



# POLICIES

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

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Appendix A - Personal Safety of Staff

## **1 General Statement of Policy**

It is the policy of Stonewall Housing to comply with the terms of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsequent legislation, to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and Systems of work for all our employees and to provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose.

Stonewall Housing also recognises and accepts its responsibility to protect the health and safety of all visitors to the workplace (including tenants, contractors, temporary staff and any members of the public) who might be affected by our activities. Stonewall Housing will also co-operate on health and safety matters with other organisations where Stonewall Housing staff are accommodated.

A copy of this policy will be issued to each member of staff. The policy will be kept up to date and the way in which it has operated will be reviewed each year.

The specific arrangements for the implementation of the policy and the personnel responsible are set out below

## **2 Responsibilities and Arrangements for Health & Safety Management**

### **2.1 The Management Committee**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a statutory duty on all employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of all its employees at work and other people who may be affected by their activities, e.g. users, volunteers, members of the public.

The Management Committee, as the employer, has overall and final responsibility for health and safety matters at Stonewall Housing, and for ensuring that health and safety legislation is complied with.

The Management Committee will review the operation of its health and safety policy annually.

### **2.2 The Director**

The Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that the health and safety policy is put into practice at Stonewall Housing's premises. In particular the Director will ensure that:

- employees receive sufficient information, training and supervision on health and safety matters;
- line managers are aware of their responsibilities to their staff and volunteers;
- a risk assessment is undertaken and the results written up and made available to all employees on an annual basis;
- the organisation maintains and demonstrates its commitment to supporting the needs of individuals with special and different needs through its implementation of health and safety policy and good practice;
- reports on health and safety matters are made to the Management Committee;
- accidents are investigated and reported to the Management Committee;
- there are arrangements in place to monitor the maintenance of the premises and equipment;

- there are adequate arrangements to liaise and co-operate on health and safety matters with other employers sharing Stonewall Housing premises;
- Stonewall Housing accepts its responsibility for the health and safety of its employees based in the offices of other organisations.

### 2.3 Competent Persons

The Director will appoint the Administrator as the “Competent Person” for the Main and Hostel Offices, the Housing Services Manager as the “Competent Person” for other Hostel accommodation and the Advice Services Manager as the “Competent Person” for the Advice and Referrals Team when working outside of Stonewall Housing’s premises as defined in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992

The Administrator, Housing Services Manager and Advice Services Manager have day-to-day responsibility, within the areas outlined above, for the management of health and safety within Stonewall Housing.

The Administrator, Housing Services Manager and Advice Services Manager will report to the Director and will assist in assessing the health and safety risks to Stonewall Housing’s employees and devising and applying measures to improve health and safety. The Director will ensure that they have adequate time, information, training and resources to undertake their task.

### 2.4 All Employees

All employees have the responsibility to co-operate with the Director and the Management Committee to achieve a safe and healthy workplace and to take reasonable care of themselves and others.

Employees must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with anything provided for their health, safety and welfare. Serious breaches of the Health and Safety Policy and rules (e.g. misusing equipment, deliberately putting someone else’s safety in danger) will be dealt with through Stonewall Housing’s Performance Procedure.

Whenever an employee notices a health or safety problem which they are unable to put right, they must immediately inform the line manager, and the Administrator, Housing Services Manager or Advice Services Manager as necessary. Health, safety and welfare matters may be raised by any employee at Stonewall Housing staff meetings.

### 2.5 First Aiders

The Administrator will be required to obtain an approved First Aid at Work Certificate, and all Supported Housing Officers will be trained to at least HSE-recognised Appointed Person level.

Names of First Aiders will be displayed in the Main Office. The Administrator will be responsible for ensuring that all First Aid training and qualification is maintained and up-to-date.

First Aid boxes will be kept in all offices and kitchens. It is the responsibility of the Administrator and Supported Housing Officers to ensure that they contain the items laid down in the Code of Practice and Guidance Notes published by the Health and Safety Executive and are regularly restocked.

Current First Aid Manuals will be kept at all offices for inspection.

For detailed first aid and accident arrangements see section 13.

### 2.6 Risk Assessment

Stonewall Housing will ensure that the Administrator, Housing Services Manager or Advice Services Manager carry out risk assessments in accordance with the 1992 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) within their areas of responsibility. This risk assessment will be written up, and be made available to all staff.

The written risk assessment will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure it covers all employees against all risks, and to ensure that any action identified as needed in the risk assessment has been carried out. The risk assessment will also be updated every time that there is a major change in working practices. The risk assessment will cover all Stonewall Housing employees, wherever they may be based, and will cover all aspects of their work.

## 2.7 Training

Stonewall Housing will ensure that new employees and volunteers receive information on health and safety as part of their induction.

Stonewall Housing will organise training for employees and volunteers on health and safety matters as appropriate, including: general health and safety training, first aid, manual handling, fire safety, risk assessment. Stonewall Housing will also organise training for appropriate use of equipment, and any special training needed to ensure safe systems of work.

If employees and volunteers consider they have health and safety training needs they should inform their line manager.

## 3 Building Maintenance

- 3.1 Stonewall Housing has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and volunteers. The Administrator and Housing Services Manager will be responsible for liaising with the Director to ensure that any repairs are carried out swiftly with the minimum of disruption.

All Stonewall Housing staff are responsible for spotting hazards or potential hazards. If a hazard is seen, it must be removed or dealt with as soon as possible or if not, reported to their Line Manager.

All building maintenance such as electrical work, carpentry, painting etc will be carried out by skilled people. No staff will endanger themselves or others by carrying out such work.

- 3.2 Examples of Hazards:

Things out of reach:

Chairs or other furniture must not be used to stand on for the purposes of replacing light bulbs, reaching for things off tops of cupboards etc. A properly maintained, undamaged stepladder must be used.

Damaged Equipment:

Regular checks must be carried out on furniture and equipment for damage which leave sharp edges protruding or other hazards. Any damaged furniture must be reported for repair or condemnation straight away and must be removed from use.

Damage to Fabric of Building, Windows etc:

All such damage must be reported immediately to a Line Manager.

Misplaced Furniture, Equipment or Supplies:

Any furniture, equipment or supplies left in an inappropriate place, for example obstructing a gangway, must be removed immediately, and placed in an appropriate, safe place.

## **4 Good Housekeeping**

### **4.1 Aisles & Gangways**

Gangways must be kept clear from obstructions and materials must be stored in safe areas. Under no circumstances must goods or materials be stacked immediately in front of or obstructing fire doors, fire exits, fire alarms or fire equipment. All staff members have the responsibility to remove obstructions from gangways.

### **4.2 Smoking**

Members of staff who smoke should be particularly conscious that their habit is injurious to the health of colleagues as well as themselves.

Smoking is not allowed in staff offices. Discretion may be used to allow tenants, or other service users, who are in distress, to smoke.

### **4.3 Lighting**

Adequate lighting must be provided. If lights are found to be out of order, the fault must be corrected as soon as reasonably possible. Current good practice of not having fluorescent lighting in offices will be maintained.

### **4.4 Noise**

Stonewall Housing staff work within an open plan office and therefore a certain level of noise is unavoidable, however Stonewall Housing will endeavour to ensure that noise are kept to as low a level as is practicable.

### **4.5 Office Atmospheric Pollutants**

Office equipment such as photocopiers and printers can emit pollutants into the atmosphere. Stonewall Housing will take reasonable precautions in ensuring that these levels are kept as low as is possible. Employees will not be expected to work in enclosed spaces with equipment that emit atmospheric pollutants. Spaces where these pollutants are present shall be kept well ventilated.

### **4.6 Equipment Storage and Usage**

Equipment must not be left lying around but must be suitably stored.

No wires must be left trailing across floors.

Non flammable rubbish bins must be positioned at various points.

Except in emergencies, and with the permission of the Director, no paraffin, bar electric or calor gas fires will be used at Stonewall Housing premises.

### **4.7 Electrical Equipment**

In accordance with the relevant legislation, the Administrator and Housing Services Manager will ensure that Portable Appliance Tests are carried out on all equipment as necessary.

Broken, ineffective or damaged electrical equipment must be reported to the Administrator or Housing Services Manager. Staff must ensure that all electrical equipment is used properly and for its intended purpose.

## **5 Welfare Arrangements**

### **5.1 Toilets and Washing Facilities**

Stonewall Housing will seek to ensure that suitable and sufficient toilets and washing facilities are provided for all staff in accordance with the minimum requirements of Health and Safety legislation, washing facilities will include a supply of clean hot and cold water, soap and suitable means of drying (e.g. paper towels).

### **5.2 Drinking Water**

An adequate supply of drinking water will be provided for all staff.

### **5.3 Rest Areas**

So far as is reasonably practicable Stonewall Housing will provide all staff with seating in a rest area, where they may rest during normal work breaks.

### **5.4 Pregnant Women**

A Risk Assessment will be carried out for the specific needs of pregnant members of staff.

### **5.5 Hours of Work**

Stonewall Housing employees should not work excessively long hours, and must take adequate breaks for meals and rest as indicated within their statements of terms and conditions of employment.

## **6 Personal Safety**

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment. Stonewall places a high priority on the personal safety of members of staff and takes seriously all incidents that threaten or compromise personal safety.

Staff must report any current or potential situation at work that is a threat to personal safety. Talking about fear and other problems related to aggression or harassment are not marks of failure but good practice. A serious incident, even if it results in no physical harm, may cause feelings of fear, panic or despair, which can carry on long afterwards.

Incidents including actual and potential violence against staff, verbal abuse and accidents are monitored, and regular reviews of procedures are carried out in order to maximise and improve on personal safety of all staff in the organisation.

The organisation recognises that some staff, by nature of their work, are more likely than others to be placed in situations where personal safety may be compromised, for example, Supported Housing Officers and Advice Workers.

Policy and procedures on personal safety are covered in detail in the Appendix A of this policy.

## **7 Handling Cash**

Where duties involve handling cash, members of staff will wherever possible use a car to transport it, varying their times and routes.

Members of staff transporting cash will be accompanied if they wish, or if the amount of cash being transported exceeds £2500.

Staff must always attempt to use an inconspicuous bag to transport cash.

If any member of staff is threatened whilst carrying Stonewall Housing money and a situation develops which cannot be handled safely, staff will hand over the cash.

## 8 Visual Display Equipment

### 8.1 General

It is the policy of Stonewall Housing to comply with the law as set out in the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (that implemented a European Community directive that came into effect in January 1993).

Stonewall Housing will conduct health and safety assessments of all workstations staffed by employees who use VDU screens as part of their usual work. All workstations must meet the requirements set out in the Schedule to the Regulations.

### 8.2 Nature and Organisation of Work

Appropriate seating must be available to all users.

Staff will take regular breaks (at least 10 minutes away for every hour at the screen), remembering that short frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional longer breaks. Use of VDUs will not exceed four hours in any day.

### 8.3 Equipment

Resources will be sought by Stonewall Housing to:

- provide VDUs with a detachable and adjustable screen, i.e. in height, swivel etc, to allow for the individual preference of the operator.
- provide computer cleaning supplies
- provide a wrist and foot rest at each workstation.
- provide an anti-static mat at each workstation.
- provide keyboards which are separate from screens.
- provide anti glare screens, where direct light cannot be prevented from falling on the screen.
- provide adequate workstation space.

### 8.4 Maintenance

The Administrator will hold copies of manufacturers' detailed instructions on the maintenance of machinery, and will ensure that maintenance contracts are adhered to and, where appropriate, renewed.

### 8.5 Eye and Eyesight Tests

Staff whose work with VDUs will be "significant and habitual" are entitled to have eyesight tests paid for by Stonewall Housing.

Where a member of staff whose work with VDUs is "significant and habitual" is experiencing eyesight problems attributable to their work with VDUs she/he will be entitled to have an eyesight test paid for by Stonewall Housing.

Where a test shows that as a result of work with Stonewall Housing VDUs a member of staff needs special corrective appliances (usually glasses) Stonewall Housing will pay for these. This payment will meet the full cost of the lenses and an amount equal to the purchase and fitting of basic frames (currently

£40). This excludes appliances normally used for purposes other than work with VDUs.

As there is no exact definition of "significant and habitual" available, the Director will decide who is eligible. Individual staff members can appeal against any decision, based on the production of evidence of their level of VDU use and the written opinion or evidence of their optician.

#### 8.6 WRULD

Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (also known as Repetitive Strain Injury) are often associated with keyboard work. Stonewall Housing will, by following best advice to provide VDU/keyboard equipment and furniture that help prevent the development of these musculoskeletal disorders. Staff however should contribute to their own safety and welfare by:

- avoiding sitting in the same position for long periods
- adjusting equipment and furniture to appropriate comfortable positions
- taking a rest break from VDU work (at least 10 minutes away every hour) by doing some other work.

#### 8.7 Pregnancy

Stonewall Housing accepts the HSE advice based on scientific research and advice from the National Radiological Protection Board that pregnant women do not need to stop work on VDUs. However to avoid problems caused by stress and anxiety over this issue Stonewall Housing will provide opportunities for women who are pregnant or planning children and worried about working with VDUs to discuss their concerns with someone adequately informed of current authoritative scientific information and advice.

Stonewall Housing will agree with the individual who is the most appropriate body to provide up to date information and advice on this issue.

### 9 Hostel Safety

#### 9.1 General

The address and payphone telephone numbers of all hostels will be kept confidential by tenants, staff, volunteers and Management Committee members at all times.

#### 9.2 Health and Safety Checks

Supported Housing Officers will carry Health and Safety checks out monthly to an agreed format. Records of these checks, and any follow-up actions, should be kept in the Health and Safety Log, which will be kept by the Supported Housing Officer and copied to the Housing Services Manager. The Supported Housing Officer is responsible for reporting any defects to the appropriate Partner Association. Strict guidelines for repairs to be carried out are listed in the Management Agreement.

#### 9.3 Fire Safety

Supported Housing Officers will carry out monthly visual inspections of fire fighting equipment in the hostels that they manage, to include checking that the relevant fire fighting equipment is in place, and testing the fire alarms. All inspections must be recorded in the fire book.

Supported Housing Officers will carry out quarterly fire drills in all houses, and record these in the fire book which is kept in the house.

Partner Associations are responsible for quarterly checks of appliances and rectifying defects. Again records of all inspections will be kept in the house.

#### 9.4 Information

Supported Housing Officers will ensure that tenants are aware of:

- Their responsibility for securing doors and windows at night.
- The dangers of smoking and other naked flames, e.g. candles (ignition of flammable materials, etc.).
- Safe use of equipment provided by Stonewall Housing, e.g. cookers, washing machines, etc.
- Health and safety information contained in the Tenants' Handbook.

#### 9.5 Risk Assessment

Risk Assessments carried out by the Housing Services Manager will include assessing the risk of both the physical environment and the activities undertaken in hostel premises.

Additionally, tenants will be assessed for possible risk at the point of entry; this will cover possible risk to staff and the need for any aids and adaptations required for the safety of the tenant.

## 10 Fire Safety

### 10.1 General

It is the responsibility of staff to be aware of fire hazards, to know the location of fire exits and the assembly point. Everyone must know the fire drill instructions, and these will be part of the induction process for new staff and volunteers.

Access to escape doors, extinguishers and other fire fighting equipment must not be obstructed and all staff will be instructed on their use.

### 10.2 Fire Drills

The Building Landlord is responsible for carrying out Fire Drills for the Central Office and will arrange at least two each year. Stonewall Housing staff will be notified of any testing taking place during office hours. Supported Housing Officers are responsible for carrying out Fire Drills in hostels.

The Administrator and Housing Services Manager are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the evacuation procedures. The Director, Administrator, Advice Services Manager and Housing Services Manager have the power to remove obstructions from fire exits. The Administrator and Housing Services Manager will liaise with the Director after each evacuation to review the success or otherwise of the evacuation and to make recommendations for improved practices.

Visitors to Stonewall Housing and all Stonewall Housing staff, including volunteers, must be made fully familiar with the escape routes and the Stonewall Housing assembly points.

## **11 Universal Hygiene Controls**

All areas must be kept clean and tidy.

Toilets must be washed regularly and kept clean.

If practicable all wash basins will be provided with hot water, soap, clean paper towels or hand dryers.

Vending machines for sanitary products and disposal bins will be provided. Bins will be emptied and sanitised regularly.

## **12 First Aid and Accident Reporting**

### **12.1 First Aid**

In all Stonewall Housing premises First Aid provision will be available at all times in appropriate and accessible First Aid Boxes.

All new employees will be told as part of their induction of the location of first aid equipment and the employees who have received first aid training.

A record of all first aid cases treated will be kept in the Accident Book.

### **12.2 Accidents and Emergencies**

All employees must report all incidents that resulted, or nearly resulted, in personal injury to themselves or others, to their line manager and the Director and make sure the accident is recorded in the Accident Book.

It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that any necessary follow up action is taken to reduce the risk of the accident or near accident reoccurring.

The Director is responsible for reporting incidents that come within the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), to the appropriate local Health and Safety Inspector. RIDDOR covers the following incidents:

- fatal accidents;
- major injury accidents/conditions;
- dangerous occurrences;
- accidents causing more than 3 days incapacity for work;
- certain work-related diseases.

## **13 COSHH**

### **13.1 General Statement**

Under the 1992 COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations employers have a duty to make an assessment of the risks related to hazardous substances e.g. chemicals, noxious fumes etc. In accordance with the Approved Code of Practice this assessment will be carried out and written down by the Administrator or Housing Services Manager.

Following this assessment, in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) Stonewall Housing will:

- In the first instance take action to remove any hazardous substances;

- If this is not possible then action shall be taken to find a substitute for the hazardous substance;
- If this is not possible such substances shall be enclosed within a safe environment;
- If none of the above are possible protective equipment will be issued to ensure the safety of staff.

### 13.2 Monitoring

If for any reason a member of staff has to be exposed to a possibly hazardous substance, levels of exposure will be monitored.

At all times levels of ill health related to exposure to hazardous substances at work will be monitored.

### 13.3 Removal, Substitution, Enclosure and Protection

All members of staff shall avoid using hazardous substances at all times if at all possible. Where substitute materials are available they will be used (e.g. water based markers, correction fluid etc). If there is no way of avoiding use of a hazardous substance, then staff must use the substance in an enclosed, ventilated environment away from other workers, and use proper protective equipment, which shall be made available by Stonewall Housing.

## 14 Manual Handling

Stonewall Housing employees will avoid manual lifting where at all possible. However, employees may occasionally be asked to manually lift and handle loads, but are not expected to put their health at risk. Correct manual lifting and handling reduces the effort required and prevents strain and risk of injury.

The most likely occurrences of manual handling for Stonewall Housing employees are:

- the receipt and storage of stationary orders;
- moving paper records into archive storage;
- rearranging the office furniture and equipment;
- rearranging hostel furniture;
- handling loads at outside events organised by Stonewall Housing employees.

All employees will use aids that are available to reduce the risk of injury, e.g. sack trolley, lifts.

Employees should not put themselves at risk by attempting to lift heavy loads which could be divided into smaller quantities. The assistance of other employees should always be sought for moving large quantities or for lifting heavy and awkward loads. When lifting in a team, take instructions from one person only.

Any employee feeling a strain will stop immediately and record the incident in the Accident Book. To continue may result in more serious injury.

If no employees are available to deal with a heavy load then outside assistance will be brought in. Delivery of heavy items should be included in the purchase of new furniture, equipment etc.

## 15 Stress Management

Stress at work is a serious issue. Workers can suffer severe medical problems, which can result in under-performance at work, and cause major disruptions to the organisation. Throughout the UK 90 million working days each year are lost as a result of stress, costing employers £1.3 billion. (TUC/Dept of Health).

Stress is a workplace hazard that must be dealt with like any other. Thus the responsibility for reducing stress at work lies both with employer and employee.

The Health and Safety Executive has identified the following primary causes of stress at work:

<p><u>Context</u></p> <p><i>Organisation function and culture</i></p> <p><i>Role in organisation</i></p> <p><i>Career development</i></p> <p><i>Decision latitude/control</i></p> <p><i>Interpersonal relationships at work</i></p> <p><i>Home/work interface</i></p>	<p><i>Poor task environment</i>  <i>Lack of definition of objectives</i>  <i>Poor problem solving environment</i>  <i>Poor development environment</i>  <i>Poor communication</i>  <i>Non supportive culture</i></p> <p><i>Role ambiguity</i>  <i>Role conflict</i></p> <p><i>Career uncertainty</i>  <i>Career stagnation</i>  <i>Poor status/status incongruity</i>  <i>Poor pay</i>  <i>Job insecurity and redundancy</i>  <i>Low social value of work</i></p> <p><i>Low participation in decision making</i>  <i>Lack of control over work</i>  <i>Little decision making in work</i>  <i>Overload of decision making</i></p> <p><i>Social or physical isolation</i>  <i>Poor relationships with superiors</i>  <i>Interpersonal conflict and violence</i>  <i>Lack of social support</i></p> <p><i>Conflicting demands of home and work</i>  <i>Low social or practical support at home</i>  <i>Dual career problems</i></p>
<p><u>Contents</u></p> <p><i>Task design</i></p>	<p><i>Poorly defined work</i>  <i>High uncertainty in work</i>  <i>Lack of variety, or short work cycles</i>  <i>Fragmented or meaningless work</i>  <i>Under-utilisation of skill</i>  <i>Continual exposure to client groups</i></p>
<p><i>Workload/pace/schedule</i></p>	<p><i>Inflexible work schedule</i>  <i>Unpredictable work hours</i>  <i>Long or unsocial work hours</i></p>

Stonewall Housing will do all it can to eradicate problems relating to stress at work. In particular Stonewall Housing will:

- Ensure close employee involvement, particularly during periods of change.
- Give opportunities for staff to contribute in the planning and organisation of their own jobs.
- Ensure staff have work targets that are stretching, but reasonable.

- Implement effective policies and procedures for dealing with bullying and any form of harassment
- Encourage good communications between staff and management.
- Promote the maintenance of a supportive culture in the workplace.
- Where appropriate, take into consideration an employee's personal problems/problems at home.
- Ensure employees avoid working long and unsocial hours.

Stonewall Housing will ensure that all policies, working practices, conditions of employment etc. do not contradict with the above statement.

Employees should become aware of the causes of stress, and ensure that they do not work in a way that could cause them to suffer an increase in stress, nor cause an increase in stress on others.

Employees must respect other members of staff, and ensure that interpersonal conflicts are avoided or dealt with sensibly.

Employees must not make unrealistic demands of other workers, by imposing impossible deadlines and/or increasing others' workloads to a level they cannot cope with.

Employees should participate with Stonewall Housing's intention to maintain a co-operative, supportive workplace environment.

If an employee is suffering from stress at work, they should discuss this with their line manager at the first opportunity. Where practicable and reasonable, Stonewall Housing will seek to provide assistance to the employee.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Appendix A - Personal Safety of Staff**

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## **A.1 Policy**

Stonewall Housing places a high priority on the personal safety of members of staff and takes seriously all incidents that threaten or compromise personal safety.

Incidents, including actual and potential violence against staff, verbal abuse and accidents, are monitored, and regular reviews of procedures are carried out in order to maximise and improve on, personal safety to start at all levels within the organisation.

Stonewall Housing recognises that some staff, by nature of their work, are more likely than others to be placed in situations where personal safety may be compromised, for example, Housing Advice Workers and Supported Housing Officers and resources will be targeted accordingly.

Stonewall Housing offers post-incident debriefing and support to all staff whose personal safety has been threatened or compromised, and if required access to post-incident training. Additionally, Stonewall Housing carries out regular training in the management of conflict and violence.

## **A.2 Procedure**

The Director is responsible for ensuring that procedures, which maximise the personal safety of staff, are in place at all locations where staff work regularly.

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that local procedures are implemented, for inducting all new staff in personal safety procedures and for monitoring compliance to the procedures within their team. In line with the Health and Safety Policy, the Administrator, Housing Services Manager and Advice Services Manager review procedures annually in consultation with staff, within their areas of responsibility, and ensure that recommendations to improve the effectiveness of procedure are implemented, so far as is possible within resource and other constraints.

Members of staff have a responsibility to be alert to situations which threaten or compromise their personal safety and to take appropriate action: an individual's personal safety always takes precedence over the service, and managers must accept that this may result, on occasion, in a task not being completed, a target not being met, or receipt of a service-user complaint.

The victim or their line manager records all incidents of actual or potential threats to personal safety, immediately after the incident, in the Accident Book. The line manager meets with the member of staff within two working days of the incident, to offer post-incident counselling, and with the victim's consent may call in the police to follow up incidents if appropriate. The line manager writes to the perpetrator of the action advising them that their behaviour is unacceptable and alerting them of the consequences, if any.

## **A.3 Control**

The Administrator will carry out Risk Assessment of personal safety procedures for each office, the Housing Services Manager at schemes at which staff within their team and the Advice Services Manager at premises where regular advice surgeries are held. Line managers on an ad hoc basis address breaches of the procedure; consistent breaches of the procedure may lead to disciplinary action.

## A.4 GUIDANCE

### A.4.1 Personal Safety in offices, reception and interview rooms

This guidance is general and applies to all of Stonewall Housing's offices. Line managers must ensure that all current staff are familiar with this guidance and that all new staff receive a thorough induction, including a demonstration of where any alarms are located.

When interviewing tenants with a known history of aggressive or violent behaviour make sure that another member of staff knows you are seeing them, and where you are and what time you expect to finish the interview. If in the main office meeting room always make sure that you are sitting between the tenant and the door. If in one of the hostel offices ask another staff member to phone you when you expect to finish the interview, or arrange to call them if the interview is completed sooner. If the other staff member rings and gets no answer they must ensure someone goes immediately to that hostel office. Alternatively arrange to meet with the tenant with another member of staff or a manager.

When an interviewee becomes threatening or shows signs of becoming violent try and find a reason to leave the room, for example, to confirm information or seek advice: this may give the interviewee a chance to calm down and you the chance to get the support of a manager or another member of staff.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution:

- trust your instincts
- If the interviewee becomes violent: try and leave the room, if you can do so without putting yourself in any further danger

The manager must try and calm the situation down and encourage the interviewee to leave the office;

Following the incident, the procedure detailed above is followed.

### A.4.2 Personal Safety in other premises and outside office hours

Staff visiting ex-tenants or advice clients at home must always consider whether there is a potential risk to their personal safety in carrying out the visit; factors to consider include a known history of violence or aggression, minimal information about a new referral, previous feelings of unease. If there is any doubt in the above areas, the meeting should be scheduled to take place in the main office.

Where it is considered that there is a risk, and it is not possible to hold the meeting in the main office, the visit must be carried out with another member of staff, or a representative from another agency, e.g. Police, Social Services, etc.

All staff carrying out visits must start their working day from their usual office base unless previously agreed by their line manager. Staff must leave clear and precise details of destinations, quoting full names and addresses of tenants/individuals to be visited with the main office.

Once a visit has been completed, the member of staff carrying out the visit must phone the main office, advising them of their whereabouts and whether they intend to go to lunch, go home, or return to the office. If

returning to the office, the member of staff aims to return by 5.00pm, to allow time for action to be taken if they fail to return.

The Director, Housing Services Manager, Advice Services Manager, or in their absence the Administrator, will check before they leave that all members of staff out on visits have returned or called to advise of their whereabouts. If a member of staff notifies them that they will be working after 5.30pm their line manager should be informed if possible.

If the whereabouts of a member of staff remain unknown at 5.30pm the Director, Housing Services Manager, or Advice Services Manager (alerted by the Administrator if necessary) will decide what action is to be taken, for example, phoning the member of staff carrying out the visit at home, visiting the tenant to confirm whether or not the member of staff is still there, or phoning the Police.

If a member of staff is working after 5.30pm, for example a Supported Housing Officer working late or Housing Advice Worker finishing a surgery or attending an evening meeting the procedure is as follows:

Supported Housing Officers should ring and leave a message on the Housing Services Manager's mobile phone confirming when they have finished.

Advice Workers should leave a message on the Advice Service mobile phone that will be carried by the Housing Advice Manager, confirming when they have finished.

Other members of staff should ring and leave a message on the main office answerphone confirming when they have finished.

#### A.4.3 Travelling to visits

When travelling to visits on foot:

- be alert to and aware of your surroundings, keep to busy, well-lit roads and avoid poorly lit or quiet underpasses;
- walk facing oncoming traffic; if you think you are being followed, make for the nearest busy or well-lit area and ask for help;
- never accept lifts unless you know and trust the driver;
- if carrying a personal alarm, keep it in your hand so you can use it, not in a handbag or briefcase.

When using Cabs:

- make sure you have the phone number of a reputable cab company which has been police checked ; Stonewall will provide a list of police checked cabs; when you book your cab ask the company for the driver's name and call sign,
- ask what type of car is being used;
- if you are calling from a public place, try to avoid doing so where someone overhears you giving your name; when your cab arrives, check the Company and driver's names; always sit at the rear of the cab; if you speak to the driver, do not give any personal details away;
- if the driver makes you feel uneasy, ask to stop at a busy familiar place and get out before you arrive at your destination have your cash ready to pay the driver.

#### When using Private Cars:

- keep your car in good working order, have it serviced regularly and carry extra petrol in a safety-approved portable petrol tank, along with oil and water, in case of emergencies; join one of the reputable breakdown/rescue organisations
- always have the necessary maps and directions in the car so you do not have to stop to ask; keep handbags and briefcases out of reach of open windows in case of snatch thieves;
- when leaving the car, always lock equipment, luggage and valuables in the boot - leave nothing on display;
- when parking in daylight, consider what the area will be like in the dark; at night, park in a well-lit place and one that is busy, if possible - avoid multi-storey car parks or car parks where you and your vehicle are not clearly visible;
- if you witness an incident or accident or someone tries to flag you down, do not stop to investigate without thinking whether it would be safer and more effective if you went for professional help (ie Police, Fire Brigade etc); if a car pulls up in front of you and you have to stop, keep the engine running and doors locked;
- if you think you are being followed, try to alert other drivers - use the lights and horn; keep driving until you reach a busy area, a police fire or ambulance station or a garage.

#### When using Public Transport:

- try to sit near the bus driver or stay downstairs on a double decker bus; wait for the bus at a busy bus stop; before you board the bus, have your fare or travel pass ready, separate from other monies or valuables; try to avoid having your hands filled with heavy bags;
- On trains, avoid single enclosed compartments: sit in an open compartment near the alarm; if there is a guard on the train, sit nearest to the guard's compartment; take note of exits; do not doze off - stay alert to what is going on around you.

A.4.4 Communication & Managing Conflict And Anger - guidance and good practice notes will be made available to all staff.