



Weaver Vale Housing Trust
Policy for Visiting Customers Homes

January 2006

1.0 Introduction

The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and customers. The Trust acknowledges that visiting customer's homes is an integral part of some of our employee's duties. It is the aim of the Trust to protect its employees from the risks that may exist when visiting homes through the use of an effective policy. This policy document sets out a framework as to what is required by Trust employees in relation to health and safety measures to support employees who work in Trust properties.

2.0 Policy

This policy has been formulated to specifically manage activities in relation to:

Employees visiting customer's homes to undertake minor works or repairs; or

Employees visiting customer's homes in the course of their normal day to day duties in respect of attending appointments or conducting interviews;

Where major works are being undertaken as part of a controlled site, the area of works will be subject to more stringent controls. Major works can be undertaken by third party contractors in which case the principal contractor will have in place the appropriate health and Safety policies, procedures and controls. Major works can also be undertaken by the Trust's in-house DSO team. In this instance additional policies and controls will be in place. Please refer to the Visiting Sites policy for further information.

If when entering a customer's home, you are unsure as to whether or not the home / works may be part of a controlled site please refer to your line manager for further assistance.

The Trust views customer care as being the responsibility and duty of all employees and will ensure that all employees are trained on and are familiar with the requirements and expectations of this policy. In particular, the Trust will provide on-going diversity and equal opportunities training to ensure that the service needs of all customers are met in full.

2.1 General Guidelines

- 2.1.1 The Trust requires managers to identify any safety issues to employees through the process of risk assessment before a visit takes place. This can be via either a specific or generic risk assessment.

- 2.1.2 The Trust requires all employees to pay specific attention to the lone working and violence at work policy when they are visiting homes or working in properties for the Trust.
- 2.1.3 The Trust requires employees to show respect to the customers and their property at all times. Employees are required to maintain high standards of behaviour and integrity when visiting tenant's homes.
- 2.1.4 The Trust requires employees not use customers toilets or washing facilities, where an alternative facility is provided and never without the permission of the customer.
- 2.1.5 Employees should wear Weaver Vale corporate clothing that has been provided with the visible logo clearly shown. An **ID badge** must be shown upon arrival at a customer's home.
- 2.1.6 All employees are advised at the commencement of their employment with the Trust that information gained in the course of their employment must not be used or passed on to any third party other than in the proper performance of their duties. Please refer to the confidentiality policy for further guidance.
- 2.1.7 The Trust requires all employees to report accidents at work in accordance with the accident procedure this includes visits to customers properties including acts of violence.
- 2.1.8 The Trust will provide employees with mobile phones, and contact numbers for daytime, emergency and out of hours use.
- 2.1.9 The Trust will aim to keep customers informed about any visits to their homes either by letter or a phone call before the visit commences where it is appropriate to do so.
- 2.1.10 The Trust will exercise particular care where children are concerned when visiting homes. Where reasonable practical, employees are advised to never let themselves be compromised by being left alone with any person under the age of 16 years in a property.
- 2.1.11 Employees must never use bad language or improper conduct whilst visiting homes.
- 2.1.12 When visiting customers, employees must not transport tenants in their vehicles unless this is pre arranged by the manager of the section.
- 2.1.13 When visiting customer's properties, employees should avoid the following:
- Accepting gifts;
 - Loaning any item including money or food;
 - Shopping, collecting money or paying bills on behalf of the tenant;

- Physical contact;
- Divulging any sensitive or irrelevant information;
- Allowing a tenant to visit you at your home;

3.0 Undertaking Work in Customer's Homes / Garden or surrounding area

Before commencing any work in a customer's home consider all risks by undertaking a risk assessment. Then where appropriate, put in place in the following control procedures as necessary:

- 3.1 The Trust will provide ramps, or signed diversions where wheelchair or prams need access to their home or where the Trust has disturbed the pavement.
- 3.2 The Trust will protect all work areas, routes of entry and exit and floor covering with dust sheets when working in customer's homes.
- 3.3 The Trust will ensure that all work areas are left clean and tidy at the end of each working day.
- 3.4 The Trust will ensure that all services are re-installed at the end of each day once work has been completed in the customer's homes.
- 3.5 The Trust will ensure that all affected site roads and footpaths remain clean and tidy at all times whilst work is being carried out.
- 3.6 The Trust will ensure that all skips are kept tidy and not overfilled.
- 3.7 The Trust will ensure that all temporary work platforms are free from rubbish and tidy.
- 3.8 When working in customer's homes employees should keep tools, materials and equipment away from the tenant.
- 3.9 When working in customers homes employees must request permission from the tenants to use electricity before doing so.
- 3.10 Where work includes repairs to properties then that work must be carried out with the minimal disruption to the tenants and to an expectable safety standard so that the property is left in a safe condition.
- 3.11 When working on or in tenants properties employees should ensure that doors and windows are closed during to ensure security is maintained where this is appropriate to do so.

4.0 Visiting for Office Based Staff to attend Interviews or Appointments

Before undertaking a visit to a customer's home consider all risks by undertaking a risk assessment. Then where appropriate, put in place the necessary control procedures.

- 4.1 The Trust requires that employees who visit homes have a procedure for signing in and out of the office before a visit and that someone knows where they are going. Please refer to the lone working/violence at work policy for further guidance.

5.0 Responsibility

Each line manager will be responsible for the following:

- 5.1 Reporting any incidents that take place the Health and Safety Adviser.
- 5.2 Arranging training for staff in respect of violence at work and lone worker training where there is a risk identified through the process of risk assessment.
- 5.3 Reducing the risk to other employees and contractors by sharing information that may be of value to others in protecting their health and safety.
- 5.4 Ensure that any relevant information on the background of the tenants is provided before each visit.
- 5.5 Ensuring that employees understand the strategy for dealing with violence when visiting homes.
- 5.6 Ensure that employees visit homes in pairs where there is a high risk or where appropriate ask the tenant to visit the Trust at a main office.
- 5.7 Where possible ensure that work is kept separate from tenants particularly where gas, electricity or working at height is involved.
- 5.8 Ensure that all main electrics – electrical equipment is working and where appropriate PAT tested.

Each employee will be responsible for the following:

- 5.9 When working in customer's homes employees should keep tools, materials and equipment away from the tenant.

- 5.10 Checking the UDC (User Defined Characteristics), job card or with the control centre staff to establish whether or not the tenant may be violent.
- 5.11 Reporting accidents/incidents via the unacceptable behaviour incident form or accident form to their Line Manager and the Health and Safety Adviser.
- 5.12 Being aware of attitudes which can lead to a violent situation when visiting customer's homes.
- 5.13 Ensuring that you have all of the relevant information before visiting homes in particular in relation to violence, asbestos, sharps and criminal offences in relation to the home you are visiting.
- 5.14 Ensure that when visiting a property someone knows where you are and at what time you may be expected back.
- 5.15 Follow the Lone Working and violence at Work Policy where appropriate.
- 5.16 Keep in contact with the control centre or other relevant staff members when working out of hours or in the event of an emergency. Please refer to the Lone Working Policy for further guidance.
- 5.17 Always attend in pairs where there is a violent person at the property or ask the tenant to meet you at the main office.
- 5.18 Safely terminate a visit to a home where the tenant is showing signs of aggression or odd behaviour.
- 5.19 Ask about pets before you go into a customer's home. If there is an aggressive dog or pet then terminate the visit at once.
- 5.20 When visiting customer's homes, report where you find any issue in relation to fleas, dog or cat excrement, needles, rotting matter, violence, drugs, alcohol misuse, or deviant sexual behaviour to your line manager and terminate the visit.
- 5.21 When visiting customers report any tenant who is storing large amounts of debris in their homes or gardens to your line manager.
- 5.22 Whilst visiting customers in their homes politely request that the tenant refrain's from smoking whilst work is in progress, this is particularly important in relation to gas work.
- 5.23 Show respect at all times and ensure the highest standards of behaviour are maintained at all times.

6.0 Links and Interdependencies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Confidentiality Policy the Lone Working/Violence at work policy and the Visiting Sites Policy where appropriate.

7.0 Consultation

A detailed consultation process with all relevant managers and a representative group of tenants, has taken place. This process of consultation will be repeated when the policy is reviewed.

8.0 Review

This Policy will be reviewed by the Executive Management Team in February 2009.