



Hull

Human Resources

66. Lone Working Policy and Procedures

LONE WORKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- 1.** Hull City Council acknowledges its duty to make adequate provision for the health and safety of lone workers.
- 2.** It is the policy of the Council to fully implement the general requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 in so far as lone working is concerned.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 3.** This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and others working for or on behalf of the Council except those in schools with delegated powers unless adopted by the Governing Body.
- 4.** The policy applies to all aspects of all lone working activities. It includes all those activities that are overtly hazardous and those where the risk is small. It includes all elements of these experiences including the journey, activities undertaken and any residential element both in the UK and abroad.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 5.** To ensure that the Council complies with all relevant legislation and guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive and other relevant bodies covering lone working activities.
- 6.** To support all staff and volunteers in meeting the demands placed on them to carry out these activities by the setting up of a procedure, relevant guidance, risk assessments and training as required.
- 7.** To facilitate the development of procedures, risk assessments and guidance documents to assist in the provision of appropriate lone working activities for people that are safe.
- 8.** To compliment the Violence at Work policy, procedure and guidance.

MONITORING AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

- 9.** Occupational Health and Safety Services will monitor accident and violence to employees reports, audit returns and set up any other reporting systems for each section to provide their relevant senior officers with a breakdown on any unsafe situations that have occurred on any lone working activities they have sanctioned.
- 10.** The Policy, procedures and associated guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis (at least every two years) and within one month were any unsafe incident not covered by the documentation is identified.
- 11.** Any modifications of the documentation will be reissued to all relevant sections of the Council as soon as practicable.

Procedures

1.1 This procedure outlines a hierarchy of principles that must be followed whenever any lone working activity is planned, together with the processes and systems that should be in place whilst they are being undertaken and the requirements to monitor and review all aspects of the lone working activities to enable continuous improvement.

1.2 The clear aim of the Council policy, this procedure and guidance are to provide a framework within which anyone can organise a lone working activity. This can assist the manager to ensure, that if all advice is followed, that everything is undertaken in a safe manner, with suitable and adequate controls in place where required, the lone work activity is as safe as possible.

1.3 This approach is being taken to ensure similar guidance is adopted across the council and compliance with national health and safety standards.

1.4 It is not intended to be a bureaucratic exercise that requires forms to be filled for the sake of filling in forms. Any paperwork required will be for a clear and specific reason.

1.5 Any opinions regarding the content of these documents should be forwarded to Occupational Health and Safety Services, principal health and safety advisor.

1.6 This document will be reviewed on a regular basis (at least every two years). If it becomes apparent that a revision is required at an earlier stage the review will be brought forward.

2 MONITORING OF LONE WORKING

2.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that lone working activities are robustly monitored. To achieve this Occupational Health and Safety Services will include in their health and safety audit questionnaires a range of questions to ensure lone working activity that have been authorised and planned comply with the relevant standards.

2.2 Manager's whose employees are involved in lone working must ensure risk assessments are completed identifying all the hazards and risk associated with the task and that the control measures and safe working procedures are robust enough to ensure the safety of their staff undertaking lone working.

3 PRE-ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Thorough planning and preparation are essential for the safety and well being of the employee in any lone working activity. It must take place as early as possible to ensure that sufficient time is available to consider all aspects of the activity and to enable sufficient time for the appropriate level of safeguards to be put in place.

3.2 It is important to ensure at this stage that employees with the appropriate competency level are available for the activity.

4. NON-PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

4.1 Managers must identify activities that are not permitted and inform all relevant employees.

5. FAMILIARISATION WITH LOCATIONS

5.1 The degree of familiarisation for a location being visited will depend upon the findings at the planning stage risk assessment. For example the time that may be spent evaluating a local lone working activity to a member of the public in a residential home would reasonably not be

expected to be as much as that spent evaluating a visit to a person in an isolated place in Hull late on a night or attending an activity abroad.

6. DOCUMENTATION

6.1 The lone worker must ensure that they have read all relevant documentation pertaining to the person(s), property or place they are visiting. Such documentation will include as required the necessary relevant activity risk assessments, emergency contact lists, insurance details, activity provider details, maps and timetables, entrance tickets, list of pupils. The documentation must be discussed with the lone worker and copies made available if necessary. Information databases must also be checked for any warning indicators.

6.2 A copy of all of these documents must also be held back at home base by a designated officer.

7. RISK ASSESSMENTS

7.1 The Council risk assessment form CS13 must be used for all risk assessments and is available on the Councils Human resources intranet site.

7.2 Risk assessments should be carried out by a competent person on any activity that can place any person undertaking or supervising it at risk of injury, with control measures identifying safe ways of carrying out the activity. The risk assessment must be discussed with the lone worker who must be happy before the activity takes place.

7.3 If no safe means of undertaking the lone working activity can be identified and the risk is assessed as being high or unacceptable, the activity should not take place.

7.4 There may be the need to undertake immediate steps to modify or amend a risk assessment to add some new or different hazards or risks that arise before a visit is to take place or to add more robust control measures and safe working procedures. Managers must be competent to ensure the activity is safe or the lone worker activities should be cancelled.

8. STOPPING / STARTING AN ACTIVITY OR VISIT

8.1 Any person who has concerns about the starting or continuance of an activity should feel confident they have their line manager's backing to terminate or refuse to attend a visit and / or return to the office at any time.

9. DEBRIEFING

9.1 On return to home base staff should ask for a debrief with their line manager if they feel any issues need to be addressed following a lone working activity. The risk assessment may need to be modified and used as part of the planning process for subsequent activities.

10. ACCIDENT/VIOLENT INCIDENT REPORTING

10.1 The same requirements for reporting and recording accidents or violent incidents that are applicable to you and the people under your supervision on a day-to-day basis at home base are applicable whilst undertaking a lone working activity.

10.2 Any accident or violent incident that occurs should be recorded using the relevant reporting forms – CS1 or CS2

10.3 These forms must be completed as soon after the accident or violent incident and submitted once the visit/ activity has finished.

10.4 However, if the incident results in the lone worker being taken to hospital from the scene of an incident, you must notify as soon as possible your line manager who will inform Occupational Health and Safety Services so they may, if necessary, investigate the incident.

11. EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

11.1 Prior to embarking on the activity a suitable procedure for dealing with any emergency situation must be in place.

11.2 An emergency can include any untoward occurrence that has a significant effect upon the visit/activity. It could include the breakdown of transport, a serious or fatal accident, the onset of ill health or a fire occurring etc.

N.B. If the emergency involves a *serious* or *fatal* accident the Police and Home Base and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed immediately. The manager must inform Occupational Health and Safety Services so that the HSE can be informed.

12. INSURANCE

12.1 Manager to ensure before authorisation of activity that adequate insurance cover for all aspects of the activity is in operation.

LONE WORKING GUIDELINES

Many Council employees are considered as lone workers and within the main this is acceptable. It is essential that systems are put into place to ensure their health and safety. These guidelines aim is to ensure that lone workers are identified and a risk assessment is undertaken to ensure their health and safety.

Note: Reference should also be made to the Violence at Work policy, procedure and guidance.

1.0 Responsibilities

1.1 Manager's Responsibilities

The manager is responsible for ensuring that: -

- a) Those tasks involving employees working alone are clearly identified and a risk assessment is carried out on each task.
- b) That the person carrying out the task forms part of the risk assessment to ensure their suitability for what is expected of them. For example, does the person working alone suffer from a medical condition that could place them or others at risk?
- c) That local procedures for lone working are developed and are known to all employees i.e. Risk Assessment and safe working procedures
- d) That plant, equipment and tools are not defective, are regularly maintained and that this is evident by means of maintenance logbooks or similar records.
- e) That the person concerned has received sufficient information, instruction and training and is provided with all the necessary protective equipment and clothing, e.g. head/eye protection, fluorescent and or waterproof clothing and gloves.
- f) That the person carrying out tasks on their own is provided, if identified by Risk Assessment, with a means of communication e.g. mobile 'phone or radio in the event of an emergency.
- g) That, wherever practicable, regular visits are made to ensure the health and safety of the person working alone.
- h) That emergency arrangements are firmly in place and known to all employees as appropriate.
- i) That arrangements for lone working are monitored and regularly reviewed.
- j) That 'lone worker' risk assessments are obtained from contractors/sub-contractors working on Council sites before work commences.
- k) That incidents and accidents are reported as appropriate and investigated by management.

1.1 Employee Responsibilities

When working alone all employees must:-

- a) Ensure that someone knows where they are, i.e. line manager, colleagues, family member etc and their expected time of return. Always use any signing in/out arrangements at their place of work or other such control measure.
- b) Inform appropriate people of any unexpected change of plans, especially evening meetings/visits
- c) Always comply with signing in/out arrangements at other sites.
- d) When parking choose well-lit areas and park so that a quick exit can be made if necessary. If necessary reposition a vehicle closer to the building if staying late.
- e) Whenever possible, conceal equipment and valuables.
- f) Always report an incident to their line manager.

2.0 Lone Workers

2.1 Working alone can be defined as *'beyond the visual or audible range of another individual for more than a few minutes'*. The safe period of working alone will depend on the nature of the job for example; an electrician near exposed live conductors should not be left alone at all, whereas someone working in an office alone at a computer would not normally be a problem.

2.2 In the Council there are a number of employees who can be classified as lone workers, some examples are as follows:

- a) Social Workers
- b) Home Carers
- c) Park Rangers
- d) Peripatetic Teachers
- e) Caretakers
- f) School Crossing Patrols
- g) Trade Operatives
- h) Drivers
- i) Cleaners

2.3 In effect anyone who is isolated from other employees is a lone worker. It must be remembered that it is possible for someone to be a lone worker even though there may be other employees on site i.e. a cleaner may be working in one section of the building, whilst others may be elsewhere.

3.0 Can Anyone Work Alone?

3.1 Not always. In some cases the law requires that at least two people must be involved in the work, and specifies the safe system to be followed e.g.

- a) Working in confined spaces
- b) Working on live electrical systems
- c) Working at height on ladders
- d) Erection of Scaffolding
- e) Working on certain woodworking/engineering machines
- f) Young persons under the age of 18 years of age

The risk assessment carried out on all lone working tasks may also identify the need for two workers to ensure a safe system of work. The law may also stipulate the standard of supervision to be provided e.g. young people undergoing training.

3.2 Where there is no specific legal prohibition on working alone, the general duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974 apply. Therefore, in some cases, in order to comply with the legislation a manager may decide to prohibit working alone because the risks are high and difficult to control. An example of this would be a client interview or visit by social workers where there is a known risk of violence.

4.0 Risk Assessment

4.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 states that it is the responsibility of employers to provide their employees with a safe place of work. One of the key steps in meeting this responsibility is to carry out Risk Assessment in accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

4.2 Managers should identify the risks to all employees both within the office setting and in the community, paying particular attention to areas of work and times of the day. This should be done in consultation with the employees concerned. Managers should prioritise the assessment of those employees that are perceived to be at the greatest risk.

4.3 Once lone workers have been identified then it is essential a risk assessment using the Council CS 13 form is completed and that tasks are identified and assessed and the individual assessed to ensure that they are suitable for lone working.

4.4 A Risk Assessment checklist provides guidance and highlights some key questions to be answered in order to complete a suitable and sufficient assessment. Should the risk assessment identify a task which is considered high risk or the individual is considered to be at risk then lone working should be avoided.

4.5 The purpose of carrying out a risk assessment is to identify:

- The hazards associated with the activity
- The extent and nature of the factors which contribute to risks.
- The changes necessary to eliminate or control risks.
- Risk assessments should be carried out and/ or reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that all new hazards and risks are included. The regulations require that these assessments must, for an organisation of our size, be written down and regularly revised so that they are as effective as possible.
- Employees should be fully briefed on all the risks within their working environment and it is important to ensure that all new employees are made aware of these risks as part of the induction programme

4.6 Specific risks to be particularly aware of include the following

- Visiting clients not known to the service i.e. first home visits
- Employees visiting clients alone
- Visits in the evening or at night, particularly to high-risk areas e.g. estates with known high levels of crime.
- Visiting unstable clients or those who may have mental health problems or be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Employees working alone, particularly in the evening or at weekends
- Services dealing with clients who have been physically or verbally abusive in the past.
- Reception areas either in remote parts of the building or where employees may be left on their own for a period of time.
- Buildings with poorly lit exteriors or car parks

4.7 The risk assessment should highlight areas of risk within each particular job, and identify the number of issues that need to be questioned, changed and controlled if the level of risk is to be reduced.

5.0 Safe Working Procedures

5.1 Safe working procedures for lone workers must be established and managers, employees and as necessary trade unions should work together. These procedures should be developed and recorded as part of the risk assessment using Council form CS13 .Where Council employees are working in partnership with other agencies procedures should be compatible if necessary.

5.2 A useful extract from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust in identifying a simple method to safeguard employees working at home or alone is:

'The most important aspect of safety for people working at home or on any project, is to ensure that they ensure they let other people know who they are meeting, when and where, so that someone is looking after their welfare'

5.3 When considering changing systems of work a number of questions need to be considered.

- Why is the job done in a particular way? Is it simply because this is the way it has always been done or has it been shown to be the only way to carry out the job effectively?
- Do certain jobs have to be done by one employee working alone with a client? Could the job be done as well or even more effectively by two employees working together?
- When the needs of clients are being established is any consideration given at this stage to the safety of employees involved?
- Are clients given adequate information about the service provided? Are they told why things are done the way they are and are they made aware of how to complain if dissatisfied?
- Do decisions concerning rotas, levels of employees and the length of time individuals work directly with the clients; take into account the possible risk of violence?
- Are employees aware how to report any incidents of violence and do they know who to report their concerns to?
- If possible, individual employees should not be left to work on their own for long periods of time, especially in situations where there is a recognised potential for violence.

6.0 Monitoring

6.1 It is essential that systems are put into place to monitor lone workers to ensure that they are safe. Monitoring systems may include:-

- a) Periodically visiting the lone worker and monitoring compliance with safe working procedures.
- b) Ensuring regular contact between the lone worker and a base.
- c) The use of automatic warning devices/systems which operate and alert management if specific signals are not received.
- d) Ensuring that the lone worker informs the office or other employees of their location and expected time of return.

7.0 Communication

7.1 It is essential when identified by risk assessment that lone workers are able to contact work colleagues, the office or the emergency services should they need assistance or help. What form of communications depends on the situation and does not necessarily mean that all lone workers carry mobile phones. Simple access to a telephone or a hand held radio may be sufficient. However, a mobile phone may be the only option where the worker cannot access a telephone because of their location or job.

7.2 When choosing a communication system ensure that the system is operable in all areas that the lone worker may work in.

8.0 Emergency Action

8.1 Managers must ensure that systems are devised which allow appropriate action to be taken should a lone worker require assistance or have not returned at the appropriate time.

8.2 In addition, it is essential that the lone worker also knows what to do in the event of an emergency. Therefore, during the risk assessment process those situations, which may result in an emergency, should be identified and emergency procedures drawn up and included in the risk assessment.

8.3 Employees have every right to defend themselves, with reasonable force (enough to defend but not enough to be considered assault against the perpetrator) and with items such as an umbrella, hairspray or keys which can be used against the attacker. The law however doesn't allow carrying anything which can be described as an offensive weapon.

9.0 Training

9.1 Training for lone workers must ensure competence in the following areas as appropriate:

- a) Understanding of the risks involved in the tasks and the control measures identified by the assessment.
- b) The use of plant, chemicals, equipment and tools.
- c) The safe and appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment.
- d) The ability to assess risks arising from unforeseen circumstances in the field and to deal with these appropriately. Note: Employee's are empowered to stop work where he/she considers the risk to be unacceptable.
- e) First Aid and emergency procedures.

9.2 New employees who are identified as lone workers must receive appropriate instruction training and supervision during their period of induction.

9.3 It is essential that all line managers are adequately trained. Their training will include (depending on operational requirements):

- Risk assessment's (mandatory)
- Emergency response procedures
- Violence and aggression.
- Personal safety and security
- Support systems procedures

9.4 To ensure consistency of training the Learning and Development health and safety advisor must be consulted and agree course content.

10.0 Potentially Violent Persons Database

10.1 The Council is developing, from violence reports, Anti Social Behaviour Orders etc, a list of potentially violent persons. This will be made available via service area representatives who will upload onto databases or disseminate the information accordingly.

10.2 The Council will investigate and develop protocols for the sharing of information with relevant agencies and partners.

11.0 Further Information

11.1 Further information and advice can be obtained from Occupational Health and Safety Services, Kingston House, Hull,

Appendix 1

Checklist for travelling alone

When driving

1. Before a long trip, make sure your vehicle is in good condition.
2. Plan how to get to your destination before leaving, and stay on main roads if you can.
3. Make sure you have enough money and petrol. Keep change and a phone card in case you need to make a telephone call or use a mobile phone. Carry a torch.
4. Before setting off make sure that your mobile phone (if you are taking one) is fully charged and that you take your charger with you. Also, make sure that you leave the mobile telephone number with someone at home and/or at work.
5. Before you leave, tell anyone you are planning to meet what time you think you will get there, and the route you are taking.
6. If you are not meeting anyone at your destination agree to phone someone back home or at work to confirm you have arrived safely. This may require you to have a home telephone number of your work contact.
7. Keep doors locked when driving and keep any bag, or valuables out of sight. If you have the window open, only wind it down a little. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in while you are stopped in traffic.
8. If you think you are being followed, try to alert others by flashing your lights and sounding your horn. Make as much noise as possible. If you can, keep driving until you come to a busy place.
9. If your car develops problems, find a telephone. On motorways follow the marker arrows to the closest phone. They are never placed any more than a mile apart, on opposite sides of the motorway. **Never** cross the carriageway to use a phone.
10. While on the hard shoulder or telephoning, keep a sharp look-out and don't accept lifts from strangers – wait for the police or breakdown service. Don't wait in the car – there is a high risk of an accident. Wait on the embankment nearby with the front passenger door open. If someone approaches you or you feel threatened, lock yourself in the car and speak to them through a small gap in the window.
11. If you frequently have to travel after dark, or if your job involves visiting people at home, consider the provision of a mobile phone.

Staying safe in taxi's

1. If you are going to be out late, try to arrange a lift home or book a taxi. Check that the taxi that arrives is the one you ordered. Ask for a description of the car – colour, make, etc – and check this when it arrives. If you gave your name when you booked, check that the driver can tell you it before you get in. When you get home, ask the driver to wait until you are inside.
2. There are many reputable private hire taxi companies, but these must be booked either at their office or by phone. In some cases the driver will carry identification. Always keep the number of a reliable firm handy. Avoid private hire taxi's that tout for business.
3. Always sit behind the driver.
4. If you feel uneasy, ask to be let out in a well-lit area where there are plenty of people
5. If in any doubt, don't get in a taxi.

Staying safe on public transport

1. Try to stay away from isolated bus stops, especially after dark.
2. On an empty bus, sit near the driver or conductor.
3. On a train, sit in a compartment where there are several other people – ideally one, which will be near the exit of your destination. Check to see where the emergency stop chain is.

Next Review Date:

Sept 2012