



Safe Home Visitation and Outreach Policy

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Version 1

Approval

Policy owner	Executive Director, People, Culture and Safety		
Approved by	Executive Leadership Team State Council		
Date approved	ELT 14/11/ 2024 State Council 29/11/ 2024	Review date	29/11/2027

Purpose

1. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (the Society) is committed to delivering high quality services and support in peoples' homes and community settings while ensuring the safety of the people we assist, visitors, and Society Personnel.
2. The Society's Safe Home Visitation and Outreach Policy and Procedures set out the principles and processes that will be applied to ensure the safety of Society Personnel and facilitate compliance with legislative and organisational requirements when visiting people we assist in their homes or during outreach work.

Scope

3. This policy applies to all Society Personnel who undertake home visits and outreach activities in their role with the Society. Where a section applies only to employees or volunteers, or members, that is specified within the section of the document.

This policy does not cover Personnel who are engaged by Retail and Logistics for the purposes of furniture deliveries or donations.

Related policies and procedures

4. Related policies and procedures include:
 - Behaviour Support Policy
 - Code of Conduct
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Incident Management Policy
 - Infection Control Policy
 - Medication Policy
 - Motor Vehicle Policy
 - Person we assist charter of rights and responsibilities
 - Person-Centred Service Delivery Policy
 - Risk Management Framework
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
 - Trauma-Informed Practices Policy
 - Travel Policy
 - Police Check and Working With Children Check Policy
 - Vincentian Visitation Guidelines 2021
 - The Rule 2012
 - Workplace Violence Policy

Policy principles

5. The Society is committed to:
 - ensuring a safety of our workers when required to visit a person we assist at their home or in another community setting
 - planning and applying risk management principles to safely manage home visits and community outreach activities

- providing effective support to Society personnel before, during and after home visits and outreach activities
- building a culture that enables positive safety outcomes for all Society Personnel, the people we assist, and others including children, impacted by our work.

Appendix 2 summarises the approach to managing home visits and outreach activities safely. Separate procedures are provided for (1) employees (and volunteers) within Vinnies Services and (2) members and volunteers.

Roles and responsibilities

6. Executive Directors are responsible for:

- overseeing communication and implementation of this policy within their area of responsibility
- overseeing risk management for home visit and outreach activities.

7. Directors and Regional Directors are responsible for:

- ensuring Personnel have relevant training, supervision, resources, and support to implement this policy
- overseeing the risk management process and verify that action is taken to control the risk within their area of responsibility.

8. Regional Presidents and Central Council Presidents are responsible for:

- ensuring Conference Presidents engage with relevant training and provide support and assistance to members to implement this policy
- encouraging a proactive approach to safety, risk management and continuous improvement
- ensuring compliance with this policy in their Region or Central Council

9. Managers, Supervisors are responsible for:

- encouraging a proactive approach to safety, risk management and continuous improvement.
- ensuring Personnel engage with relevant training, supervision, and support.
- reviewing and approving risk assessments and implementing risk controls within their area of responsibility.

10. Conference Presidents are responsible for:

- encouraging a proactive approach to safety, risk management and continuous improvement
- ensuring Conference members complete relevant training,
- supporting members to assess the risk associated with their home visitation activities and implementing strategies to minimise risk within their area of responsibility.

11. Personnel are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves and complying with this policy and seeking support from Managers, Supervisors or Presidents on how to implement the policy and procedures.
- taking reasonable action to ensure home visits and outreach activities are safe for themselves and others by complying with the relevant procedures.

Review

12. This policy is scheduled for review every three (3) years from its approval date or more frequently to align with legislative or practice changes. The effectiveness of this policy is to be evaluated and reviewed by the Executive Director, People Culture and Safety.

Further assistance

13. Personnel should speak with their Manager, Supervisor or President regarding implementing this policy. Additionally, feedback on the policy can be provided to the Executive Director, People Culture and Safety.

References

14. Relevant legislation, regulations, or other instruments implemented by this policy, include:

- Aged Care Quality Standard
- *Aged Care Act 1997 Cth*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*
- *Children’s Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Legislation Amendment (Transitioning Aged Care Providers) Rules 2020*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*
- QIC Health and Community Service Standards
- Work, Health and Safety Act 2011

Approval and amendment history

Version	Approval authority	Date	Amendment summary
Doc 1	SVdP Society Support Services Executive Director	08/03/2018	Vinnies Services Home Visits Policy and Procedure Complete rewrite
Doc# PO2024-065 Version 1	Executive Leadership Team State Council	14/11/2024 29/11/2024	Update of policy and expansion of scope from Vinnies Services staff to all relevant Directorates.

Appendix 1: Definitions

➤ Relevant definitions include:

Term in Bold	Definition
Company	The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (ACN 161 127 340)
Employee	An employee is a paid member of staff of the Society (Company) unless otherwise specified. This includes full time, part time, maximum term, or casual staff.
Home visitation/ Outreach	<p>Employees and volunteers conduct home visits, providing the people we assist with support, case management, advocacy, direct assistance, or referral to other services at a person we assist's home.</p> <p>Employees and volunteers provide outreach to a person or people we assist to provide support, advocacy, direct assistance, or referral to other services within a community setting (a place outside of the Society's control). Outreach activities take the services to people, including but not limited to meetings or appointments with a person we assist in providing a service, case management, engaging with street sleepers, group activities or outings for promotion of Society services and programs.</p> <p>Members recognise that meetings or 'visitation' could be at a Vinnies Support Centre, Care and Support Centre or in a person's home. Therefore, a member visitation could be either a home visit or outreach.</p>
Reasonably practicable	<p>The WHS Act 2011(NSW) defines what is 'reasonably practicable' in relation to a duty to ensure health and safety as what could reasonably be done at a particular time to ensure health and safety measures are in place. In determining what is reasonably practicable, there is a requirement to take into account and weigh up all relevant matters, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the likelihood of a hazard or risk occurring (in essence, the probability of a person being exposed to harm) • the degree of harm that might result if the hazard or risk occurred (in essence, the potential seriousness of injury or harm) • what the person concerned knows, or ought to reasonably know, about the hazard or risk and ways of eliminating or minimising it • the availability of suitable ways to eliminate or minimise the hazard or risk, and • the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the hazard or risk. (WHS Act 2011 (NSW), s18)
Risk	The effect of uncertainty and probability of a person being exposed to harm.
Volunteer	A volunteer is any person who performs unpaid work for the Society.
Visitors	Visitors to the Society include people who are visiting a Society site, or service. This may include people we assist's support network, members of the public, customers. This does not include Personnel or people we assist.
Worker	Anyone who performs work for the Society such as employees, contractors, labour hire, members, and volunteers. The overarching WHS duty of St Vincent de Paul NSW as an organisation is to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all our workers and those impacted by our work.

Appendix 2: Managing safety during home visits and outreach activities

Home visits and outreach activities can pose potential risks to health and safety. The Society requires all Personnel to plan, assess and manage risks to themselves and others when conducting home visits or outreach activities.

The Society acknowledges that emergencies can occur at any time for a variety of reasons. When emergency situations occur during a home visit or outreach activity our personnel may be isolated from the normal support networks of the Society. For this reason, Society Personnel are required to work in teams or pairs (buddy system) in higher risk situations and must be prepared to respond independently to emergencies.

Training and competency

The Society will ensure that all Personnel conducting home visits and outreach activities are appropriately trained and skilled to deliver safe and appropriate services and supported while out in the community. This includes familiarity with this policy and associated procedures, as well as child protection, de-escalation strategies, and responses to other plausible emergency situations.

Risk assessment

The Society requires a risk assessment to be completed for *at least* the first home visit or outreach activity with a new person we assist. Risk assessments should be updated after the first visit or interaction and reviewed regularly including after any incident to ensure up-to-date information about the risks and controls. Where there are particular risks to consider ahead of visits this should be noted in CAMS/the file of the person we assist.

In some situations, a home visit may not be appropriate. For example, if the person we assist does not have a fixed address, the person requests that we do not attend their home, the home is not reasonably accessible or the home is unsafe for some other reason.

Risk Controls

- Before the visit, review any existing risk assessments and case notes for the relevant person we assist or location to help identify any specific hazards and risk controls.
- If a home visit for a person we assist is not considered safe or appropriate, Society Personnel meet with the person in a public place, Society office or other appropriate setting.
- Society **members** must conduct visitations in pairs (buddy system) as required by The Rule and the Vincentian Visitation Guidelines.
- Society **employees and volunteers** must conduct home visits in pairs if any of the below risks are identified:
 - a. known history of aggressive behaviour, violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence or recent imprisonment by the person we assist or someone else likely to be present
 - b. there are child related custodial challenges
 - c. there is a risk of injury occurring to the person we assist, visitors, or our personnel
 - d. Society Personnel feel they may be at risk during the visit.

- Society Personnel must have access to and utilise appropriate communication devices for home visits and outreach activities (e.g. mobile phones and duress devices if available).
- Society Personnel must communicate the location and time of home visit and outreach activities to relevant managers/leaders and agree on a check-in protocol including confirmation that the home visit or outreach activity has been completed.
- During a home visit or outreach activity Society Personnel must continually and dynamically assess risk and make appropriate adjustments as required. Further guidance is provided in the procedures.
- All transport of people we assist we must adhere to the requirements of the Travel Policy, Motor Vehicle Policy, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. This may include the completion of a separate risk assessment.

Record keeping

Society Personnel will ensure all records of home visits or outreach activities, case notes and related information are stored in the relevant system (e.g. SCIS or CAMS).

Incident reporting and management

The Society requires Personnel to respond to, report and manage incidents that occur during home visits or outreach according to the Society's Incident Management Policy.