

Lone Working Policy

Potential Hazards of Lone Working

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

Accidents or sudden illnesses may happen when there is no-one to summon help or first aid

- Violence or the threat of violence
- Fire
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)

The perception of these hazards or the actual risks may be different for different people. For example the inexperience or your works may underestimate the risks of an activity; some workers may feel particularly vulnerable to violence away from the workplace or after dark; or a medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.

The school must consider these factors when doing risk assessments. If there are lone workers within an area the manager must take appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high-risk activities. They should consider:

- Does the workplace present any special risk to a lone worker?
- Can all the equipment, substances and goods used on the premises be safely handled by one person? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
- Is there a risk of violence or the threat of violence? Is the nature of a visit or the person being visited likely to increase the risk? Will the staff member be alone in a dark or remote location?

Risk Assessments

A lone working risk assessment is in place for Caretakers and Cleaners. A risk assessment for any further staff who wish to work alone should be completed as required.

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Lone Working

Supervision

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. However, line-managers can ensure that staff understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions. They can put into place arrangements for the individual to contact a line-manager if they need additional guidance. Occasional site visits may be appropriate, particularly if there are high-risk activities. Staff new to a job or undergoing training may need to be accompanied initially. Regular contact by phone or radio may be appropriate. The person in charge of Health and Safety should assess what level of supervision is required.

Checking System

All out of hours lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with either family, friends, or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers provide a relative or friend with a telephone contact number (eg Line Manager's) to call if the lone worker fails to return home at the expected time.

Reporting Back

A system should be in place to ensure that a lone worker returns to their base or their home at the completion of a task away from the normal workplace. For high risk or frequent lone workers the Site Manager may stipulate that the staff member must inform him/her of their whereabouts and the expected duration of the visit so that if the staff member has not reported in or cancelled the call by the expected hour, a call will automatically be triggered to check the staff member is safe.

For occasional lone workers or low risk lone workers, they should inform a colleague where they are going and when they are expected back; arranging to ring the office at the conclusion of the visit or call; issuing a mobile phone number to allow a contact call to be made if the staff member's return is overdue. Use of diary systems or notice boards to indicate whereabouts can form part of this system. All staff involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal systems for safe lone working.

The school should also consider staff who meet with visitors on a one to one basis on the school premises. Whilst they are not alone in the building, they may be alone with the visitor in a place where other colleagues cannot see them. The school should consider systems for ensuring that they have emerged safely from such a meeting and systems for raising an alarm if necessary.

Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. This should include being made aware of special arrangements for out of hours incidents. First aid may be available from school staff, or it may be prudent for an individual frequently working away from the base to carry a basic first aid kit if there is a foreseeable risk of injury. It is also necessary for staff working alone in a building or part of a building to let the Director of School Support know they are there, so they can be accounted for in case of fire.

Medical Conditions

Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

Task Not Suitable for Lone Working

Risk assessment will identify the hazards of work. When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up should be put in place, or the work reassigned to another member of staff or done in hours when they are not alone. For example a staff member who arrives before other colleagues may be instructed not to attempt heavy manual lifting until another colleague arrives to assist.

Intruder

Staff should not enter the school premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to immediately contact the police.

Violence at Work

Staff who undertake home visits must use a system to reduce the risk of violence by not visiting alone or meeting in another location. The risk of violence may not be directly related to a particular property. It may be associated with the environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents. Staff likely to be lone workers in such situations should be trained in dealing with difficult people, in ways to recognise a risk and in behaviour which may reduce the risk (up to and including terminating the visit). All incidents of violence must be reported.

Pupils Lone Working

The teacher in charge of the lone worker should ensure that the pupil understands the risks associated with lone working and the relevant safety precautions. The teacher should ensure that they check on the lone worker at least every hour and more frequently if necessary. Pupils should be informed that if the fire alarm sounds they should leave the building by the nearest fire exit and not return to the teacher.

Pupil Lone Working Guidance is given to Sixth Form pupils prior to carrying out independent fieldwork expected as part of an examination syllabus outside of school hours.

Conclusion

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. The school must ensure that they have not only introduced measures to reduce any risk but must also ensure that they have communicated their expectations to lone workers and trained them appropriately. All staff, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and all staff can take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with their normal working life.

Pupil Lone Working Guidance – Working Offsite Without Staff Supervision

At times pupils will work alone on tasks outside of school and it is important that pupils and parents assess the risks and take steps to avoid or control these where necessary, as responsibility for safety and welfare when undertaking such activities out of school hours lies with parents and pupils.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those ‘who work by themselves without close or direct supervision’.

Potential hazards of lone working:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses may happen when there is no-one to summon help or first aid
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Fire
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)

Pupils should understand the risks associated with lone working and the relevant safety precautions.

Consideration should be given to the following:

- Does the work area present any special risk to a lone worker?
- Can all the equipment, substances and goods used be safely handled by one person? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
- Is there a risk of violence or the threat of violence?
- Will the pupil be alone in a dark or remote location?

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Lone Working

Checking System

- The school recommends that parents check on the pupil at least every hour and more frequently if necessary, either by phone or in person.
- All pupils should establish their own checking in and out system with either family or friends and should agree an expected time to return home.
- Upon arrival at the location the pupil should phone the designated contact to inform them they have arrived safely and that the phone is working. Contact should be maintained at specified time intervals.
- Suitable response procedures should be decided upon in the event of contact times being missed and such procedures and arrangements must be in place and familiar to relevant participants before the fieldwork begins.

Accidents and Emergencies

Pupils should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. It may be necessary to take a basic first aid kit in case of injury.

Medical conditions

Pupils should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness but should make arrangements for somebody to accompany them.

Violence

Environmental issues like working alone outside after dark may increase the risk of violence and should be avoided.