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**Lone Worker Policy**

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# Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone working as ‘those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision’. While lone workers are generally susceptible to the same risks as anyone else, their vulnerability to experiencing harm is higher due to their potential lack of support if something were to go wrong. Therefore, lone workers require additional assessment, training, supervision and support to ensure their safety in the workplace.

# Policy Statement

[Company Name] is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its lone workers by identifying and minimising any associated risks, as far as reasonably practicable.

# Scope

This policy and the procedures apply to all staff (including contractors, volunteers or self-employed persons) who undertake some element of lone working. Staff are responsible for cooperating with [Company Name] and abiding by any implemented procedures designed to ensure their safety.

The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of their staff members and that the contents of this policy remain current and in line with best practice.

# Procedures

[Company Name] has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1999 to assess all risks to employee health and safety, this includes lone workers. While lone workers generally face the same risks as other workers, there can be a greater potential for harm resulting from the vulnerability of being alone, for example:

* Accidents or emergencies with a lack of immediate access to first aid equipment or assistance
* Fire in an unknown environment
* Inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities
* Violence and abuse from clients and/or their relatives
* Theft
* Intruders
* Manual handling incidents
* Sudden illness.

If a risk assessment identifies that the required work cannot be safely undertaken by a lone worker, then alternative arrangements will be made (e.g., where complex client moving and handling is required).

Injuries and/or incidents suffered by staff in their work must be reported to the Registered Manager or another appropriately designated individual and recorded and responded to appropriately, as well as being reported to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Registered services also have a duty to report incidents to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

**Risk assessment**

All lone workers must undergo an adequate risk assessment to determine their ability to safely work alone. In addition, for those entering client’s properties alone, risks assessments must be performed on an individual client basis that include any historical information on potential hazards from the client and/or their relatives who may be present at the time of the visits (e.g., any alcohol or drug misuse or mental health conditions that have previously led to violent incidents).

Risk assessments should include the following:

* The risk to the health and safety of staff and any others who may be affected, including whether the lone worker is more vulnerable (e.g, young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee)
* Risks relating to any environmental factors, such as location of property, lighting etc, and to variable conditions such as extreme weather conditions or time of day or night,
* Identification of any preventative and protective measures needed
* Arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures
* Any health surveillance identified in the risk assessment
* Procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger.

All risk assessments should be clearly documented, especially where there are five or more staff members, or a significant risk is identified. All staff members must be provided with adequate safety information, as well as instruction and training. If needed, safety representatives should be consulted. Risk assessments should be routinely reviewed, with an interim review if there is a reason to believe that the original assessment is no longer valid.

**Dynamic Risk Assessment**

It is not always possible to identify all the hazards relating to a role, especially where the workplace or area is in the community or otherwise outside of [Company Name]’s immediate control. For this reason, lone workers will be trained to undertake “dynamic” risk assessments at the work location on arrival.

This will cover situations where the actual presence of hazards cannot necessarily be detected in advance such as the influence of alcohol, drugs or the threat posed by animals or other hostile elements. Staff at [Company Name] are empowered to make the decision as to whether it is safe to work.

**Manual handling**

Lone workers are statistically more likely to suffer from an accident or injury as a direct result of a manual handling incident. Therefore, each risk assessment will identify any manual handling tasks that can and cannot be carried out by a lone worker. Where manual handling tasks require more than one worker, adequate provision of additional staff must be provided for the task to be safely undertaken. If a risk assessment has not already identified a need for additional support, staff are responsible for contacting the Registered Manager and/or an appropriately designated person to arrange for additional staff.

**Fire**

The early identification of a fire is less likely to occur where there are not multiple workers. Therefore, a risk assessment must be performed by a trained assessor to identify any fire risks, this should include:

* all potential risks from fire
* whether fires can be detected in a reasonable time with adequate warning for workers
* whether staff and clients can leave the building safely
* whether staff know how to respond in case of a fire.

Staff should also be provided with adequate fire-fighting equipment and mandatory training.

**Violence**

Lone workers are potentially more vulnerable to the threat of violence and a risk assessment must be undertaken to identify whether there is any risk and, where identified, measures should be implemented to reduce this risk. This should include consideration of the Company’s overall working practices and systems, including the workplace location, staffing and staff information and training. In addition:

* Lone workers should receive ongoing conflict resolution training
* If possible, triggers for violence, such as the use of visibly expensive equipment, should be avoided
* Information gathering and sharing should be undertaken to identify any clients with a history of violence. Staff are also responsible for accessing this information and understanding the potential risk and triggers before working alone with a client.
* Young or inexperienced staff should not work in isolation, where possible
* For home visits:
	+ Identify those that should not be carried out in the evening or at night by a lone worker
	+ Ensure that staff provide their manager with a detailed itinerary and report back to base at regular intervals
	+ Ensure staff have the access and capability of contacting the relevant emergency services.

Any acts of violence or aggression towards staff must be clearly reported and monitored, with reassessment and action taken where areas for improvement are identified.

**Working in isolation and remoteness**

For staff members working in areas that are remote and/or isolated a risk assessment should account for the following:

* Whether staff have a safe means of travel to and from the workplace/premises, including when working out of hours.
* The time it will take to complete a visit and how frequently the staff should report in. If a staff member fails to report in, the designated contact must attempt to achieve contact in the first instance and, where necessary, contact the emergency services.
* Whether staff have access to toilets, rest, refreshment and first aid equipment
* How to report and respond to an emergency.
* The ease with which the emergency services would be able to reach the isolated area.

**Medicines and Prescriptions**

Refer to the Medicines Management Policy for safety and security procedures of medicines during home visits where appropriate.

**Stress**

Lone workers can feel isolated and disconnected. To prevent this [Company Name] will provide regular contact with lone workers and provide them with the opportunity to share any concerns. Staff will also be routinely informed of any changes to policy or procedure and given access to company updates, training and staff organised social activities.

**Supervision and reporting**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff at work. Therefore, risk assessments must be performed to identify the level of supervision staff require, if any, with action taken to provide this. Lone workers must be competent and confident in the requirements of the job before being asked to act alone and must also be able to recognise when assistance is needed and understand how to access this. For staff member(s) competent at working alone, details of their itinerary must be left with a designated contact, including client names and contact details and their likely arrival and departure times. Staff must be able to keep in contact and should have access to a phone or emergency alarm to enable them to call for assistance if needed.

For staff driving for long periods alone, a risk assessment should be performed to identify any associated risks, a road risk assessment can be found at The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). Lone workers using their own cars must have a valid MOT, business insurance and license, as well as breakdown cover. Refer to the Vehicle Policy for more details.

**Training**

Training will be provided to all staff working with [Company Name] and will include the following elements:

* Who is a lone worker.
* What are the possible risks to safety.
* What can be done to counter these risks e.g., risk assessment of the clients and their home environment prior to the initial home visit taking place.
* Understanding how to mitigate risks using risk reduction and risk control measures including dynamic risk assessments.
* Understanding individual responsibilities to maintain own safety.
* What policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety of staff and the client.
* Record keeping.
* Maintaining confidentiality.
* How to deal with and summon help in an emergency.

The lone worker training will include situational guidance on:

* What to do in specific situations.
* Dealing with threatening and aggressive behaviour.
* Procedural measures to ensure personal safety.
* How to escalate a safeguarding concern.
* How to report accidents or incidents to the Registered Manager.
* Handling of allegations raised against the staff member during or after a visit.

# Personal Safety

Staff should be aware of the environment and know what measures are in place to protect them.

Staff should take the following precautions:

* Check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and ensure they have their allocated first aid kit.
* Make sure that their 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.
* If their work takes them into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for high crime rates, arrange to check in when the visit is over, or work with a partner.
* If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against them, and of possible escape routes.
* Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings they control.

Staff should consider the following:

* Think about body language. What messages are they giving?
* Think about tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.
* Think about what they are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper movement?
* In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
* Be aware of their own triggers – the things that make them angry or upset.

Staff should be aware of other people:

* Take note of their non-verbal signals.
* Be aware of their triggers. Don’t crowd people – allow them space.
* Make a realistic estimate of the time needed to do something, and don’t make promises which can’t be kept, either on their own or someone else’s behalf.
* Be aware of the context of their meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
* Listen to them and show them.

# Reporting Incidents

Staff are encouraged to report all Lone working related concerns, incidents and near miss incidents to the Registered Manager. Staff are also encouraged to contact the police where necessary.

# Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through routine audit and investigation into any adverse incidents or near-misses.

# Related policies

* Bullying and Harassment Policy
* Governance and Risk Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Incident Management Policy
* Medicines Management Policy
* Moving and Handling Policy
* Training and Induction Policy
* Vehicle Policy

# Legislation and Guidance

**Relevant Legislation**

* The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

**Guidance**

* Unison: Working Alone, A Health and Safety Guide on Lone Working for Safety Representatives, [Working20alone.pdf (unison.org.uk)](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/10/Working20alone.pdf)
* Health and Safety Executive, Lone working: Protect those working alone [Lone workers: how employers should protect them - Overview - HSE](https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/employer/index.htm)
* Health and Safety Executive 2020: Protecting Lone Workers, How to Manage the Risks of working Alone, <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>
* Skills for Care: Supporting staff that regularly work alone. A guide for adult social care employers 2019,
* Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, <https://www.rospa.com/safety-consultants/Work/Risk-Assessment>

# Summary of Review

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