

AGHALEE VILLAGE HALL **LONE WORKING POLICY**

The aim of this policy is to set out the guidelines and protocols to ensure that the personal security and safety of Aghalee Village Hall staff and volunteers when working on their own or undertaking a home visit as part of the delivery of services.

Any reference to staff should also be taken to include volunteers.

A: Home visits

Procedures when booking appointments

A customer may be offered a home visit due to a number of factors including poor mobility, other health related issues or due to their responsibility as a carer. A customer should be offered a home visit only if they are unable to visit our offices or outreach service and staff should ascertain that a home visit is absolutely necessary before arranging one.

The following good practice guidelines in relation to customer care in for home visits should be carried out

- Check best time for a home visit – what other arrangements will the Aghalee Village Hall advisor need to fit in with – e.g. homecare, nursing care, social work visit.
- Explain what will happen when Aghalee Village Hall advisor visits. Set a time limit to your visit e.g. 1 hour or 1.5 hours etc so that the client knows what time to set aside
- Strictly, a maximum of two hours should be set aside for a home visit but wherever possible, staff or volunteers should undertake to carry out the visit in less time.
- Ask the client to have any necessary or relevant paper work at hand for the appointment
- If there is sufficient time, confirm appointment and relevant paperwork needed in writing. Check that client will be able to read any correspondence, e.g. that there are no issues in connection with poor eyesight, visual disability, language problems, etc

Office cover

In terms of office cover, staff should arrange a home visit so that their absence from the office is kept to an absolute minimum. Wherever possible and taking the above into consideration, staff or volunteers should schedule a home visit at the start or finish of a working day. The following guidelines should be followed

- Arrange a home visit on way in to the office and as the first piece of work. For example, if you would normally start work at 9.30, organise your time so that the appointment is for 9.30 – 11.00 (etc). Avoid an unnecessary trip to the office before departing soon after to undertake a home visit.

Or

- Arrange a home visit on your way home from the office and as your last piece of work. For example, if you would normally finish work at 5.30, organise your time so that the appointment is for 4.00 – 5.30 (etc). Avoid any unnecessary and lengthy absences from the office to undertake a home visit.
- Remember to take travel time and office cover duties into consideration when arranging a home visit.
- Before arranging a home visit, check that your absence from the office will not cause significant gaps in office cover; check whether other staff has arranged a home visit etc.
- At the end of a home visit, ensure that the customer is aware of all XXX services as well as information relevant to the visit and has been handed the appropriate literature.

Procedures before you undertake a home visit

- Make sure that staff at Aghalee Village Hall know where you are when undertaking a home visit. It is essential that the customer's name, address, telephone number and anticipated time frame are recorded in the office and to another member of staff (Volunteer) before leaving for the visit.
- If the home visit is being made to a known or existing customer, who is already on the database, then you need only enter the customer's name, telephone number and anticipated time frame
- If a home visit is being conducted en-route to the office and as the first piece of work for that day, staff must ensure that the above details are entered the day before.
- Confirm estimated time of arrival with a customer shortly before leaving the office, if possible.
- On no account should a home visit be conducted without following procedure i) or ii) above
- Make sure that the office has your correct mobile contact number. Staff must take full responsibility for ensuring that any changes made to mobile numbers are recorded at Aghalee Village Hall.
- All home visits should be pre-assessed with reference to their estimated duration.
- If you have any personal safety concerns before visiting a customer, it is essential you visit accompanied by another Aghalee Village Hall member of staff. Alternatively, you can request that a Management Committee Officer accompanies you on the trip.
- A pre-determined and agreed term should be agreed with another member of staff (volunteer), who you can ring in the case of unease when you might wish to ask for assistance to come to you and you feel unable to do this by directly stating the problem. For example – you might ring and ask for information from 'The Brown Book' and the call

recipient would know you need help and feel threatened. The recipient would either call to the address themselves to assist or summon help from another source.

For volunteers undertaking home visits, especially for visits out of office hours, they must notify a friend or relative of where they are going and the expected duration of the visit. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify their friend or relative when they have finished their visit and it is the responsibility of the friend or relative to contact the volunteer if they have not heard within the specified time.

Travelling to appointments

When driving, keep doors locked and park your car in well-lit areas. Only get out of the car when you feel safe to do so.

If you see an accident/incident or someone tries to flag you down, consider whether it is safe; if necessary, indicate that you will go for help or telephone (either on mobile or drive to a call box).

If you think you are being followed, do not stop, try to alert other drivers (using lights/horn), drive to a busy area and alert the Police.

If approached when you are stationary, keep doors locked, only wind window down slightly so that you can hear them. If you are in any doubt about the situation, drive away. Do not leave valuables on view.

If the car breaks down and you have a mobile 'phone, call the recovery service and stay in the car with the doors locked until assistance arrives. Always refer to the identified risk assessment. If you do not have a mobile 'phone, assess the situation with regard to going to a call box. If it is not safe to leave the car, try to attract help and ask them to 'phone for you. Keep the door locked and remain alert. If possible, use nearside doors and seats. Keep all valuables out of sight.

In line with the Health and Safety policy, do not use a hand held mobile phone when driving. Pull over in a safe place before answering or making a call.

On public transport, if you feel unsafe in getting off at a particular stop, then stay on the bus until it is safe. Stay downstairs and within sight of the driver.

When walking, wear clothing that does not restrict your movement and try to keep at least one hand free, if possible; do not load yourself down with bags or packages as it makes you less mobile.

Try to keep to well-lit areas and, if there is no footpath, walk facing towards on-coming traffic. After dark, avoid poorly lit subways, waste ground, alleyways and poorly lit blocks of flats. Do not be tempted to take short cuts through potential problem areas, even if you are in a hurry.

In the home

Staff must show identification to customer before entering the customer's home (even if the customer does not wish to see your ID, please ensure you make it visible as it promotes good practice when working with vulnerable customers).

If you have any personal safety concerns when you arrive for the appointment, do not proceed; apologise and leave. A new appointment can be arranged with reference to point viii) above.

Always leave your mobile phone switched on and on silent mode. Customers should not have their business interrupted by text and voice-mail messages. Staff must take full responsibility for ensuring batteries are fully charged.

On arrival, take a moment or two to check exit routes. Ensure your option to exit is visible and accessible at all times.

If you are sitting in a customer's home, if possible, choose the seat nearest the door so that your exit can not be blocked.

If during the visit you become uneasy or uncomfortable with your surroundings, perhaps due to the arrival of another person, make an excuse (such as you've just received an urgent telephone message from the office that you've only just noticed on your mobile, or you need to put more money on the parking meter), apologise and leave. A new appointment can be arranged with reference to point viii)

If you have any problems during a home visit that causes you to require assistance and you feel threatened or unable to leave, then phone your manager or another colleague and request information from the 'big brown book'. This will alert whoever takes the call that you are in difficulty and appropriate action will be taken. Only use this in emergencies and as a last resort if you are unable to exit the property.

If the customer attempts to leave you alone in the property regardless of the length of time, explain that Aghalee Village Hall's policy does not allow staff to remain in a customer's home alone. Leave immediately.

If the visit takes longer than anticipated, then you must telephone your manager and let them know how long you expect the visit to last.

Completing the visit

Once a home visit has been completed, staff should telephone the office to report that the visit has ended and with an estimated return time. If you are not intending to return to the office before going home you must contact your line manager (or another colleague who knows your whereabouts) by phone or text to inform them that your visit has finished.

All home visits should be completed by 17.30 hours unless agreed otherwise beforehand.

If the member of staff conducting the home visit has not contacted the office by the expected finish time to say that they have completed the visit, particularly if the appointment was at the end of the day, then the line manager will try and make contact with the member of staff on their mobile or on the client's home number. If contact can not

be made, then the manager will contact their emergency contact and if the member of staff's safety or whereabouts can not be confirmed the manager will call the police.

Customer's safety

If you are concerned for the customer's health and safety for whatever reason, speak to your line manager.

B: Working alone in the office

If a member of staff is working alone in the office, either at the beginning or end of the day, they must ensure that all access doors or gates are locked.

If it is not possible to have the minimum number of two people working upstairs, the main doors should be locked and members of the public should not enter the hall.

Emergency Contact details

Staff Name: _____

Home address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Phone (home): _____

Mobile (own): _____

Car registration: _____

Make: _____ Colour: _____

Details of any health problems:

Details of family responsibilities:

Name of Emergency Contact: _____

Address: _____

Tel. No. of emergency contact: _____

Relationship: eg. spouse, friend, son, daughter _____

The Secretary at AGHALEE VILLAGE HALL will keep this information. Please inform of any changes. All information to be used only in emergency.