

Lone Working Policy

September 2018 – September 2021



POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1. Policy Statement

Where associated tasks require staff across the Trust, 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.

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 procedure 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 who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

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

4. Context

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of lone worker is:

“Those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, either employees who work separately from others in a an establishment, or mobile workers who work away from a fixed base”

Examples across the Trust who may be classed as lone workers include:

- Staff with responsibility for opening up and closing buildings
- Staff working outside normal working hours
- School staff working during holiday periods
- Staff working in isolated parts of the building
- Staff undertaking home visits e.g. Learning Mentors, Education Welfare Officer and Child Protection Officer
- (This list is by no means exhaustive)

The Trust has 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
- Equipment such as mobile phones will be made available as appropriate



5. 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 intruders
- 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
- External doors are closed or on “exit only” to avoid unwanted visitors when a receptionist or responsible adult is not on duty

6. 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 backup 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 they sign in and out of building registers particularly in the school holidays
- 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 base. This is particularly pertinent when making home visits.
- Staff such as Learning Mentors or the Education Welfare Officer who work to pre-planned programme of sessions, must inform their Line Manager if they deviate from the programme.
- 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 contact and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team.
- Issues to take into account Include:
 - Staffing levels and availability
 - The identified risks
 - Measures in place to reduce those risks



- Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or 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. Staff may use their own mobile for this purpose. Requests for use of a mobile phone may be made to the Business Manager. Staff are responsible for checking that the mobile is charged, in working order and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider

7. 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 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.

8. Planning

- Staff safety should be considered when choosing locations for courses etc.
- Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself
- 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.
- The Line Manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating condition affecting the staff member.

9. Practice Guidance – Personal Safety

“Reasonable precautions” might include:

- Checking directions for the destination
- Ensuring your car if used is road worthy and has break down cover
- Ensuring someone knows where you are and when you are expected back
- Avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas
- Taking care when entering or leaving buildings, especially at night
- Ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly



10. 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, for students and for other service users.

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 entrance, and 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 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 realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on you own or on someone else's behalf
- 4.5 Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- 4.6 Listen to them, and demonstrate through your body language and feedback that you are listening.



Appendix 2– Protocol and Guidance for Home Visits

Introduction

1. Guidance for Home visits

- 1.1** When making a home visit Admin staff should be provided with a list of any home visits arranged, including name, address, phone number of the home/individual visited and estimated time of leaving and returning. The worker making the visit should have a fully operation mobile phone with them for the visit. Staff should appraise themselves of any previous visits by other staff or agencies and acquire background information from others.
- 1.2** Staff visiting should be fully acquainted with the location of the student's home and how to get there to avoid having to stop and ask for directions. Staff should have the appropriate insurance cover as such visits are regarded as "business" by the insurance companies
- 1.3** If staff are anxious on arriving at a location and feel their safety could be jeopardised, they should not take the risk of proceeding further. They should telephone the home and advise that they are unable to attend. Alternative arrangements should be made.
- 1.4** All home visits should be recorded with the reason of the visit, points discussed agreements reached and any concerns that the member of staff may have from the meeting however trivial these may appear at the time. Clear detailed record keeping may well prevent problems in the future.
- 1.5** Travel plans should only be changed if relevant staff have been alerted
- 1.6** Staff may consider the carrying of a personal alarm
- 1.7** Public transport is a poor option for home visits since a great deal of personal control is taken away. Only a thorough risk assessment should allow for the use of buses, taxis and trains
- 1.8** Confrontation should always be avoided. At the first sign of potential danger the staff member should make a speedy exit from a home. Never assume that violence wouldn't happen as while there are hundreds of home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incident should be reported to the line Manager immediately
- 1.9** Visiting staff and volunteers are reminded to keep up to date with current legislation and safeguarding training.