SECTION 2(13)

LONE WORKING

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INTRODUCTION

Information and advice is available to staff in the Lone Working Policy. This is issued by the Human Resources Section in the Corporate Services and Resources Department and is available on BORIS via the following link: http://boris.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/lone-working-policy.pdf

WHO ARE LONE WORKERS?

Lone Workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They can be found in a wide range of situations, for example: people in fixed establishments where:

- Only one person works on the premises, eg: in a small workshop, also home-workers.
- People who work separately from others, eg: in leisure centres.
- People work outside normal hours, eg: cleaners, security staff, and maintenance staff.
- Or mobile workers working away from their fixed base, eg: vehicle recovery staff, forestry workers, service workers such as social workers, home care assistants, pest control workers, etc.

HAZARDS OF LONE WORKING

People who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other staff. However, the risk is often greater, so it is essential that the risks of lone working are taken into account when risk assessments are undertaken.

Hazards which lone workers may face include the following:

- Accidents or emergencies arising out of the work
- Fire
- Violence/abuse from members of the public
- Manual handling

EMPLOYER'S LEGAL DUTIES

Although there is no general prohibition on working alone, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, employers have legal duties to assess all risks to health and safety, including the risks of lone working. If the risk assessment shows that is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements for providing help or back up must be put in place.

In certain high-risk activities there may be specific prohibitions on working alone, for example: work in confined spaces and electrical work near live conductors.

SAFE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR LONE WORKERS

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff. Managers need to know the law and standards which apply to their work activities, and then assess whether the requirements can be met by people working alone.

Extra risk control measures may be required to ensure that lone workers are no more at risk than any other member of staff. Control measures should take account of the normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, illness and accidents, and equipment failure.

Where managers identify situations where people are working alone, they should ask questions such as the following:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person?
- Can all the plant, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?

It is important to check that staff are medically fit and suitable to work alone.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Lone workers should be sufficiently experienced to understand the risks and control measures fully. It is important that managers set and explain the limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone. Employees must be competent to deal with circumstances which are new or unusual beyond the scope of their training. For example, it is important that employees know when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor or how to handle aggression.

Supervision can help to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work and the necessary safety precautions are undertaken. Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, it is still a manager's duty to ensure their health and safety at work. The extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the ability of the member of staff to identify and handle particular issues. The level of supervision required is a management decision which should be based on the findings of the risk assessment. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should not be left to individuals to decide whether they require assistance.

Procedures will need to be implemented to monitor lone workers to ensure they remain safe. These include:

- Supervisors periodically visiting and observing staff whilst they are working alone.

- Regular contact between the lone worker and manager or supervisor, using either a mobile telephone or a radio.

- Devices designed to raise the alarm in the event if an emergency such as use of panic alarms and the automated lone worker monitoring system on offer through Forestcare.

- Arrangements to account for the movements of lone workers, such as, use of in/out board, diary sheets or Outlook calendar.

- Checks to ensure that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of the particular task.

- Use of the "ALERT" system prior to undertaking visits and for recording any information. This is a database for recording information relating to potentially violent persons or hazardous addresses. Further detailed information regarding its operation can be found at http://boris.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/corporate-services/human-resources/health-and-safety-health-and-safety-at-bfbc/corporate-safety-team-alert.htm

- Provision of training for dealing with violence and aggression should also be identified and provided as a control measure where appropriate.

An example of other control measures to consider are included in Appendix 1.

Those that work alone should be capable of responding to emergencies. Risk assessments should be used to identify any foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them. For example, lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities and mobile workers may need to carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries should this be identified during the assessment.

Important factors to consider when undertaking the risk assessment also include the following:

- Does the member of staff deal primarily with other Council employees?

- Does the member of staff deal with members of the public who may have the potential to be aggressive, eg: dealing with mental health clients, those with learning difficulties.

- Does the member of staff undertake and enforcement role e.g. planning officer, environmental health officer, benefits and fraud officer?

- Does the member of staff deal with out of hours work or emergency response situations?

The risk to the lone worker will vary depending on the above and appropriate control measures will need to reflect the above.

FURTHER INFORMATION

HSE document INDG73 (rev) "Working Alone in Safety, Controlling the Risks of Solitary Work". http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

EXAMPLE OF RISK ASSESSMENT FOR LONE WORKING   **APPENDIX 1**

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION	CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE
Working day	▪ Use Outlook wherever possible, for each appointment, detail the destination, contact name and telephone number, and duration. Always give as much information as possible about the visit. Ensure that line managers and colleagues have proxy access to your diary. ▪ Use the in/out boards in the office, indicating times and locations. ▪ Line managers or another nominated member of staff should always ensure that officers are checked on at the end of the day. This may involve the officer telephoning in at the end of the day. If you change your plans then always inform someone. ▪ Use the Forestcare Lone Worker Monitoring system ▪ Other Lone Working monitoring systems are available in the market; including manually operated or automatic warning devices which trigger if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker, eg staff security systems ▪ "Buddy up" with colleagues to ensure they are aware of your movements. ▪ Ensure mobile phones are available for officers to use, either as dedicated phones or from a pool. Pagers and panic alarms are also available. ▪ Use "ALERT" prior to undertaking visits. ▪ Courses are available from Human Resources – "Personal safety on council premises , Personal safety away from council premises, lone working", seek advice from your line manager if you feel these would be beneficial. ▪ Ensure all accidents and incidents are reported following the appropriate BFC procedure, including "ALERT"
Out of hours	▪ Leave a list of contact telephone numbers at home for worried relatives / partners to ring if you fail to return at the agreed time and they cannot contact you. ▪ If the out of hours visits are pre-arranged check the file to ensure the premises is not a potential risk and use "ALERT". ▪ If you feel anxious about an out of hours visit then inform your line manager and arrangements can be made for two officers to attend. Never put yourself into a situation where you might be at risk, do not proceed until it is safe to do so, if necessary seek assistance from the Police. ▪ Always ensure that a fully charged mobile phone is available for out of hours visits. ▪ Use the Forestcare or a similar Lone Worker Monitoring system.
Reception / interview rooms	▪ If you use the interview room, then advise reception, ask them to keep an eye on you if you feel vulnerable. ▪ Position yourself so that you are located near to an exit route. ▪ Assess each situation, if the situation gets confrontational then back off. ▪ Panic buttons are situated in interview rooms, do not hesitate to use them if you feel vulnerable. ▪ Early warning pager system to be implemented into all reception areas.

Travelling	• Ensure your vehicle is well maintained and full of petrol. • Wear seatbelts at all times. • Join a motoring organisation of possible. • Carry a full charged mobile phone, phone card or change for use in an emergency. • Plan your route in advance. • Drive at a safe distance, do not drive aggressively. • Do not pick up hitchhikers. • If you are being followed then lock the doors, and keep driving to a built up area where there are people around. If you are forced to stop, ensure all windows and doors are locked and keep the engine running. Sound the horn and flash the lights to alert attention and try to reverse away from the situation. Be cautious where you park, do not park in dark, isolated areas. Ensure your car is locked at all times and do not leave valuable in view, park as close to your destination as possible.
Visiting homes / premises	• If questioning a complainer over the phone, obtain their telephone number and call them back to check. If using a personal phone then dial 141 first to prevent your number being forwarded. • Always check the file /system or "ALERT" before a visit, ensure that the premises are not listed as a potential risk. • If you feel anxious about a visit then inform your line manager, and where possible arrangements should be made for two officers to attend. • If you are going directly home from district then ensure your line manager and/or colleagues are aware of this. • Do not draw attention to yourself, dress down if possible and wear sensible shoes. • Take note of the surroundings in somebody's home. Enter a room last, look for the escape route, position yourself as close to this as possible. • Tell people at your destination what time you plan to arrive.
Visiting derelict property / building sites	• Wherever possible, book in with the site operator. • Wear the appropriate PPE, safety shoes, hard hat, high visibility jacket. • Avoid working at height if possible, if use of a ladder is required then ensure it is properly footed and secured.
Working at home	• A home working assessment should be completed with your line manager before the premises are used. • Home working should be planned so that the best is made from the time available. Ensure that all paperwork / references are available to you before you begin work. If possible work in a designated area away from distractions. Ensure that there is sufficient working space, lighting and ventilation. Care should be taken to avoid electrical, tripping and manual handling hazards. • Always have access to a telephone so that you can call for help if necessary. • Ensure that you visit office on a regular basis.