

Personal Safety in the Community Policy

1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) is committed to ensuring that all workers are safe while working in the community and in meeting with community members.

This policy seeks to:

- Raise awareness of risks which can be encountered while working offsite
- Ensure that there is a consistent approach to risk management across all of ICH's services

This Policy operates pursuant to the ICH *Workplace Health and Safety Policy*.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, Board members, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors engaged in service delivery. For the purposes of this policy, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Policy

ICH acknowledges the diversity of services provided across the organisation, both in intensity and level of risk. It is important however that there is a common understanding of risks which may be encountered while working offsite and that there is a system which proactively identifies and seeks to mitigate risks for workers.

3.1 Risks in the Community

It is important for all workers to recognise the wide-ranging types of risks which they may be exposed to when working in the community.

Risks can include but are not limited to:

People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service users' history• Service users' current behaviour• Likelihood of changes in service users' behaviour• Alcohol or drugs• Mental health• Violence (including domestic and family violence)• Visitors in the home• Physical and/or verbal abuse• Threats of violence• Intimidation
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoarding with difficult access or egress• Slips, trips and falls• Uncontrolled and/or aggressive pets

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven surfaces, incomplete or damaged building work • Damaged or broken furniture or equipment • Insects and other vermin • Access to weapons • Hazardous substances used in the home • Fire (including where there are no smoke alarms or safe egress route) • Smoking
Biological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood • Vomit • Faeces • Infectious health conditions • Sharps • Unhygienic surfaces
Task related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual handling (including bending, lifting, pulling, carrying) • Working at heights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Above 1.2m is not permitted unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer • Use of manual or power tools
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue • Transporting service users • Breakdowns • Traffic incidents • Road rage • Weather • Poor driving behaviour
Other risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working alone • Working in isolated environments • Working at irregular times (e.g. nights)

3.2 Management of Risks

3.2.1 Identification

Identification of risks should be undertaken prior to and while in the community. Key stages where risks can be identified may include, but are not limited to:

- Information provided during intake, this could be provided by an external organisation or by a service user
- Continuous scanning for risks, including upon arrival as well as while working within the site
- Support planning processes where services are planned and risks identified
- Conversations with service users
- Reviewing service user records

When outside of the office, workers must maintain an awareness of the environment to identify any potential risks.

3.2.2 *Assessment and Mitigation of Risks*

Upon identification of risks, the worker must notify the Manager and record this on the client management system.

If a risk is identified while a worker is outside of the office, they should assess the level of risk and take appropriate action to ensure their own safety and where appropriate, the safety of others. Workers must at all times prioritise their own safety and should not put themselves at risk of injury.

All risks should be assessed in accordance with the ICH *Risk Management Policy*. The risk management assessment means that appropriate strategies can be identified to mitigate the level of risk. Any risks which are deemed to be high or extreme risk, can only be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

ICH recognises that processes may vary depending upon the service. However, in all cases workers are responsible for taking steps to ensure their safety while working in the community, this includes but is not limited to:

- Recording visit details including:
 - The name of the service user
 - The contact number of the service user
 - The address
 - The registration number of the vehicle being driven to the visit
 - Names of those attending the visit
- Wearing appropriate clothes
- Avoiding carrying/displaying cash, credit cards or other valuables where possible
- Carrying a mobile phone with enough battery for the duration of the time offsite
- Familiarising themselves with any identified risks prior to visiting and implementing strategies to mitigate the level of risk
- Conducting an environmental assessment prior to leaving the car and entering the site
- Continuing to assess any risks during the visit
- Not entering or alternatively, leaving a site where risks have been identified which are unable to be adequately controlled

A Risk Management Plan may need to be completed where risks have been identified. These may require additional strategies to minimise the risk of harm such as:

- Sending two workers on visits
- Checking in requirements during visits
- Moving visits to a safer location (e.g. ICH facilities or a safe public location)
- Using PPE
- Other strategies as appropriate

Other strategies are detailed within the *Personal Safety in the Community Procedure*.

Unsafe Situations

If a risk cannot be safely mitigated or at any time where a worker feels unsafe, they should take appropriate action to de-escalate the situation if needed, politely excuse themselves and leave the site (in accordance with the ICH *Dealing with Difficult Service Users Procedure*). Workers should also take appropriate action in accordance with the ICH *Emergency Policy*. Emergency services should be called where required.

3.2.4 Review of Risks

Risks should be reviewed regularly to determine if any updates are required to the service user information or to any risk management strategies.

Risk management reviews will be undertaken:

- Informally at each point of contact with the service user, where each worker assesses the level of risk based on their observations of the service user or other people present, the environment and any other factors
- Informally and as appropriate during supervision
- When there are significant changes in the service user's circumstances which result in increased risk

A Risk Assessment should be performed at least every 12 months or sooner as per procedure. All Risk management plans required as a result of a risk assessment should have a review date and be reviewed in accordance with that date.

3.2.5 Documentation

All workers must ensure that all risks are documented on the relevant service user file in accordance with the individual Service requirements. This includes any Risk Management Plans which have been developed. Documentation is critical for ensuring that if other workers were to support the service user, that they would have the information available to them in order to conduct a visit safely.

Service Managers must keep a register of all Risk Management Plans and must ensure that these are kept up to date and reviewed appropriately.

3.3 Working Safely in the Community

All Managers must have a system in place which ensures that people working in the community, finish the visits safely and are accounted for. This system may differ based upon the Service however at a minimum, a contact person must be nominated who will be responsible for:

- Being available to take calls from workers
- Monitoring expected return times and contacting overdue workers
- Taking reasonable steps to verify that workers finish their work safely

- Promptly escalating situations where a worker is uncontactable, in an emergency or after an incident

3.4 Incidents

Any incidents which occur while visiting must be promptly reported in accordance with ICH and any other Service specific requirements.

The relevant supervisor will debrief with workers after any incidents occur and where appropriate refer workers to access the EAP.

3.5 Communication and Training

The Manager of the Service is responsible for consulting with all workers about risks. This shall be through both individual and group meetings.

The Manager of the Service shall ensure that workers are trained in appropriate risk management strategies and the use of any required safety equipment.

3.6 Breaches of this Policy

Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination from ICH.

Any suspected breaches of this policy should be immediately reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

3.7 Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer shall:

- Promote a safety conscious culture
- Review and if appropriate, approve any Risk Management Plans for high or extreme risk visits

Service Managers will:

- Ensure that there are systems in place which identify, assess, mitigate, monitor and review risks while workers are in the community
- Ensure workers are provided with appropriate training as required
- Promote a safety conscious culture
- Provide appropriate supervision to workers
- Collaboratively with workers, create Risk Management Plans as needed

Workers must:

- Read all relevant service user information and any risks previously identified
- Be aware of and continually scan for risks while in the community
- Comply with any health and safety requirements
- Implement appropriate risk management strategies
- Identify risks with the Manager

- Record any risks or Risk Management Plans on the relevant client management system

4. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years.

This policy remains in effect unless otherwise determined by resolution of the Board of Directors.

5. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Work Health and Safety Policy

ICH Risk Management Policy

ICH Emergency Policy

ICH Supervision Policy

Procedure

ICH Personal Safety in the Community Procedure

ICH Dealing with Difficult Service Users Procedure

Forms

Critical Incident Form

Non-Critical Incident Form