



Personal Safety at Work

PERSONAL SAFETY AT WORK

Your line manager will help by pointing out any known hazards that you may encounter, but it is up to you to be on your guard the whole time against the unexpected. The safety of the service users is important and can be increased by pointing out hazards both to them and your Team Leader.

The service Users Home:

You have had some experience of running your own home so you know what the basic needs are, and how to cope with them. However, other people's homes may be very different to your own and you must be prepared to encounter difficulties and to overcome them as best you can.

The most important things that you need to look out for in the service user's homes are:-

Safe Movement:

Being able to move safely about the home is vital - Check that -

- Doorways, hall, stairs, landings and bedside areas are well lit and free of clutter. A proper bedside light or failing that a torch by the bed is a good idea.
- Doors and windows in all rooms (especially the bathroom) open and shut easily. Doors without locks are less likely to present a problem in an emergency.
- Floors, stairs, steps, outside paths and all floor coverings are not damaged, uneven or slippery, and anything split on them is cleared up at once.
- Footwear is kept in good repair and spectacles are cleaned regularly.
- All areas are free of trailing flexes.

Reaching:

Check that -

- Shelves and cupboards in daily use are within easy reach and that heavy items are not stored on high shelves or on top of wardrobes.
- A proper stepladder is always used for reaching up or climbing e.g. to change a light bulb. It is unwise for anyone who is not fully fit to attempt any job involving climbing. Care should be taken that the stepladder is fully extended and any metal bar is firmly in place.
- Door butts, window catches, light switches, gas supply taps and deliveries can be reached without difficulty.

Heating:

Check that:

- Living rooms in daily use and bedrooms are kept comfortably warm and free of draughts, but well ventilated. Some of our Service Users cannot afford to spend much money on heating so they use portable heaters of various sorts, which can be dangerous. Firstly, there is the oil or stove heater, early models could cause fires if knocked accidentally. This danger does not apply to modern types of heaters, but care should be taken with all models. Oil heaters and bottled gas heaters give off water vapour when they burn and they use up oxygen. Unfortunately, service users may try to conserve that heat by closing all windows and blocking up cracks under doors etc. thus impeding the flow of air. There are dangers in doing this. Many people die every winter by suffocation or carbon monoxide poisoning due to such actions.
- All fires and heaters are adequately guarded and well clear of furniture, curtains and bedclothes. Place portable heaters near to wall and not in the middle of a room where they could be easily knocked over.
- All types of heaters are regularly serviced and flues and chimneys are regularly swept.
- Any smell of gas is investigated at once by the Gas Board, gas taps are not loose, and makeshift devices are not being used instead of proper gas connections.
- Paraffin and bottled gas are stores in a safe place in their proper containers.

Lighting:

There should be enough lighting for all concerned to safely negotiate stairs and passages. If you have any difficulty in this matter, speak to your Manager about it.

Cooking:

Gas rings and electric rings can be sources of danger. A forgotten saucepan of milk may boil over, and put out the flame of a gas ring, the escaping gas may not be detected by smell, and may cause an explosion, or may suffocate someone. An electric ring can start a fire in just the same way as an electric fire or heater. In order to improve safety - Check that-

- All pans and cooking utensils are in good condition.
- A regular eye is kept on the cooker while it is in use.
- Panhandles are kept clear of burners or hot plates and that they do not hang over the side of the cooker.
- There are adequate uncluttered work surfaces besides the cooker and the sink, to avoid carrying hot pans around the kitchen.

- Tea towels are not dried over the cooker.
- Gas pilot lights are checked regularly to ensure that they have not gone out.
- If gas appliances have been turned on and not lit, do not attempt to light. Turn off the gas and open all windows

Electricity:

Before using any electrical appliance for the first time take a good look at its flex and plug for any sign of damage. Whenever possible, ask the service user if it is safe to use. Should the flex be badly frayed, or the plug or socket be in bad condition, do not use the equipment and refer to your Manager. **DO NOT DO ANY ELECTRICAL REPAIR YOURSELF.**

Some further points to check -

- Connectors, which crackle or become warm in use due to bad contacts or to overloading may cause burns, fires or shocks and should not be used. Adapters, which allow two or more appliances to be run from the same socket, are particularly liable to give trouble.
- In bathrooms only special appliances made and fixed for bathroom use may be used.
- Electric steam irons, kettles etc should be unplugged before filling with water and kettles should again be unplugged before pouring out their contents.

Living Room and Bedroom Arrangements:

The most familiar rooms may be the most taken for granted where safety is concerned check that -

- Beds and chairs are the right height for getting into and out of without strain.
- The arrangement of furniture allows freedom of movement but does not create a fire risk.
- Mirrors are not hung over the fireplace.
- Cigarettes and matches are stubbed out in deep ashtrays, and that smoking in bed is avoided.
- Hot water bottles are not dangerously worn.

General Living Conditions

You will not be able to do much about living arrangements but if you find things which are definitely unsafe, such as holes in floorboards, or carpets, especially stair carpets, report these to your Team leader.

Lifting:

Do not attempt to lift until you have received instructions from your Team Leader. Never attempt to lift an object that is too heavy, get assistance or discuss the situation with you Team Leader.

The main points to learn and remember are:-

- Observe the shape and size of the object to be lifted.
- Look for suitable handholds.
- Establish the route you are to follow.
- The route is free from obstruction.
- There is ample room for a firm footing.
- The height from which the lift is to start.
- The weight of the object.
- Check if it is a straight lift upwards or to one side.
- The final destination.

All these actions and thoughts should pass through the lifter's mind before the lift commences. This can be called the planning stage.

Following the planning stage, you can lift, and it is very important to remember these points or physical injury could follow. For example, the **must** points when picking up a box should be:-

1. Palm hold.
2. Straight-arms.
3. Chin in.
4. Back straight.
5. Firm foot position with feet apart, one foot slightly pointing in the direction of travel.
6. Legs bent to 90 degrees.

Lifting heavy objects needs care. The feet should be settled well apart, the knees bent and back kept straight. A secure hold of the object should then be taken and the head lifted, chin tucked in. The strain should be taken and lift steadily with the legs and hips and back at the same time. The load should then be lifted close to the body.

If at any stage you feel the object is too heavy or awkward, DO NOT LIFT.

Objects should be lowered with the same care.

Push a heavy object. Again, if the object is too heavy or awkward, DO NOT PUSH.

When pushing a pulling a heavy object do so with feet apart and straight back, get a

strong grip and feel the effort of the push or pull coming from your legs and hips. It is sometimes easier to put your back against the object and push with your legs.

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