



Lone Working Policy for Portage Home Visitors

This policy was written following training attended by the Head of Service in September 2010.

It is to be read in conjunction with the North Tyneside Safety Document for Lone Working (June 2008) and the Portage Policy Document (2010). The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines Lone Workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."

"It is the responsibility of each individual employee to familiarize themselves with the policies and comply with them." (Safety Document for Lone Working)

Refer to Appendix B - Duties and Responsibilities of Employees and other Workers.

The policy fulfils the following aims of Beacon Hill school:

- That promotes a happy, healthy atmosphere of security, trust and respect
- That actively develops parental partnerships for the benefit of the pupils

Portage is a home visiting service and, as such, relies upon the professional skills of the Portage Home Visitor in building an effective relationship with the family in the home. The Portage Service Level Agreement has been revised in light of the Lone Working training and sets out clearly the expected commitment from both Portage Visitor and parent in building a partnership based on mutual trust and respect. (See Appendix 1)

All Portage Home Visitors (PHV's) will be encouraged to attend Lone Working Training. The Head of Service will contact their employers to request that they are released in order to attend this.

- **All partners include, involve and inform each other**

The Portage service in North Tyneside is founded on the principle of a multi-agency model. Referrals to Portage are usually made by a professional who is already visiting the family. (Health Visitor, Speech Therapist etc) Whenever possible the initial visit to a family is made by the Head of Service with the person who has made the referral. Where a joint visit is not possible the Head of Service will contact the referrer

for some background information about the family before making an initial visit. She will then complete a Rapid Risk Assessment.

When signing the Service Level Agreement parents give their consent for relevant information regarding their child's development to be shared with other involved professionals and for referrals to other agencies to be made as appropriate.

- That empowers all individuals equally and so meets diverse needs

Research undertaken by the National Portage Association has shown that Portage does empower parents. The vast majority of families who engage with the service report that it is a positive experience for both them and their child.

Portage visitors actively involve parents/carers in all aspects of their work, valuing the parent as a partner in the process of enhancing their child's development through joint working towards common goals. This partnership is the key to minimising the risk that a Portage Home Visitor will encounter conflict or hostility with the families they work with in the home.

Principles

The National Portage Association is committed to promoting services that are -

- Family Centred
- Well co-ordinated
- Accessible
- Competent
- Accountable
- In partnership with other agencies.

" Portage is most effective when it is both a source of support for individual children and families and a link by which other services are accessed and used effectively." NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines 2006

Guidelines

1. Referrals:

In line with NPA guidelines the North Tyneside Portage Service operates an open referral system, accepting referrals from families themselves as well as other agencies.

Where an agency is making a referral for a child and family, it is essential that the referral has been fully discussed with parents/carers and their

permission obtained. This will ensure that the family is already engaged in home visiting with at least one other agency before Portage becomes involved.

Upon receipt of a referral the Head of Service will contact the referrer for some general background about the family and then arrange an initial home visit to meet the family. This will be with the referrer if possible. At this stage a Rapid Risk Assessment will be completed. (See Appendix D)

2. The Initial Visit:

The Head of Service takes a pack of information to talk through and then leave with the parents/carers. This has information on North Tyneside Portage Service, Complaints procedure, Child Protection, Service Level Agreement and the groups parents are invited to attend if they wish. There is an information sheet regarding the child's background and development that the Head of Service completes, in discussion with the parents. This information will include things such as siblings who may be at home during visits, family pets, extended family members, locality of the home, garden etc which will inform a Risk Assessment for Home visiting.

At this stage the parents do not need to indicate whether they wish to engage with the service. This visit is usually followed up with a phone call after approximately 2 weeks if the family have not indicated whether they wish to proceed.

3. The Introductory Visit

Where a family does indicate that they wish to receive Home Visits the Head of Service will allocate a Portage Home Visitor, following discussion at a team meeting. The Portage Home Visitor will be briefed about the family/child using the information collected at the initial visit.

An introductory visit will be arranged where the Head of Service can introduce the Portage Home Visitor to the family and explain how the service will operate from this point. During this visit the Head of Service will go through the Service Level Agreement and get both parties to sign a copy and exchange phone numbers (the PHV giving their Portage mobile number)

A Lone Working Risk Assessment will then be completed using Appendix C of the North Tyneside Safety Document.

Regular Portage Home Visits commence:

- Because most of the PHV's are employed in settings across North Tyneside they will sign in and out of the buildings they work in

when they go out for their Portage Home Visits. They will report directly to their colleagues and/or managers at their place of work.

- The Portage Home Visitor will usually have a regular time each week for visiting each family and this is kept on a timetable in the Portage Office. However all planned visits should be entered in the diary in the Portage office when PHV's attend team meetings.
- Where a visit takes place in the afternoon and PHV's are going home from the visit they are expected to inform the Portage office by text or phone call when the visit finishes.
- No Portage Home Visitor is required to work outside of their normal working hours. Most Portage Home visits take place between 9am and 4pm. During School holidays the PHV's are made aware of the times when there is somebody in the Portage office so that if they wish to visit their families they can record this in the diary in the normal way and maintain contact via their Portage mobile.
- All PHV's have been supplied with a mobile phone specifically for their Portage work. The numbers of all the PHV's and Head of Service are all stored in the phones. They have been advised to add an ICE number (in case of emergency number) and leave a list of their Portage contacts with next of kin.
- The Portage office has a folder with all the contact numbers both personal and work and home addresses and e mails for all PHV's
- PHV's will be required to inform the Head of Service if their relationship with a family changes in any way or if something in the home changes the risk factor. They will complete a new risk assessment to establish whether Lone Working remains appropriate.
- Where a PHV feels that their relationship with a family is coming to a potential conflict situation they may request to be accompanied on a future visit by the Head of Service or agree a signal system to alert the office if they are feeling uncomfortable (eg pre arrange to be called at a certain time or make an excuse to ring the office and use an agreed code word)
- If the PHV feels uncomfortable during a home visit they should make an excuse to leave at the earliest possible opportunity and discuss this with the Head of Service. (see Guidelines in Portage Policy) It is up to each PHV to use their own judgement and assess risk factors 'on the spot'.
- All risk assessments must be reviewed at least annually.

- PHV's will carry forms for reporting incidents and must report any incident to the Head of Service at the earliest possible opportunity. Any serious concerns will also be recorded on an Individual Supervision form and filed in their confidential file in the Portage Office.

**Lynn Scorer - Head of Portage and Pre-school Home Teaching Service
Drafted October 2010**