

Worcestershire Parent & Carers' Community
Lone Working Policy

1. Policy Statement

1.1. 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.

1.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health & Safety and Safeguarding policies.

2. 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.

3. Scope

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

4. Context

Some staff work outside office hours and/or alone due to flexible working patterns and/or to undertake their job role. WPCC's principles for supporting lone workers include:

- 4.1. a commitment to supporting staff and volunteers both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices
- 4.2. recognising and reducing risk
- 4.3. a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff
- 4.4. a clear understanding of responsibilities
- 4.5. the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property
- 4.6. a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff
- 4.7. Equipment such as mobile phones will be made available as appropriate.

5. 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 but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

6.1. Security of buildings

Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:

6.1.1. All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building and that emergency exits are accessible

6.1.2. When working alone they are familiar with exits and alarms.

6.1.3. There is access to a telephone and first aid kit

6.1.4. If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they call for assistance before entering

6.1.6. External doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone

6.2. Working alone at another building/location

Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:

6.2.1. All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building/room and that emergency exits are accessible

6.2.2. They are familiar with the fire and, if applicable, intruder alarm procedure and know the location of both exits and alarms

6.2.3. When making a booking at a venue, whether there will be somebody else present in the building (i.e. Building Manager or Caretaker) and that this person can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

6.2.4. There is access to a telephone and first aid kit

6.2.5. If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they call for assistance before entering

6.2.6. Whenever possible that they park in a well-lit and busy area

6.2.7. Ensure sign in and sign out procedures are followed, where applicable

7. Personal Safety

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

7.2. 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.

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

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

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

7.6. Staff must inform their Line Manager or other identified person when 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.

7.8. 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.

7.9. Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to take into account include:

7.9.1. Staffing levels and availability – developing links with a residential establishment may be the best out of hour's solution

7.9.2. The identified risks

7.9.3. Measures in place to reduce those risks

7.10. Where 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.

7.11. Staff working away from the office should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times.

8. Assessment of risk

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

8.1.1. The environment – location, security, access.

8.1.2. The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.

8.1.3. The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.

8.1.4. History – any previous incidents in similar situations.

8.1.5. Any other special circumstances.

8.2. All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as 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.

9. Planning

9.1. Staff safety should be considered when choosing locations for meetings, courses etc.

9.2. Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.

9.3. Communication, checking-in and fall-back arrangements must be in place. Staff should ensure someone is always aware of their movements and expected return time.

9.4. The Line Manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the staff member.

10. Practice Guidance – Personal Safety

‘Reasonable precautions’ might include:

10.1. checking directions for the destination

10.2. ensuring your car, if used, is road-worthy and has break-down cover

10.3. ensuring someone knows where you are and when are expected home

10.4. avoiding, where possible, poorly lit or deserted areas

10.5. taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night

10.6. ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly

13. Monitoring and Review

Any member of staff with a concern regarding lone working issues should ensure that it is discussed with their manager or with the whole team, as appropriate.

Appendix 1 - Personal Safety

1. Personal Safety

1.1. There are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. The organisation has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves.

1.2. This is not about raising anxiety levels but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk, for yourself and for service users in your care.

2. Be aware of the environment

2.1. Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.

2.2. Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported /dealt with.

2.3. If your work takes you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for high crime rates arrange to check in when the visit is over.

2.4. If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes.

2.5. Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings you control.

3. Be aware of yourself

3.1. Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?

3.2. Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.

3.3. Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?

3.4. Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.

4. Be aware of other people

4.1. Take note of their non-verbal signals.

4.2. Be aware of their triggers.

4.3. Don't crowd people – allow them space.

4.4. Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.

4.5. Listen to them, and show them you are listening.

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