



"Not for self"

Oswestry Rural Parish Council

LONE WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose of this policy and procedure	2
The scope of this policy	2
Policy	2
Definition	2
Responsibilities	2
Risk assessments	3
Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced	3
Health and wellbeing	4
Reporting incidents	5

Purpose of this policy and procedure

The council recognises that some staff work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working.
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone.
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk.
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers.
- Encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

The scope of this policy

This policy applies to all staff, whether full time, part time or temporary workers. It does not apply to councillors.

Policy

The council will protect staff from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone.

Definition

'Lone worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- A caretaker who opens and closes a building either early in the morning or late at night.
- A groundsman tending to green space.
- Office workers who work alone in the premises.
- Homeworkers.

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.

Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

Managers

- Will try to avoid the need for lone working as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure that the lone worker is competent to work alone.
- Ensure that all lone working activities are formally risk assessed so that the risks to lone workers are identified, and necessary control measures and emergency procedures are put in place to minimise those risks.
- Arrangements for lone working must be made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone explained.

- Lone workers must be informed of the hazards, understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place, and have the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment.
- Must raise the alarm if staff cannot be contacted or do not return as anticipated.
- Must ensure that all staff are aware of this 'Lone Working Policy and Procedure' and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working.

Lone workers

- Should take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work.
- Should follow any instruction given by management or the council.
- Should raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working.
- Should not work alone unless there is adequate information to undertake a risk assessment.
- Should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone.

Staff

- Must be aware of colleagues working on their own and be alert to unexpected changes of routine and unanticipated periods where there is no communication.
- Buddies should ensure they maintain and share up to date contact details (see below).

Risk Assessments

Managers must complete (or ensure the completion of) a 'Lone Working Risk Assessment' prior to every lone working activity, and keep it updated as appropriate.

The risk assessment should be:

- Reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work.
- Communicated to all relevant staff or councillors.

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles/tasks. However, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:

- Sudden illness.
- Faulty equipment.
- Travelling alone.
- Remote locations.
- Abuse from members of the public.
- Animal attacks.

Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their particular circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment. For example, the plan for a groundsman working alone with machinery will be more detailed than an administrator working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff and where appropriate, councillors.

Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined):

- Signing-in and out book.
- Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up to date with meeting/visit/lone working details.
- Agreed times and method of contact.
- Buddy scheme.

Buddy scheme

The following information should be written down and kept by the lone worker and their buddy, next of kin and manager (see the Lone Working Buddy Form):

- Name and contact details of the lone worker.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the buddy.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the lone worker's next of kin.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the lone worker's manager.
- Any 'code word' that would indicate that the lone worker needs assistance.

Note, all these details must be kept securely in line with data protection legislation.

If a lone worker changes their contact details, they must inform their buddy and manager.

In circumstances where a buddy system is appropriate as a way of reducing the risks identified in the risk assessment, the buddy must have relevant details about lone working. This may include:

- Where the lone worker is going (address or area if there is no address).
- Details of the purpose (i.e. preparing the hall, grass cutting, meeting).
- Contact details of anyone the lone worker intends to meet, such as additional contact details for the location the lone worker is visiting.
- The lone worker's mode of transport.
- When the lone worker is expected to return.

The lone worker's buddy must know what to do if the lone worker does not return or make contact at the anticipated/agreed time.

Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure personal safety, it is important that the lone worker shares with an appropriate person details of any aspects of their health that could lead to increased risk. This includes pregnancy. The lone worker can then jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by their circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with the confidentiality of the utmost importance.

Reporting incidents

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved.
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence.
- Incident reports might also include recording details of any circumstances that might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support the council to review its risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If a lone worker feels unsafe, unwell, or becomes injured they should call the emergency services if immediate assistance is needed. If possible, the lone worker should call their manager/buddy/councillor/colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do so on their behalf).

The lone worker should call their manager if their plans change because they feel unwell or if they have a domestic emergency when working alone.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

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Notes

The Health and Safety Executive have extensive advice and guidance on homeworking, lone working, including guidance on the risks of lone working.

Homeworking: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

Lone working: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm>

Risks of lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999.

The above Acts impose a duty on employers to ensure that employees who work alone are safe and that adequate risk assessment has been carried out in the workplace.

This Lone Working Policy and Procedure has been drafted specifically for Oswestry Rural Parish Council using a template provided by NALC.