

Health & Safety Policy

INCLUDING MANUAL HANDLING, LONE WORKING AND COSHH

Policy Owner	Board of Trustees
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Responsible Person	Centre Director

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1 Policy Statement

Unique Minds (LAMEHLAK) is committed to providing and maintaining a safe, healthy, and supportive working and service environment for all staff, volunteers, trustees, service users, and visitors at the Stourbridge High Street centre and in all outreach activities.

The Board of Trustees accepts its overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively and that all reasonable and practicable steps are taken to protect the health, safety, and welfare of everyone connected with the organisation.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and any individual working on behalf of Unique Minds, in all settings including the centre, community locations, and home visits.

The health, safety, and welfare of our people and the people we serve is a shared responsibility.

2 Purpose

This policy sets out Unique Minds' approach to health and safety across all areas of its work. It establishes the framework within which risks are identified, assessed, and managed, and provides clear guidance to all staff and volunteers on their responsibilities in maintaining a safe environment.

Given the nature of the people Unique Minds supports – adults living with dementia, carers under significant stress, and children and young people accompanying them – the physical and operational safety of the centre is itself a care consideration. A well-managed, hazard-free environment directly contributes to the quality and safety of the services delivered.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all activities carried out by or on behalf of Unique Minds, including:

- ✓ All activities within the Stourbridge High Street centre (Unit 2, 100–102 High Street, DY8 1EQ)
- ✓ Outreach and Wayfinder support delivered in accessible community locations or agreed external venues
- ✓ Activities involving staff, volunteers, students, placement workers, contractors, and third parties
- ✓ Events and activities held off-site

4 General Health & Safety

Unique Minds will ensure that all reasonable and practicable steps are taken to prevent injury, ill health, and unsafe working conditions. This will be achieved through:

- ✓ Conducting and reviewing risk assessments for all areas of the centre and for all activities carried out by staff and volunteers
- ✓ Ensuring the centre premises are maintained in a safe condition, with clear evacuation routes, appropriate lighting, non-slip flooring, and accessible facilities
- ✓ Providing appropriate health and safety information, instruction, and training to all staff and volunteers at induction and on an ongoing basis
- ✓ Consulting with staff on health and safety matters and acting on concerns raised
- ✓ Maintaining a clear and accessible record of all risk assessments, accidents, near misses, and remedial actions taken
- ✓ Ensuring building and contents insurance and public liability insurance are maintained at all times

Centre-Specific Considerations

Given that the centre will serve people living with dementia and their carers, the following design and operational principles apply:

- ✓ Non-reflective, non-slip flooring throughout to reduce fall risk and perceptual confusion

- ✓ Good, even lighting: natural and artificial, to reduce shadows and glare
- ✓ Clear large-print signage to all areas including toilets, exits, and consultation rooms
- ✓ Wide aisles and unobstructed pathways to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility aids
- ✓ Level or ramped entry from the High Street, no trip hazards at the threshold
- ✓ Accessible toilets with handrails, adequate turning space, and clear signage
- ✓ A calm, sensory-friendly environment, low noise zones, muted fragrance, no harsh overhead fluorescent lighting
- ✓ Safe storage of any materials, equipment, or supplies to prevent access by vulnerable service users

5 Manual Handling

Unique Minds will take all reasonably practicable steps to avoid the need for hazardous manual handling. Where manual handling cannot be avoided, the risk will be assessed and appropriate measures put in place to reduce the risk of injury.

Principles

- ✓ Manual handling tasks should be avoided wherever possible through good workplace design and use of appropriate equipment
- ✓ Where manual handling is necessary, a manual handling risk assessment must be completed before the task is undertaken
- ✓ Staff must not attempt to lift, move, or carry loads that could cause injury, appropriate aids or assistance must be used
- ✓ All staff involved in manual handling tasks must receive manual handling training at induction and refresher training as required

Relevant Tasks at Unique Minds

Manual handling risks at the centre may include:

- ✓ Delivery and movement of furniture, equipment, and supplies during set-up and ongoing operations
- ✓ Setting up and clearing activity rooms, moving chairs, tables, and equipment
- ✓ Assisting service users with mobility needs, staff must never physically lift a service user without specific moving and handling training and a personal risk assessment
- ✓ Transporting materials to and from outreach locations

IMPORTANT NOTE

Staff must never attempt to physically support or lift a service user without specific moving and handling training. If a service user falls or requires physical assistance, the emergency procedure must be followed and, where needed, emergency services called.

6 Lone Working

Lone working is defined as any situation where a member of staff or volunteer works without direct or close supervision, or without a colleague nearby. At Unique Minds this includes outreach Wayfinder home visits, community appointments, and any situation where a staff member is the only person present in the centre.

Risk Assessment

A lone working risk assessment must be completed for all roles and activities that involve lone working. The assessment must consider the nature of the task, the environment, the individuals involved, and any known risk factors.

Lone Working Procedures

- ✓ No member of staff or volunteer should lone work without informing their manager or a designated contact person of their location, expected duration, and estimated return time
- ✓ A check-in and check-out system must be in place for all lone workers, staff must confirm their safe arrival and departure
- ✓ Where risk is assessed as high, a buddy system or scheduled telephone check-in should be used
- ✓ Staff undertaking home visits must always carry a mobile phone and ensure it is charged before leaving
- ✓ Staff should not enter a property or continue a visit if they feel unsafe, they should leave immediately and report the situation to their manager
- ✓ Personal details of service users visited must not be shared with unauthorised individuals
- ✓ Lone workers should park in well-lit, public areas and be aware of their surroundings

Out of Hours Working

Where staff are required to work outside of normal hours, additional risk assessment steps must be taken, including ensuring someone is aware of the working location, that communication is possible, and that a clear escalation process is in place if contact is lost.

Escalation

If a lone worker fails to check in at an agreed time, the designated contact must attempt to make contact immediately. If contact cannot be established within a reasonable period, emergency services should be notified.

7 COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)

Unique Minds will comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH). All substances used within the centre that may present a risk to health will be identified, assessed, and managed appropriately.

Substances in Use

At Unique Minds, hazardous substances may include:

- ✓ Cleaning products and disinfectants used in the centre and accessible toilets
- ✓ Any materials used in activities (art supplies, craft materials)
- ✓ Hand sanitisers and hygiene products

COSHH Procedures

- ✓ A COSHH assessment must be completed for every substance identified as potentially hazardous before it is brought into or used in the centre
- ✓ All hazardous substances must be stored securely and out of reach of service users, particularly given the vulnerability of those with dementia
- ✓ Safety Data Sheets (SDS) must be obtained and kept on file for all hazardous substances
- ✓ Staff must be trained in the safe handling, use, and disposal of any hazardous substances relevant to their role
- ✓ Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be provided and used where required
- ✓ Substances must be clearly labelled and never decanted into unlabelled containers
- ✓ Disposal of hazardous substances must be carried out in accordance with manufacturer guidance and relevant legislation

IMPORTANT NOTE

Given that service users include people living with dementia, all cleaning products and potentially hazardous materials must be stored in locked cupboards and must never be left unattended or accessible in communal areas.

8 Fire Safety and Emergency Procedures

Unique Minds will ensure full compliance with fire safety legislation, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A fire risk assessment will be completed for the centre premises prior to opening and reviewed annually or following any significant change.

Fire Prevention

- ✓ All fire exits must be clearly marked, unobstructed, and accessible at all times
- ✓ Fire doors must not be propped open
- ✓ Electrical equipment must be regularly tested and PAT certified where required
- ✓ No flammable materials should be stored near heat sources

Emergency Procedures

- ✓ A fire evacuation plan must be displayed prominently in the centre and all staff must be familiar with it
- ✓ Fire drills must be conducted at least twice per year and records kept
- ✓ Designated fire marshals must be appointed and trained
- ✓ All staff must know the location of fire extinguishers and how to raise the alarm
- ✓ Special consideration must be given to the evacuation of service users with mobility difficulties, dementia, or other vulnerabilities – personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) should be prepared where appropriate

First Aid

- ✓ A fully stocked first aid kit must be maintained and regularly checked
- ✓ At least one trained first aider must be present whenever the centre is open to service users
- ✓ All accidents and near misses must be recorded in the accident book

9 Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents, near misses, and incidents must be recorded and reported in accordance with this policy and relevant legislation, including RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).

- ✓ An accident/incident report must be completed as soon as practicable after any event
- ✓ The report must include date, time, location, persons involved, nature of the incident, immediate action taken, and any witnesses
- ✓ All reports must be retained securely and reviewed by the Centre Director
- ✓ Where an incident meets the RIDDOR threshold, it must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) within the required timeframe
- ✓ Patterns of incidents or near misses must be reviewed regularly to identify systemic risks and implement improvements

10 Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for health and safety and must ensure that adequate resources are allocated to implement this policy effectively.

Centre Director

The Centre Director is the responsible person for day-to-day health and safety management at the centre. This includes ensuring risk assessments are completed and reviewed, that staff are trained, that incidents are reported, and that the policy is implemented consistently.

All Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- ✓ Taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others affected by their work
- ✓ Following all health and safety procedures and instructions
- ✓ Reporting any hazards, accidents, near misses, or concerns to the Centre Director promptly
- ✓ Not misusing or interfering with anything provided for health and safety purposes

11 Related Legislation and Documents

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

- ✓ Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- ✓ Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- ✓ Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended)
- ✓ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)
- ✓ Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- ✓ Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- ✓ Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- ✓ Equality Act 2010 (in relation to accessible premises)

This policy should be read alongside:

- ✓ Safeguarding Adults Policy
- ✓ Safeguarding Children Policy
- ✓ GDPR and Data Protection Policy
- ✓ Complaints and Feedback Policy

12 Feedback

Feedback on this policy and its implementation is welcomed from all staff, volunteers, service users, and partner organisations. Feedback can be provided through supervision, team meetings, or directly to the Centre Director, and will be used to inform future reviews and continuous improvement.

13 Approval and Review Details

This policy will be formally reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, guidance, or organisational practice.

Policy Name	Health & Safety Policy
Organisation	Unique Minds
Policy Owner	Board of Trustees
Responsible Person	Centre Director
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