



## BOROUGHBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

### Lone working Policy

There are circumstances when Boroughbridge Town Council (BBTC) staff and Tourist Information Point (TIP) Volunteers are asked to, or must, work alone. While most of these circumstances will not present a risk to the person, it is important that all steps are taken to minimise risk and ensure an individual's safety.

The guidelines contained within this document set out ways of managing safe lone working and gives recommendations for precautions to take in many common circumstances.

#### Definitions:

**Lone Worker** - Any person who is allowed to work alone at any time, day or night, in or out of doors for significant periods of time.

\*Violence at Work - An incident or behaviour that abuses, threatens, or assaults a member of staff in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment or activity, and results in physical, mental or emotional damage.

**Violence to Staff** - violence includes:

- Physical attack - whether actual injury and/or pain occurs.
- Sexual attack.
- Other aggressive behaviour directed towards a member of staff causing fear or concern e.g. verbal abuse, threats and intimidating behaviour.
- Damage to personal property.

BBTC staff and TIP Volunteers could potentially be faced with intimidation or threatening behaviour resulting in emotional distress which is equally as frightening and harmful as physical assault.

#### General Advice

The following guidelines are designed to offer general advice to all staff on planning for safe lone working, how to avoid violence and how to deal with potentially difficult situations.

It is recognised that it is not possible to cover every eventuality as the situations in which violence may occur are too diverse. All personnel must follow BBTC staff and TIP Volunteers guidelines and safe systems of work that may be introduced following any risk assessment.

In any occupation where staff deal with members of the public or clients, difficult situations can arise. In the office, although there are generally a few people around and staff may **feel** relatively protected, there can be no guarantee of personal safety.

While BBTC is committed to training and developing all staff in dealing with incidents of aggressive behaviour, set out below is advice that will help to prevent the likelihood of violence occurring:

#### Avoid Risk

- Avoid confrontation, do all you can to defuse a potentially violent situation.

- Never interview a person alone if they have a history of violent or aggressive behaviour.
- Physically - keep your distance.
- Trust your intuition, if you feel scared or uneasy, don't ignore the warning, act on it.
- Learn to recognise body language.
- When leaving the workplace, share details of your movements and when you expect to be back. (eg. diary)
- Always report any incident, no matter how trivial it may seem. Not doing so could put others at risk.

### **Develop Confidence and Communication Skills**

- Learn how to deal with difficult situations, develop communication skills and assertiveness through training, when offered.
- Allow the aggressor plenty of space, both personal and verbal.
- Be aware of your body language, e.g.: relax your stance and do not clench your fists.
- Look confident - not arrogant, a person who looks confident is less likely to be attacked.
- Effective communication can greatly reduce the risk of aggressive or potentially violent situations developing but remember that communication is not just verbal.
- If people focus their aggression on you, work to placate rather than provoke them.

### **Reducing the Risk**

For staff working in the main office or TIP, especially outside normal working hours. BBTC must ensure they do so in relative safety. The following points are guidance for reducing risk.

#### **Town Council Staff:**

- Security arrangements will be of a high standard. For example, all doors must be always locked when premises closed.
- All staff must be aware when they are lone workers and are encouraged to lock themselves in when working alone.
- Only people known to that employee should be permitted entrance after normal working hours.
- It should not be obvious from the outside of the building that people may be working alone inside. Additionally, radios or CD players give the impression that the office is occupied

#### **Town Council Staff and TIP Volunteers:**

- Telephone numbers of the emergency services and appropriate personnel are displayed clearly in both offices.
- Large sums of money should only be left in the safe on site and valuable equipment should not be visible from the outside.
- On leaving the building the exit routes should be well lit.

### **Communication Systems and Raising the Alarm**

The availability and use of mobile phones is increasing, but the range and coverage is still variable. However, where possible and practical, it is suggested that workers consider using a mobile phone.

Staff working alone are responsible for making sure that information is left available with a responsible member of staff, giving the following information when working away from the offices:

- Nature of work involved
- Location of the work
- Mode of travel
- Departure time/estimated time of return
- Mobile phone number (if one is available)

### **Reporting**

It is important that all incidents of violence towards staff are monitored, and that appropriate action is taken. The reports will be monitored by the Human Resources (HR) Committee Member who is the nominated Health and Safety Officer (HSO), alongside accident information, and any appropriate recommendations for changes to working practice will be made.

### **Reporting Procedure:**

1. Any member of staff or volunteer who suffers any act of violence whilst at work should ensure that it is reported immediately to the Town Clerk and /or the mayor.
2. The Clerk should make a preliminary investigation of the circumstances and instigate a written report, and copies of all reports should be forwarded to the HSO.
3. If any serious assault has taken place, the incident should then be investigated further by the HR Committee Chairman.
4. Any recommendations should be shared with the immediate people affected, and BBTC to ensure improved practice within BBTC.

Whilst all incidents need to be reported and treated seriously, a distinction needs to be drawn between serious incidents which may give rise to a legal action and less serious incidents which may only need to be monitored.

### **Review of Incidents**

Violent behaviour towards BBTC staff and TIP Volunteers is unacceptable. The Clerk/mayor should review each incident and where appropriate make recommendations to the HSO as to the action which should be taken to minimise the risk of subsequent incidents. A debriefing for all members of staff should take place.

Recommendations might include:

- Criminal proceedings or some form of civil action being taken, with the assistance of BBTC named solicitor.
- An increase in the level of supervision
- Training being provided for the staff affected by the incident
- Altering the working environment

### **Summary**

Statistics show that your chance of being attacked is once in a hundred years! The average person's chance of becoming a victim is very low. However, sometimes at work, because of the situations we find ourselves in, the risks are increased. We should be working all the time to keep these risks as low as possible.



**BOROUGHBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**

**Lone Worker Incident Report**

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Name of Worker: .....

Date: .....

Nature of Incident:

Reported to:

Action taken:

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Town Clerk

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Health and Safety Officer