



*Services for schools, owned by schools*

**Health & Safety Standard Procedure**

# **Guidance for staff undertaking home visits**

November 2017

## **Introduction**

Attached is guidance for staff and others who may work outside Eko Trust schools, visit homes or other educational establishments. The model policy statement guidance has attached a generic risk assessment as an addendum to this Standard Procedure as Appendix A.

## **References**

HSE Working Alone – Health & Safety guidance on the risks of lone working.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

Eko Trust Policy – Guidance for staff working alone.

## **Who is governed by this policy?**

All Eko Trust schools.

## **Establishment Action**

When completing your risk assessment;

- Read the attached document. (Appendix A)
- Review the current risk assessment for those staff who may work alone by comparing it to the attached risk assessment (Appendix B)
- Make provisions for the vulnerable employees who may be at greater risk from lone working (Appendix C)
- Ensure that you consider the questions posed in Appendix D
- Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed regularly
- Ensure that those staff are given guidelines set out in Paragraph 5 and Appendix E.

Date received:

Planned action:

Action to be taken by ..... To be completed by.....

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### Eko Trust – Undertaking Home Visits guidance

#### 1. Background

It is established practice in Eko Trust schools to visit families at home before children commence with them. It helps to begin forming the relationship between parents, practitioners and children; and starts the process of sharing information.

Very often Eko Trust staff will visit homes either with colleagues or work alone. This guidance covers those undertaking:

- Home visits;
- Appointments with professionals at parents' home/another venue, i.e. schools or offices;
- Working out of hours in such a situation may be at risk from:
  - Having an accident and being unable to attract help;
  - Aggressive/violent behaviour of another person;
  - The subject of false allegations.

This policy outlines the procedures for undertaking home visits and provides good practice guidelines.

#### 2. Policy Statement

- Home visiting that includes lone working is an essential part of support work. The Eko Trust is committed to ensuring that it does not put any of its workers in a situation of unreasonable risk.
- Risk Assessments, approved by line managers, for visits out of school must be undertaken to reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable.
- All staff working alone must take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety. If at any time they feel unsure of their safety, they should remove themselves from that situation as soon as possible.
- The Eko Trust will ensure that where a worker is likely to be in a position of lone working and visiting, this will be specified in the recruitment information, in order to make this requirement explicit to all applicants.
- The Eko Trust will ensure that the induction programme for all staff and volunteers includes written materials and discussion about the Eko Trust guidance for staff working alone and staff undertaking home visits.
- The Eko Trust will ensure that appropriate staff and volunteers receive regular training and updates on the measures in place for lone working and undertaking visits.

#### 3. Responsibilities

- The employee or school representative will hold responsibility of informing the school of work movements which are outside of school.
- The school will not allow any visits or movements which will place the worker at unacceptable risk levels.
- Employee or school representatives will not be asked to undertake home visits outside school hours unless they are unavoidable.

#### **4. Good practice guidance for managers (an aid to completing the risk assessment).**

- Employee or school representative must be aware of background information before making a visit.
  - When arranging the first home visit with a parent/carer over the telephone ask who will be present in the home
  - The employee or school representative may be accompanied by a colleague on initial home visits where it is deemed that there may be a higher personal safety riskfactor.
- Employee or school representative should not be left alone with any child in a home.
- Clear notes of the meeting must be made by the employee or school representative.
- Meetings at neutral venues should be logged with manager with times and venues clearly stated.
- All movements should be recorded in the school diary and variations advised to the line manager.
- If employee or school representative finds they are delayed, call the parent and let them know you will be arriving later than originally planned.
- If, on arriving at a home, you consider yourself to be at risk, decline to enter or make an excuse to leave where necessary, e.g. "I've left the car lights on" or "I've left some papers in the car" and depart. Do not attempt to enter what is considered a risk situation.
- Employee or school representative should leave a mobile phone on at all times so that they can be contacted for checks or can report in any issues.
- If at any time, the employee or school representative experiences any aggression or verbal abuse, or other unwelcome approaches, this should be reported to the emergency school contact immediately, when safe to do so. Employee or school representative should leave at the earliest opportunity.
- Employee or school representative must not then arrange to make another appointment with the abusive or aggressive person until the case has been reviewed.
- The employee or school representative must ensure she/he has appropriate vehicle insurance for transporting parents/carers and their families if necessary when carrying out their day to day duties.

#### **5. Best practice guidelines for those undertaking home visits**

- Always trust your instincts – if you are in any doubt or feel unsafe, remove yourself from that situation.
- Act in a confident manner and terminate the visit apologetically, for example by saying you have to be at another meeting which you had forgotten about.
- Plan your route and take a map along, to avoid having to stop and ask for directions in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Consider where you park and always reverse into a space, so it is easy for you to drive out.
- If using public transport, sit where there are other people, not on your own.
- If walking, use well lit public streets – do not use shortcuts.
- Pay attention to your surroundings when in someone's home – where are the doors? Sit in a seat nearest to a door.
- Ensure you always have your mobile telephone switched on and to hand.
- Keep your keys easily accessible.
- Avoid carrying valuables or large sums of money.
- Do not allow a parent/carer to leave you alone with a child. If, whilst talking, a parent walks out of the room and leaves you with a child in the room, follow them (i.e. into

the kitchen if they are making drinks etc).

- Always have a legitimate reason for leaving, e.g. that you have another appointment.
- It is advisable not to accept offers of a drink or food whilst on a home visit.
- The employee or school representative may be expected to operate from an alternative workbase during periods of school closure.

## DO

- Prepare and plan. Check records and speak to colleagues.
- Set up your case file with papers to sign – confidentiality agreement, sensitive data consent form, agreement of support form.
- Keep the School informed of your whereabouts – inform Manager of diary.
- Plan your route in advance. Avoid known unsafe areas. Carry a fully charged mobile telephone with credit available.
- Do have a contingency plan if things go wrong – car breaks down/battery is flat/arrange to be picked up.
- Maintain a discrete distance. Ensure you sit close to exits. Speak in a friendly and polite manner.
- Avoid dangerous areas.
- When transporting parents/carers and/or their children, wherever possible ensure they are seated in the rear of the car and wearing appropriate restraints e.g. seatbelt, child car seat.

## DON'T

- Visit without having read the appropriate paperwork.
- Forget to keep a simple case file, taking pen and paper!
- Forget to let Manager know and others of your whereabouts.
- Forget to contact the school after visits to say all is well!
- Forget to charge up or take your mobile telephone.
- Forget to keep your car serviced and full of petrol.
- Give out personal details, your mobile, address.
- Forget to report any trips, falls, and accidents or report abusive threatening behaviours.
- Park near to high walls, hedges or unlit areas.



## Appendix B

### RISK ASSESSMENT

School:

Work activity: **Home visits**

Assessor(s):

Pages 1

Date:

Review date:

What could go wrong?	Who might be harmed?	Control measures at present	Further action required (if any)
Break down Road traffic accident Road rage Dangerous dogs / other animals Threatening behaviour Physical assault Accidents on premises eg slips, trips or falls	Staff members	Means of communication e.g. personal / work mobile phone for emergencies Consider 2 members of staff visiting – particularly on a ‘first visit’ Ensure visits are pre-arranged Signing in-out procedures including details of visit and return time ‘Buddy system’ for out of hours Reporting / recording procedures for visits including feedback Appropriate training where necessary eg dealing with difficult customers Pre-arranged welfare calls for longer visits Car parking in a safe well lit area Business mileage added to motor vehicle insurance Refer to EKO Trust guidance for staff working alone	Personal panic alarm Mobile phone Written guidelines / procedures for staff

### Vulnerable Employees that may be at a higher risk from home visiting/lone working

Group	Additional Considerations for home visiting/lone workers
<b>New and Expectant Mothers</b>	<p>The Eko Trust duty of care extends to the unborn child as well as risks to the mother herself. Therefore <b>assessments must include the risk to any unborn child or child who is still breast-feeding.</b></p> <p>Consideration must also be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Impaired mobility may make the mother more prone to slips, trips and falls (especially in the later stages of pregnancy).</li> <li>➤ Impaired ability to carry out physically strenuous work</li> <li>➤ Increased likelihood of back injuries.</li> <li>➤ Entitlement to more rest breaks.</li> <li>➤ Risk of early labour or miscarriage.</li> </ul>
<b>Young People Aged Under 18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Possible lack of experience and immaturity.</li> <li>➤ Possible inability to concentrate for long periods.</li> <li>➤ Entitled to more frequent rest breaks.</li> </ul>
<b>Disabled People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mobility problems and visual impairment may make unassisted evacuation difficult.</li> <li>➤ Potential difficulties in raising the alarm when assistance is required.</li> <li>➤ Unable to hear alarms.</li> </ul>

### General questions for managers to consider when completing risk assessments

Do staff have a system for vetting or checking people they are going to meet alone?	If not, devise and implement a system for vetting and checking. Information about prospective parents/carers who could pose a threat to other workers should be shared.
Do you know where colleagues are at all times?	If not, it is imperative that adequate record is kept of the whereabouts of all workers. Good practice dictates that people in the office have these details in order to pass on appropriate information in an emergency. The system should detail time, place of visit, name of the person visited, if possible a telephone number, the venue of the meeting, time of return.
If staff change their plan, do they inform the team?	If not, devise and implement a system of informing if plans are changed.
If staff do not return at the stated time what happens?	If nothing would happen, devise and implement a system for contacting colleagues, places visited etc. Include in the plan the point at which the emergency services would be contacted.
Can staff be contacted?	Ensure that contact numbers are held or accessible by SLT.
Do staff leave details of their emergency contact person etc.?	If not, devise and implement a system. This should give: Contact details, telephone number, details of any dependents who may be relying on them e.g. children to be picked up from school, make and registration number of their car.
Do staff check in when working alone or in isolated situations?	If not, devise and implement a system for staff working alone to check in if appropriate.
Is there a check in system for staff that will be undertaking visits out of normal office hours?	If not, devise and implement a system for colleagues working alone to check in. This may involve workers acting a contact buddies for one another.
Do you need to introduce a contact buddy system for staff who work alone or in isolated places outside the normal office hours?	See above.
Where will cars be parked? Is it safe?	Staff must think about where they park their car and how safe it is, particularly after dark.
Which route will be used – quickest or safest?	Safest routes must always be used. Shortcuts, through isolated or problem areas are never advocated.



<p>Is an alarm carried – do staff know the best way to use alarms?</p>	<p>Personal attack alarms can be provided on request in accordance with the risk assessment. It is important that staff know how to use them and what response they will receive. They are used to startle an assailant and give the user a chance to escape. Bystanders <b>will not normally</b> react to the activation of a personal alarm.</p>
<p>Has the induction procedure covered this area of working?</p>	<p>If not, the induction process must be reviewed</p>
<p>Are workers currently medically fit to work alone?</p>	<p>If not, reasonable adjustments must be made to safeguard the health of the worker.</p>
<p>Are all workers familiar with out of hours emergency procedures?</p>	<p>If not, appropriate information or training must be given. Managers must check that workers fully understand the</p>
<p>Will there be a risk of aggression or violence?</p>	<p>If there is a risk of aggression or violence managers must consider the risk and determine what appropriate action should be taken.</p>
<p>How will the person be supervised?</p>	

### Further guidance for staff regarding driving

- Always keep doors locked when driving and keep any bag, phone or valuables out of sight.
- When escorting in a car, managers and workers should consider the need to have a colleague who can sit in the back of the car with the person being escorted.
- Before making a long journey, ensure that the vehicle is in good condition and has an up-to-date service history.
- If you hire a car, make sure that it has been checked, especially the spare wheel, and that the vehicle has a full tank of fuel.
- Tell anyone who is being met en route of the route to be taken, and planned arrival time. Have a plan in place for situations where workers are late or fail to arrive.
- Drivers should not stop if flagged down other than by a police officer. They **must** always ask for identification even if the officer is wearing a uniform, before they unlock the car.
- Use a Satnav or have directions and a map in the car to avoid having to stop to ask. Transfer brief notes of directions on to a note that can be attached to the dashboard rather than driving around with a map book open.
- Drivers must never pick up hitch hikers.
- Only wind windows down enough to let a little air in. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in while you are stationary in traffic.
- Anyone who thinks they are being followed should try to alert others by flashing lights and sounding the horn. They should keep driving until they reach a busy area or a police, fire, ambulance station or garage.
- Drivers who are forced to stop by a car pulling up in front of their vehicle should keep the engine running in case they need to leave quickly.
- Workers must think about where cars are parked, especially if it could be dark when they return to it.
  - Could the car be vandalized?
  - Is it close by if needed quickly?
  - Is it parked in the direction of travel?
- Drivers of quality cars should consider the purpose of the visit. If it is to see someone about a controversial matter e.g. an exclusion, give thought to parking the car out of sight of the person you are visiting.
- Drivers should have keys ready when returning to the car and not open car doors remotely until standing beside the vehicle. Unlocking the door from a distance increases the chance that someone could secrete themselves in your vehicle.
- The back seat of the car should be checked before the driver gets in – keep a torch handy.