



Heart Wood CIO

Lone Working Policy

Version:	2
Created:	1 July 2024
Next review:	1 July 2025

Introduction

At times it may be necessary for a Heart Wood Lead Facilitator to lead a session on their own without the support of a co-facilitator.

There are increased risks when working alone, as there may not be others around to assist should the facilitator or participant finds themselves in difficulty.

This policy outlines the procedures required in the event a session is delivered alone. The policy considers the associated risks and the safeguards put in place to mitigate, as far as is reasonably practical, those risks.

At no time would a Heart Wood Co-Facilitator be expected or required to work on their own without the support of a Lead Facilitator.

What are the key principles of this policy?

- Understanding the associated risks of working alone in the counselling and therapy context
- Understanding personal responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of ourselves
- Priority is placed on the wellbeing of the counsellor and therapist over the provision of services
- Appropriate supports are in place to protect the wellbeing of lone workers

Associated risks

The risks associated with lone working include but are not limited to:

- Working in isolation with a client who may be experiencing mental health issues and distress
- Driving to and from the session location with participants
- Risk of injury to either the facilitator or participant in a potentially remote location



Lone Working Policy

1. Session numbers

A session may be delivered by one Heart Wood Lead facilitator with one participant.

2. Designated safe person

Prior to each session being delivered, the facilitator must have a designated safe person who knows:

- the location you are travelling to (ideally with a 'what3words' location)
- the expected times of arrival and departure
- who you are working with
- how you and the participants are travelling to the site
- an agreed contact time where they will expect to have heard from you.
- if appropriate, the contact number for the participant(s)

This designated safe person could be a colleague, partner, family member or trusted friend.

Upon finishing a session, the Facilitator must contact the designated safe person to let them know the session is finished and they are travelling back. If the designated safe person hasn't heard from the Facilitator by the agreed contact time then steps should be taken to try and contact the Facilitator.

If contact cannot be made, then they are to contact the emergency services stating the 'what3words' for the site location.

3. Personal responsibility and safety

It is the responsibility of the counsellor or therapist to take all necessary measures to ensure their own welfare and wellbeing whilst on site. Whilst every measure will be put in place to protect the counsellor or therapist, the nature of lone working means that they alone are the ones who are best placed to make a judgement call on whether they are safe.

The Facilitator should not put themselves in a situation that might be considered risky and should use all their best judgement to avoid putting themselves at risk of harm.

If a client becomes distressed during a session and there is a risk of harm to them or to others you must contact the Heart Wood Safeguarding Lead, Chip Ponsford on 07940 853123.

4. Driving

Heart Wood Facilitators are to be aware of the associated risks involved with driving. It is the Facilitators responsibility to ensure their vehicle is roadworthy and suitable for the journey and has provisions in the event of a breakdown during winter months (such as torch, blanket, and warm clothing). If you assess the weather conditions as being unsuitable for driving, please reschedule the session with the client and do not attempt to travel.



5. Unconscious Process and Mirror neurons

On occasions having worked with a client who may be in distress or with severe mental health issues, emotions can be unconsciously transferred onto the Facilitator, often referred to as unconscious process or mirror neurons. This can result in feelings of anger, shame, distress, or even suicidal ideation. This can increase the risk from any journey away from the client's location, as well as affecting the counsellor or therapists in the time following the session.

If a Facilitator experiences any of these feelings following a session whilst driving it is important that they pull over to a safe location and refrain from driving further until they can ground themselves sufficiently to be able to travel safely. It is the Facilitator's responsibility to administer adequate self-care in the event of experiencing any kind of unconscious process to maintain their wellbeing, including in the time following a session.

6. Priority

The priority will always be on the wellbeing of the Facilitator over the provision of services. Should the risk of lone working be deemed too significant, or should a Facilitator feel unsafe, then the session is to be stopped and the Facilitator is to leave the location.