



LONE WORKING POLICY

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Purpose of this policy and procedure

The Council recognises that some of our staff work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working,
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone,
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk,
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers, and,
- Encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

We will protect staff from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the Council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 cover the responsibilities that the Council has towards lone workers.

Staff who find themselves alone by chance should alert fellow staff to the fact that they are leaving an area and inform them that the remaining person will be on his or her own.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

The scope of this policy

It applies to all staff, whether full time, part time or temporary workers. It does not apply to Councillors, agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.

Definition

'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- A caretaker who opens and closes a hall either early in the morning or late at night.
- An employee visiting another Council site.
- Office workers who work alone in the premises; and,
- Homeworkers.

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.

Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

Managers

- Will try to avoid the need for lone working as far as is reasonably practicable;
- Will ensure that the worker is competent to work alone;
- Will ensure that all lone working activities must be formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;
- Will ensure that arrangements for lone working are made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone are explained;
- Will inform Lone workers of the hazards and understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place and be given the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment;
- Must raise the alarm if staff cannot be contacted or do not return as anticipated;
- Must ensure that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and will provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working; and
- Will ensure that lone workers carrying out risky tasks (as identified by the risk assessment), agree a means of communication with colleagues.

Lone workers

- Must take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work;
- Must follow any instruction given by management or the Council;
- Must raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working;
- Must not work alone where there is inadequate information to undertake a risk assessment; and
- Must inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone.

Staff

- Should be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine and/or unanticipated periods where there is no communication.
- Buddies should ensure they maintain and share up to date contact details (see below).

Risk Assessments

Managers must complete (or ensure the completion of) a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to every lone working activity and update this as appropriate. The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and communicated to all relevant staff or Councillors.

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles/tasks. However, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:

- Sudden illness
- Faulty equipment
- Travelling alone
- Remote locations

- Abuse from members of the public
- Animal attacks

Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the Council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their particular circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment. For example, the plan for a groundsman lone working with machinery is likely to need to be more detailed than an administrator working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff and where appropriate, Councillors.

Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined):

- Signing-in and Out book.
- Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up to date with meeting/visit/lone working details.
- Agreed times, method and name of an appropriate contact.
- Buddy scheme

Buddy scheme

The following information should be written down and kept by the lone worker and their buddy, next of kin and manager (see the Lone Working Buddy Form):-

- Name and contact details of the lone worker.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the buddy.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the lone worker's next of kin.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the lone worker's manager.
- Any 'code word' that would indicate that the lone worker needs assistance.
- If you change your contact details, you must let your buddy and manager know.

In circumstances where a buddy system is appropriate as a way of reducing the risks identified in the risk assessment, the buddy must have relevant details about your lone working, that may include,

- where you are going (address or area if there is no address),
- details of the purpose (i.e. preparing the hall, grass cutting, meeting),
- contact details of anyone you intend to meet (any additional contact details for the location you are visiting);
- your mode of transport, and
- when you are expected to return.

Your buddy must know what to do if you do not return or make contact at the anticipated/agreed time.

Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed lawfully and in accordance with the Council's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. The Council recognises that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure your personal safety, it is important that you share any details of any aspects of your health that could lead to increased risk with your manager or specific Councillors. This includes pregnancy. You can then jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by your circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with your confidentiality of the utmost importance.

Reporting incidents

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved;
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence; and
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances you think might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support us to review our risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If you feel unsafe, unwell, or become injured call the emergency services if you need immediate assistance. If possible, call your manager, buddy or Councillor or colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

Call your manager if your plans change because you feel unwell or if you have a domestic emergency when working alone.

Further information

For more information on lone working visit the HSE's Lone Worker pages.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm>

More information on personal safety can be found by visiting the Suzy Lamplugh website.

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/>

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