

Lone Working Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The following policy and procedure has been written in order to minimise risks for staff working alone and volunteers working with Thornley Village Centre.

1.2 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 it is the employer'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 their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

1.3 The Council will regularly review the Policy to ensure its implementation and to ensure that it is relevant to working practice.

2. Policy

2.1 To enable the Council with its statutory duties with regard to lone working, the Council will, through procedures adopted at all levels, avoid the need for lone working but acknowledges that with a small staff team and the range of activities undertaken by the Council, that lone working will happen.

2.2 Where employees have to undertake lone working, personal safety will be a paramount importance

2.3 Lone working must not be viewed in isolation; other relevant policies and practices already adopted will also apply, which will identify the protective and preventative measures necessary for employees to undertake lone working activities.

2.4 The following details, although mostly common sense, are provided to reinforce the need for everyone to take lone working and their safety seriously at all times.

3. Definition of Lone Working / Lone Workers

3.1 Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For example:

- A staff member working alone in an office or other base
- People working outside normal hours, e.g. staff working late etc.
- A staff member, Councillor or volunteer who is required to travel alone to and from a fixed base to another place of work or to meetings etc.
- Leisure provision, such as providing events.
- Anyone undertaking land inspections

4. Potential Risks

4.1 Some of the main risks have been highlighted below, however, this list is not meant to be exhaustive.

- Accessibility by members of the public, contractors etc. e.g. open access or unlocked doors.
- Requirement to lock up when leaving a building
- Poorly lit entrance / exits.
- Isolated and poorly lit car parking facilities
- Being taken ill whilst working alone
- Fire in a building
- Lack of knowledge regarding Health & Safety procedures

1. Assessing the Risk

5.1 The purpose of assessing the risk of lone working is to establish two main facts.

- Whether the work can be done safely by a lone worker
- What arrangements will ensure that an individual is not exposed to unnecessary and unacceptable risk?

5.2 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.

5.3 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.

5.4 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.

5.5 While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

2. Prohibition of Lone Working

6.1 Certain situations require that employees cannot work alone, these include:

- Young persons under 18
- Anyone working with machinery
- Certain work with substances hazardous to health
- Any situation where someone has to climb anything, or use anything which is not stable.

3. Responsibility & Personal Safety

7.1 It is your responsibility to keep yourself safe. Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

7.2 Keeping track of individual movements is sometimes difficult but it is the responsibility of the staff member and the line manager to identify potential risks in carrying out the work and to minimise these risks, by maintaining regular communication.

7.3 Staff issued with a 'Personal Alarm' should have this by their side to use in the event of a potential risk.

7.4 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

7.5 Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager, as set out in paragraph 5.2 above.

7.6 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 a visit rather than returning to their base.

7.7 Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.

7.8 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.

7.9 Where staff work alone for extended periods and / or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

4. Procedures for staff working in fixed bases.

8.1 Staff should always adhere to the following guidelines in order to minimise risks when working alone at any fixed base.

- Avoid unnecessary 'out of normal office hours' working where ever possible.
- Familiarise yourself with the layout of the building / floor. Ensure you have keys. Lock all doors that allow direct access to the building and / or office you are working in.
- Familiarise yourself with the Fire Safety Procedures and identify escape routes.
- Do not answer the door to unexpected visitors, e.g. in the case of contractors, ask for identification and don't let them in until you have checked it out if you are at all unsure.
- Practise setting the alarm system.
- Practise the locking up procedures.
- Do not use lonely exit routes if there are safer alternatives.
- If possible, avoid parking your car in badly lit areas, and move it nearer to the place you exit the building
- Carry a torch and have your 'personal alarm' ready to use if working late.
- Notify people at home when you intend leaving work and what time to expect you home.

- Leave contact numbers at home so that the Council can be contacted if there are concerns for your safety.
- Should you feel ill whilst working alone – seek help immediately – dial 999 if necessary.
- If you are based in a host or community organisation check out their procedures for lone working and personal safety.
- Ensure you are familiar with the Council's lone working risk assessment and undertake a risk assessment for lone working if your activity is not covered. Report any concerns, hazards or potential risks to your line manager immediately.
- If there is a Whiteboard or Signing out system in operation in your office – use it – or leave a note to let people know if and when you can be expected.

5. Procedures for mobile workers working away from a fixed base.

9.1 All staff should leave details of their movements and give an idea of how long they are going to be away from base or home and when they expect to be back. If plans change, ensure the person who knows what time you're expected back knows plans have changed.

9.2 Details of venues being visited and a contact number should always be provided.

9.3 Think about the location of the place you are going. Check out the venue and prepare for the visit beforehand.

9.4 Meet unfamiliar people in public areas.

6. Parking.

10.1 Park your car in a well – lit area – especially if you intend returning to it after dark. If possible, ask someone you know to accompany you to the car. If this is not possible, carry a small torch and personal alarm with you.

7. Buildings / meetings at unfamiliar venues.

11.1 Report to reception on arrival and always sign in and out of the building.

11.2 Ask the receptionist to notify the person you are meeting.

8. Isolated locations and unfamiliar people.

12.1 Avoid meetings in isolated locations; suggest a public place to meet such as a coffee bar etc. If this cannot be avoided, then where possible do not go alone and always notify the person who knows where you are going, when you arrive and leave.

12.2 Check out the person or people you are meeting beforehand; if you feel uncomfortable at any point, make your excuses and leave.

12.3 Avoid walking alone at night.

9. Planning.

13.1 By thinking things through and planning for the unexpected, it will help you to remain confident when faced with an emergency.

13.2 If you work alone on a regular basis, assess any risks with your line manager and identify any measures needed to ensure your personal safety.

10. Out of Hours Call Out.

14.1 Staff who are called out to alarm activation incidents, out of hours, will follow the Working Alone procedure below and must ensure that someone is checking that they return home safely.

11. Communication.

15.1 Managers must consider whether communication is adequate, and in particular:

What level of supervision is required and how is it to be carried out?

Has the lone worker got a system of maintaining contact, e.g. mobile telephone or radio?

Is a CCTV system available and will it be monitored?

15.2 Do not forget to communicate your whereabouts – this is crucial – tell someone about your plans.

12. Reporting an incident.

16.1 It is important to report any incident that takes place, whether it is aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident, to your line manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify any additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening to somebody else.

13. Victim Support / Counselling.

17.1 Victim support and or counselling can be made available, if required, in the event of any aggressive action or subsequent post trauma related that may have an effect on your work or wellbeing.

Working Alone – Procedure

Stage 1: If you will be working alone or out of normal hours, you must follow this procedure

Ensure you are familiar with the Parish Council's lone worker policy and risk assessment. If you think your activity is not covered by that assessment, complete a separate risk assessment for the activity you plan (or ask your manager to do this if you are not used to completing risk assessments).

If you are going anywhere alone in the course of your work, ensure your line manager, a colleague or a Councillor has the address, name of the person you are visiting and their telephone number and let them know when you are going and what time you will be back. You can give this information to a family member if for example you are inspecting a piece of parish land, but not if the information contains any information that could compromise data protection. Make sure the person has seen this policy and they are aware of where to find it and who they should contact if they are concerned.

If you do not intend to return to the office after being out, let anyone needs to know that you will be going straight home and message them when you are home to let them know you are safe.

If you are working alone, ensure your line manager, a colleague, a Councillor or someone who you can rely on, is aware of the time you expect to return. Contact them to let them know you are safe when you return.

If you are working late or at your fixed base alone, make sure you are safe. Lock the main entrance door or office door as appropriate, if you are not expecting any visitors. Make sure someone knows what time you are expected home and seen this policy and knows where to find it and who to contact if they're concerned.

If the person who is looking out for you becomes aware that you have not returned as expected, they will contact you to ensure you are alright. If they cannot make contact with you, they will move to stage 2.

Stage 2: What to do if someone has not returned at the expected time.

Do not panic. Give them an extra half hour if that seems reasonable, for example they may have been delayed in traffic.

Phone the person. If you are unable to contact them straight away – leave a message on their phone and ask them to contact you as soon as possible.

If they have not returned your call within ten minutes, ring them again and leave another message. Also ring any person or organisation they were visiting to check whether they arrived and left their destination. If their anticipated location(s) are close by, send someone to go and look for the person.

If you do not locate them and they have still not contacted anyone – inform the Parish Clerk (or for the Clerk, the Chair or Vice Chair) who will then endeavour to make contact on the member of staff's personal telephone number and to contact the person's last known location. If they are not successful, they will contact the Police for advice and to report the person missing.

If you are unable to contact anyone to discuss this, contact the Police on 101 for advice.