

## **Lone Working Policy**

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and their Line Manager have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Health & Safety policies.

### **Purpose**

This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

Volunteers must not be expected to work alone and so should be outside the scope of this policy

### **Context**

Some staff work outside office hours and/or alone due to flexible working patterns and/or to undertake their job role, attending evening meetings for example. The Council aims to support lone workers by:

- a commitment to supporting staff and managers both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices;
- recognising and reducing risk;
- a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff;
- a clear understanding of responsibilities;
- the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property;
- a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff, and

- ensuring equipment such as mobile phones will be made available as appropriate.

## **Definition**

Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building or place of work, but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

## **Mandatory Building Procedures**

### **Security of buildings**

Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:

- All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building and that emergency exits are accessible.
- Alarm systems are tested regularly – both fire and intruder.
- When working alone they are familiar with exits and alarms.
- There is access to a telephone and first aid kit.
- If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they call for assistance before entering.
- Sign in and sign out procedures are followed.

### **Personal safety**

Staff should avoid working alone if not necessary and where possible the final two people should leave together.

Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Line Manager.

Where required, staff must ensure that they sign in and out of building registers.

Staff must inform their Line Manager or other identified person when and where they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following an external commitment rather than returning to their base.

If a member of staff does not report in as expected an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate using emergency contact information if necessary.

Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team taking into account the identified risks

Where members of staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

Staff working away from the office should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times, whether Council or personal. Where a personal phone is used the Council will reimburse the costs of any calls. Members of staff are responsible for checking that the mobile phone is charged, in working order and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider, where appropriate.

### **Assessment of risk**

In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access.
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations.
- Any other special circumstances.

All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated is necessary. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

### **Practice Guidance – Personal Safety**

'Reasonable precautions' might include:

- checking directions for the destination;
- ensuring your car including official Council transport, if used, is road-worthy;
- ensuring someone knows where you are when not at your normal place of work;
- avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas;
- taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night;
- ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly.

### **Monitoring and Review**

Any member of staff with a concern regarding lone working issues should ensure that it is discussed with their manager.

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