

Lone Worker Policy

Introduction

There is often confusion/concern about the circumstances in which it is, or is not, safe to work alone. There is no general legal prohibition on working alone, but risk assessments should specifically consider whether the fact that a person is likely to undertake a task alone creates an unacceptable level of risk.

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees, but it is necessary to consider any particular additional hazards of lone working. The end result should be that lone workers are at no greater risk than other workers.

This document gives general guidance on working alone. It offers advice on how to comply with duties towards lone workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999.

The Parish Council's Policy

The Council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees, visitors and contractors and safety of those affected by the work, e.g. members of the public.

These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is the Council's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary. Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with the Council in meeting its legal obligations.

Who Are Lone Workers?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They are found in a wide range of situations

- Where only one person works on the premises, such as in an office, home workers.
- Issues to be considered The main issues to be considered in the risk assessment are:-
- Is there risk of violence?
 - Is the person medically (and psychologically) fit to work alone?
 - Is any special training required?
 - Are the individual(s) concerned and any necessary safe working practices adequately monitored?
 - Are there adequate arrangements in the event of an emergency?
 - Can all plant, substances and equipment involved in the work, be safely handled and/or operated by one person?

Assessing the risks

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety of Work Regulations 1999 still apply. These require identifying the hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

It is important to talk to employees (and their safety representatives) as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen.

Controlling the risk

Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment, mobile phones, 'calling in systems', etc. Employers should take steps to check that control measures are used and review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure it is still adequate.

When 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.

Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, that employer should inform the lone worker's employer of any risks and the control measures that should be taken. This helps the lone worker's employer to assess the risks.

Risk assessment should help decide the right level of supervision. There are some activities which are high risk.

Safe Working Arrangements

Employers need to be aware of the law and standards which apply to their work activities and may need to seek expert advice, then assess whether the requirements can be met by lone workers.

Some of the issues which need special attention when planning safe working arrangements are as follows:

- Can the risk of the job be adequately controlled by one person?

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, for example fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Employers should identify situations where people work alone and ask questions.

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?

Check that lone workers have no medical conditions which make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary. Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

- What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions fully. Employers should set the limits to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone. They should ensure employees are competent to deal with circumstances which may be new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training.

Monitoring

Procedures will need to be put in place to monitor lone workers to ensure they remain safe. These may include:

- Regular contact between the lone worker and supervision using a mobile phone or landline phone.
- Checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.

Emergencies

What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency?

- Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies.
- Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events.
- Emergency procedures should be established, and employees trained in them. Information about emergency procedures and danger areas should be given to lone workers who visit premises.
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally, risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

Control measures

Consider the following practical guidelines:

1. Lone workers, outside normal working hours and in isolated buildings, should report their place of work and expected duration of stay to a designated person or on an office whiteboard.
2. Ensure a working telephone is available.
3. Lone workers should not undertake dangerous work, for example using dangerous chemicals or operating dangerous machinery.
4. When undertaking off site visits, the checklist below must be considered prior to the visit.

Off site visit checklist for lone workers	Yes	No
Is there a risk of violence?		
Is there safe access and exit for one person?		
Is manual handling undertaken?		
Is the employee medically fit to carry out the lone working tasks?		
Is there first aid provision?		
Can an emergency service approach close enough if necessary?		
Is there a clear understanding on how long the work will take?		
Are transport arrangements to and from the workplace adequate?		
Is there a system for maintaining contact with the lone worker?		
Is there CCTV on the site being visited?		
Is the Clerk trained to deal with violence and aggression?		
Does the Clerk know how to diffuse potentially violent situations?		
Is the Clerk briefed about the areas they visit?		
Does the Clerk have all available information on those being visited?		
Has an itinerary been left?		
Have plans been made to keep in contact with Councillors?		
Has the Clerk the means to contact their Chairman?		
Does the Clerk know how to complete an incident form?		