



## **Lone Working Policy**

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# **APPROVAL & ADOPTION**

This policy was formally agreed and adopted at the Full Governing Meeting held on:

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## **UPDATE SCHEDULE**

<b>Review Frequency: Every 2 Years</b>		
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# CONTENTS

General Policy Statement.....	4
Aim.....	4
Lone Workers .....	4
Specific Areas of Work.....	6
Leadership Duties .....	6
Staff Responsibilities .....	7
Risks Associated with Violence .....	7
Threats to Staff.....	8
Home Visits .....	8
Reception Areas and Offices.....	8
Receptions.....	8
Offices.....	9
Other Risks.....	10
Key Holders .....	10
Caretakers and Site Managers .....	12
Miscellaneous .....	14
Training.....	14
First Aid Requirements.....	14
Risk Assessments .....	14
Reporting of Accidents and Incidents .....	14
Monitoring and Reviewing .....	14

# **Lone Working Policy**

## **General Policy Statement**

Lone Workers as defined by the Health and Safety Executive are, "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."

As part of the Management structure it is the duty of care for all Managers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all their staff, as it is also the employee's responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by their work activity.

This policy is to assist leaders in devising a safe system of work and to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for their staff can be carried out for Lone Working duties.

From this policy relevant information should be obtained to assist in creating a specific policy for your place of work.

## **Aim**

To ensure adequate control measures are put into place to safeguard all employees who work alone at any point during their contractual duties. All hazards should be identified and all significant risks should be recorded on a risk assessment. These risks should be reviewed on a regular basis especially if there is a change in the situation; a near miss has occurred or an accident or incident has taken place.

## **Lone Workers**

People working alone or in isolation from others may be at particular risk either because of circumstances of their day to day working or because an emergency may occur. They are at extra risk if they are not in regular contact with others and are not kept informed of any changes that may affect them.

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Schools should identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Can all the plant, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.
- Is there a risk of violence?

- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Does the person have any medical condition that may affect their suitability to work alone?
- What happens if the person either becomes ill has an accident or there is an emergency?

There are various work activities that may result in staff members working alone; some examples are:

- Staff that are required to work alone for all or most of the time, such as cleaning staff working at night or early morning.
- Staff staying on to finish urgent work after others have left, or those who regularly work late or start early, before anyone else gets into the building.
- Staff who are key-holders or who are left to turn out the lights, set the alarm and lock up the premises after everyone else has gone home.
- Peripatetic workers whose work involves travelling or home visits to service users.
- Staff that work at home.
- Staff that move between locations in order to carry out their daily schedule.

Many lone workers could come into more than one of the categories below. These categories can be split into levels of risk as follows:

- ***Category One:***

- a) Staff working in offices or other secure locations outside of normal working hours or who routinely work in these locations on their own.
- b) Staff visiting established service users who have been assessed as presenting no risk to staff.

- ***Category Two:***

- a) Staff working in locations where security is inadequate or where shared premises would allow non-authorized access to their work area.
- b) Staff working in unfamiliar locations but not meeting members of the public.
- c) Staff visiting service users for the first time, or when an earlier situation may have agitated the service user.
- d) Site managers/caretakers and cleaning staff that have to work out of hours; (refer to caretakers and site manager section, under activities to be avoided).

- ***Category Three:***

- a) Staff who visit the homes of unknown service users or service users who are known to present challenging or aggressive behaviour.
- b) Staff working in remote locations.
- c) Key holders on a call out.
- d) Staff making unscheduled visits without the knowledge of the base or line manager.

## **Specific Areas of Work**

- School
- Home Visits
- Family Liaison Officers
- Office based staff
- Maintenance staff
- Cleaners
- Caretakers
- Key holders
- Staff likely to be working later than others or start earlier

## **Leadership Duties**

- Provide safe systems of work for all staff.
- Ensure that there are appropriate security systems in place to secure the building.
- Provide security devices for members of staff when they are working in the office or out in the community, if assessed as appropriate.
- Carry out personal risk assessments for all staff working alone.
- During one-to-one sessions discuss the control measures that are in place to ensure they are still adequate or discuss amendments.
- Identify any training needs and ensure these are met.
- Set up an adequate system for recording home and out of office visits. Ensure this is kept up to date on a daily basis, for example: staff reporting to the office; their location and general movements for the day, where this is required as part of the risk assessment.
- Ensure systems are agreed, on how to raise the alarm and copies of the procedures are given to all relevant staff.
- Ensure that anyone who is not able to raise the alarm is not left alone.
- Ensure that during induction all procedures are discussed, a copy of relevant information is obtained, and a training plan is agreed by both the staff member and the manager.
- Ensure that the staff members are suitable to be left working alone.
- Ensure that your procedures allow for lone workers to request additional support when they feel vulnerable.
- Discuss this policy on a regular basis during team meetings, and especially if an incident has occurred.
- Be approachable and have empathy if a member of staff has suffered a trauma, involving aggressive or violent behaviour. Debrief that staff member, if required.
- Provide practical support when needed.
- Ensure that there is counselling readily available if needed.
- Report any incidents on an HS157 accident/ incident form and send it to the relevant department.
- Record and monitor all accidents and incidents and report findings to the relevant people.

## **Staff Responsibilities**

Staff have a duty of care for themselves and anyone else who could be affected by their actions.

*Therefore, staff have a responsibility to ensure that they:*

- Are aware and follow all policies or procedures.
- Always plan ahead.
- Are fully aware of the risks when working alone.
- Do not put themselves in potential danger.
- Ensure that they have made themselves aware of the nearest place of safety.
- Be aware of the on-site security procedures.
- Ensure that access is available to personal alarms/mobile phones or some form of personal communication.
- Phone-in to confirm safety, using the system which is in place according to this policy.

## **Risks Associated with Violence**

Below are some indicators that may make violence more likely

*Consideration must be given to assess whether any parents or visitor is likely to*

- Threaten violence
- Be a menace with weapons
- Bear grudges
- Feel victimised
- Harbour a grievance
- Suffer from mental health issues
- Have a dependency on drugs or alcohol
- Associate with violent people

*There are various warning signs that could arise and are demonstrated through*

- Tensions apparent within a group
- Restless or agitated behaviour
- Being deliberately provocative or attention seeking
- Unusual quietness or excitability
- Physical signs such as raised voice, aggressive body language

### *Control Measures*

Listed in the sections below are various control measures that can be put into place to reduce the risk to staff when working alone. Not all measures will be applicable as circumstances vary in different situations; therefore the controls need to be re-evaluated for each individual occasion to ensure that the correct measures are in place to reduce the risk to its lowest level.

## **Threats to Staff**

Very occasionally staff may find themselves, through the job they carry out alone, the subject of threats from service users, family members or members of the public.

The following actions and options should be considered where staff are the subject of threats or acts of violence when working alone:

- Report the threat to the police and seek their advice;
- Vary personal routines and travel routes;
- Use an alternative entrance and /or exit to and from the place of work;
- Carrying a personal attack alarm; (ensure this is charged; carry spare set of batteries).
- Registering with 'Lone Safe' through KCC contact centre;
- Accessing personal safety training;
- Reporting whereabouts to office at all times, when changing venues or set up buddy system.
- Managers to hold personal records on each member, with contact details and a photograph, for identity purposes.

## **Home Visits**

Staff visiting parents in their own home need to take particular care and participate only in pairs or more.

## **Reception Areas and Offices**

### *Receptions*

When a parent or visitor first enters a building in order to make contact with a member of staff or to access services, the first impression (welcoming? unfriendly? distant?) is very important, and can set the tone for the subsequent relationship with that parent or visitor.

In addition, a receptionist may be working alone, and specific safe systems of work need to be in place to control the risks from the members of the public that we need to provide a service to. The need for these sometimes opposing factors to be reconciled, means that reception arrangements should be considered carefully.

## *Control Measures*

### *Staff need to:*

- understand their role;
- understand the role;
- know how to respond to the first signs of aggression;
- know what to do in any foreseeable emergency;
- attend training if this is necessary to help keep safe.

### *Environment needs to:*

- be welcoming
- be pleasant and clean
- include adequate, secure seating where parents and visitors may have to wait
- enable communication for parents and visitors with staff
- provide an escape route for reception staff
- be separated from rest of building with appropriate security measures
- be able to be viewed from elsewhere, e.g. adjoining corridor through glass
- have limited heavy objects that can be thrown or used by an aggressor
- have limited number of authoritarian signs e.g. 'Do not.....'

### *Systems in reception need to:*

- keep waiting time to a minimum, to reduce frustration
- allow for parents and visitors to be able to leave easily if they want to
- include a procedure for lone workers to alert others, such as a panic alarm.
- include a debriefing procedure for a lone worker should a traumatic incident occur
- Allow for another competent member of staff to cover the reception in the event that the usual staff member needs to undergo debriefing.

## *Offices*

Ideally, offices should be designed so that there is clear visibility into them. However in most school offices this is not the case. This provides for a measure of security for any lone worker, as parents and visitors are generally less likely to be aggressive when they know they can be seen.

In all cases, however, a member of staff should consider the circumstances carefully before carrying out an interview alone with an agitated parent or visitor.

### *The following provides a checklist for members of staff and their managers:*

- Do not arrange to meet anyone when you will be alone in the building.
- Avoid keeping parents and visitors waiting; if someone is waiting for you, tell them how long you will be.
- Ensure you have relevant information regarding the current risk of aggression from the parent or visitor.

- Consider if you need to set up in advance an interruption by a colleague.
- Consider if you need to take a portable alarm into the room with you.
- Tell someone which room you are going to go to, and whom you are with, while the parent or visitor is listening.
- If a large number of the service user's family or friends are with them, decide carefully who else should be present, as the risks of aggression may increase. Conversely, there may be someone who acts as a calming influence.
- If escorting someone through the workplace, it is safest to walk beside them on the level, precede them upstairs, and follow them downstairs.
- Allow your visitor to precede you into the room, so that you have a chance to station yourself nearest the door.
- Be alert to signs of aggression at this early stage, as it may be easier to leave now and bring back a colleague to join you, if necessary.
- Ideally, you should sit on a chair at the same height, and at a 45° angle, but wait until your visitor has seated themselves.
- Ensure your chair is close enough to the telephone if required.
- Be prepared to withdraw from the situation if you feel there is an unacceptable level of risk.
- If the parent or visitor starts to damage property, withdraw immediately and summon help. Do not intervene to try and protect the property, as you are likely to become the target instead.

*REMEMBER, you are at greater risk of aggression if the room*

- has only one door
- has no glass panels in walls or door
- is in an isolated part of the building
- provides potential weapons for an aggressor
- has no telephone or if the procedures for using this are inadequate.

## **Other Risks**

### *Key Holders*

Key holders may need to attend premises outside of normal business hours. This may be to carry out normal work activities or following the activation of an intruder alarm or because of some other emergency that might have occurred.

Key holders are registered with the Police in case there is an out of hours emergency. This is essential when the building is protected with an intruder alarm system. Good practice dictates that at least three key holders are appointed in order to cover holidays and sickness etc.

Key holders that are just carrying out normal work activities should be following the general lone working guidance in this policy.

Key holders that are attending the premises in the event of intruder alarm activation should use the following procedure:

- On receiving a telephone call notifying of intruder alarm activation, confirm the identity of the person making the call, i.e., Police Officers name and number or Alarm Company operative's name.
- Use telephone numbers previously obtained, call back and verify the detail.
- Arrange with either a member of their family or other responsible person to call the Police to the premises if they have not heard to say that all is well. This call should be made between 30 to 45 minutes after the estimated time of arrival.

#### *On arrival at the premises*

- If the Police are in attendance make sure they have checked all sides of the building. Then enter with the Police and check all areas.
- If the Police are not in attendance drive slowly round as much of the premises as possible (using public roads if necessary) checking for signs of entry including the roof and walls. If in any doubt leave the site and from the first available telephone, call the Police by dialling 999.
- If all appears to be quiet, enter and check premises. If there are signs of a break-in leave at once and call the Police as above.
- If in doubt leave the site immediately, even if you have the use of a mobile phone. Arrange to meet the Police nearby. This is for own safety.

#### *On entering the premises:*

- Carefully note all information displayed on the alarm controls. Take no action at the control panel beyond un-setting the protected areas.
- Check that the telephones are in working order. If the telephones do not work, it is likely that the lines have been cut by intruders who have, or who may try again, to attack the school. If the Police are in attendance they should be made aware of the telephone not working.
- If alone and, at any point, it is suspected there has been a break-in, then leave the premises and call the Police.
- If there has been a break-in, re-enter the premises and check carefully with the police and following their instructions. Please note that a crime reference number will be required for insurance purposes.

### *After checking the premises:*

- If there is no apparent break-in and the alarm system appears faulty the alarm company should be called to arrange for an engineer to attend. Obtain his name and estimated time of arrival.
- Notify the member of family or other responsible person, who is expecting to be contacted, to let them know that all is in order. Consider arranging to make further calls if appropriate.
- Check identification of alarm engineer on arrival; call the alarm company to verify details if necessary.
- Insist on a complete repair of alarm system if reasonably practicable. Only agree to part of the system being disconnected if a fault is identified and it cannot be corrected within a reasonable time (key-holder must understand insurance requirements that apply).
- Never leave the premises unprotected. If necessary arrange for other staff to join you or relieve you as appropriate.
- If you are not responsible for opening the premises at the start of the next day leave a note for the person who will be undertaking this responsibility; advising them of the problem and instructing them to liaise with the alarm company for further engineer attendance, if this is necessary.
- Ensure that all written logs detailing what has occurred are correctly completed by both the key-holder attending and the alarm engineer.
- Advise the HOS and EHT or other members of staff as necessary.
- Arrange for any emergency repairs to be made so the premises can be secured.
- Secure the premises and set the alarm system.
- On your next return to the premises advise the relevant members of staff about the situation.

### *Caretakers and Site Managers*

Caretakers/Site Managers are a group of workers that are more likely to be lone working. They will probably be key holders and possibly responsible for opening and locking up the premises. They may also be the person who would attend the premises when there has been a suspected break-in; if this is the case then they should follow the guidance given in this document for 'Key Holders'.

## *Hazards*

Risky activities which the Caretaker/Site Manager may be undertaking whilst working alone. Areas you should think about may include:

- General repair works during holidays or after hours, including use of power tools
- Decorating
- Checking security
- Turning the heating back on after a break
- Laying grit and clearing paths in icy and snowy weather
- Locking up after events
- Opening the building first thing in the morning
- Using hazardous chemicals
- Manual Handling

## *Control Measures*

As well as considering the guidance contained in this document there are some activities which should be avoided when lone working. These include:

- Working at height
- Working with dangerous machinery
- Live electrical work

Medical conditions the employee may have, which could put them at more risk will be taken into account. Hazardous activities will be undertaken during normal working hours and lower risk activities when lone working.

Some other examples of control measures that are adopted to reduce the risks identified above include:

- Following general guidance for Managers and Employees on pages 6 & 7 of this document
- Ensuring that no power tools or equipment are brought in from home which is not appropriately PAT tested. Otherwise only equipment provided by the employer should be used
- Providing long handled paint rollers for decorating high areas will be provided
- Following 'key holder' guidance in this document when checking security of building or site
- Ensuring any procedures are known and followed for re-lighting the boilers after periods of shut down
- Ensuring that employees is adequately trained for the required task
- Checking weather forecasts and laying grit on hazardous pathways before ice or snow forms
- Ensuring access and egress from site are free from defects and are well lit
- Carrying a fully charged torch when attending site after dark

- Carrying out Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessments on any hazardous substances to be used and provide training to the employee for their safe use
- Carrying out Manual Handling risk assessments to ensure that loads are not too heavy for one individual. Also ensure that the employees most affected have Manual Handling training
- Providing correct Personal Protection Equipment where required

## **Miscellaneous**

### *Training*

Depending on the member of staffs job role, a training plan is introduced through induction and appraisal process. This is to cover all aspects of lone working and to ensure that the staff member is able to protect themselves in vulnerable situations.

### *First Aid Requirements*

First aid for travelling, remote and lone workers: employers are responsible for meeting the first-aid needs of their employees working away from the main site. The assessment of first-aid needs should determine whether those who travel long distances or are continuously mobile should carry a personal first-aid box; and whether employees should be issued with personal communicators/mobile phones.

### *Risk Assessments*

Specific risk assessments should be completed for individual cases or situations. Information as required can be found on-

[http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/policy/hsi\\_risk\\_assess.cfm](http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/policy/hsi_risk_assess.cfm)

### *Reporting of Accidents and Incidents*

Any accidents, incidents or near misses are recorded on the HS157 (KCC's accident and incident form) and a copy of the form sent to the appropriate personnel office. The original copy is retained by the school with the employee's records

If an accident happens and causes either a major injury or the loss of over 3-days work or unable to carry out normal duties for over 3-days then a F2508 form is completed and sent to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations(RIDDOR) '95. Copies of forms for such Reportable incidents are also sent to the Health and Safety Unit at County Hall.

If an incident involves violence, this is recorded on an HS157. This includes verbal abuse, physical assault and property damage. The 'nature of activity' and 'other factors' section is completed also.

### *Monitoring and Reviewing*

All accidents, incidents or near misses are logged and monitored; trends are looked for to assess whether a review should be carried out on any risk assessments due to the outcomes. This is reported to Senior Leaders, union reps, and governors, (as appropriate) so that they are aware of any situations that may have arisen.