which might be a matter of training, or equipment, for example) they must consult with their supervisor or Manager

- Must ensure that their daily schedule is known to Carers Choices. Carers Choices must be informed of any deviation
- Must ensure that the mobile phone they carry is fully charged at the beginning of any shift, is functioning, and if it is of the “pay as you go” variety, then sufficient credit must be available in order to make calls. They must also ensure that other personal safety equipment (such as a personal alarm, and a torch) are available at all times whilst on duty
- Have an awareness of their surroundings and the possible threats to their personal safety when working alone
- Be involved in assessing risk and identifying safety measures
- Leave the working environment if there is an imminent danger to their safety
- Undertake and follow training provided to ensure their safety
- Ensure they take regular breaks to avoid working excessively long hours
- Follow Carers Choices’ policies and procedures set up to protect their safety
- Use equipment in accordance with the training given and not misuse it
- Tell the employer when safety measures are not adequate
- Tell the employer when they have encountered a ‘near miss’ or have identified additional risks to their safety that were previously unidentified
- Report to the employer any actual accidents or incidents that occur, using proper organisational procedure.

Monitoring and Supervision

Supervisors will regularly visit Clients at a time corresponding to the arrival of a Company Carer in order to confirm that care is being delivered on time, in a satisfactory manner and consistent with the Client’s Plan of Care. Supervisory visits may or may not be pre-arranged and will provide the opportunity for the supervisor to assess not only the competence of the Carer, but also how well they are coping with the stresses and demands of lone working.

All Carers are required to confirm, at the end of every shift, that assignments have been satisfactorily completed. Administrative staff will maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of addresses and contact details for all Clients currently being looked after by Carers Choices. This will assist in identifying the last point of call for any Carer whose whereabouts might be unknown. This policy will be subject to regular review.

Any incident which relates to the safety of Carers and therefore has an impact on this policy, and the guidance it contains is to be reported using Carers Choices' Incident Reporting Procedure. Incidents will be fully investigated, and modifications will be made as deemed appropriate and necessary.

CQC Registration and Inspection Compliance

Key Questions and Quality Statements applicable to this Policy	Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009 applicable to this Policy
Safe • Involving People to Manage Risks • Safe Environments	

Legislative Compliance

Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 applicable to this Policy	Other legislation relevant to this Policy
Regulation 12: Safe care and treatment Regulation 15: Premises and equipment Regulation 17: Good governance	

Policy Reviewed on Date of Implementation by the Following Company Officer:

Full name:

Paul Ramsden

Job Title:

CEO

Signature:

P. Ramsden