Guidance for service areas on the development of service-specific Lone Working procedures

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Related Documents

Reference	Title	Tier
	Protection of Staff Policy	
	Procedure and Guidance on Managing Violence and Aggression against Staff	
	Recording of Clients of Concern Policy and Procedure	

Contents

Purpose

1.1. This purpose of this guidance is to provide advice and information from which service areas can develop lone working procedures specific to their operations.

1.2. The Council has defined lone working as any situation where a member of staff is engaged in a solo activity out of sight and hearing range of others, where they may potentially be exposed to unacceptable risk.

1.3. Examples of lone working could include:

- Working in a fixed establishment with no other persons on site, or when others may be elsewhere on site

- Working in a remote location, including outdoors

- Working on other employers' premises

- Traveling in the course of work (i.e. other than home to work) to visit customers/clients/sites away from the workplace

(NB: Lone working does not include working from home, for which other procedures apply – please see the Mobile and Flexible Working Policy and Procedure)

1.4. Examples of jobs where lone working may be involved include:

- Social Workers

- Education Welfare Officers

- Civil Enforcement Officers

- Maintenance staff

- Highways staff

- Countryside Rangers

- Planning Officers

- Building Control Officers

- Trading Standards Officers

- Environmental Health Officers

1.5. It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure the safety of staff working alone, away from the workplace or travelling in the course of work.

1.6. Heads of Service must ensure lone working procedures and safe systems of work are established for each service area, where applicable. All service-specific lone working procedures should include a section on how employees are expected to respond to emergency situations.

1.7. Where an individual/post is designated as lone working, the additional hazards involved must be included within the job risk assessment. See section 5 for further details.

2. Guidance for circumstances where employees are visiting clients/customers away from the workplace

2.1. Employees who are visiting clients in premises away from the workplace (e.g. the client's home) should ensure high standards of conduct are maintained and ensure appropriate steps are taken to minimise risk. Below are examples of good practice:

- Before making a visit, employees should check the Clients of Concern register and if the client is listed, consult with the gatekeeper making that entry, to obtain a full assessment of risk to their personal safety. In addition employees must carefully check their own services' records.

- Where there is potential for a violent or aggressive situation, the employee must then consult with his/her manager prior to any visit and develop a plan for the visit, and if necessary, undertake the visit with a colleague or abandon the visit in preference to the client attending the council offices.

- Employees should undertake basic safety precautions, appropriate to the circumstances - e.g. conceal all valuables, ensure clothing/attire is appropriate, wear personal protective equipment if required, consider where the car is parked in relation to the destination, plan the route, check radios/telephones/other safety equipment is working.

- On arrival, employees should introduce themselves to the client/customer and produce their identity card

- Employees should explain the purpose of the visit to the client/customer and give an indication of how long the visit is expected to take

- Employees should ask the client/customer to inform other occupants of his/her presence

- Employees should tell the client/customer if he/she expects to leave the premises and when he/she expects to return

- Employees should remain close to the entrance/exit door of a client's property if there is any potential for violent behaviour. Where possible, discussions could take place at the doorstep or within the entranceway lobby or hallway.

- Where appropriate, on departure the employee should make the premises safe (for example, if undertaking maintenance work) and remove equipment or materials

- Where appropriate, the employee should inform the client/customer when the work will be completed/whether follow-up work will be required

2.2. When making a visit, employees should be helpful at all times and where possible answer questions and queries raised. If a client/customer's manner is aggressive or abusive, arguments or confrontation should be avoided.

2.3. If the employee is unable to answer the query, he/she should give the contact details of a Council employee who may be able to help.

2.4. Should a situation appear to escalate, or if there are warning signs of potential danger, the employee should leave the premises and report the incident to the line manager

2.5. Where an incident of violence or aggression occurs, the line manager must advise the Head of Service who should ensure a record is made on Webrisk (the Council's incident reporting system).

2.6. Where a significant incident occurs, or where an escalation of aggression occurs, the Head of Service must ensure a prompt review meeting is held, involving all relevant staff, to review procedures and make changes to Lone Working Procedures/Safe Working Practices where appropriate. Any changes must be communicated to all staff.

2.7. Where appropriate, the Head of Service will ensure an entry is made on the Clients of Concern register.

(*NB*: *see also Procedure and Guidance on Managing Violence and Aggression against Staff and Recording of Clients of Concern Policy and Procedure for supplementary information on points 2.4 to 2.7).*

2.8. Where employees are away from the work base for prolonged periods or visiting a number of different places/clients, line managers should ensure effective communication systems are established. These should log the movements of the employee and ensure that communication with the employee is maintained on a regular basis (maximum interval of 3 hour, but more frequent contact is required when staff are inexperienced). Systems should include procedures to take action when a call/signal from the lone worker is not received at the appropriate interval.

2.9. Employees should carry a mobile phone and/or pager, call into a designated person in the office at prescribed intervals and provide updates when circumstances change, all of which must be recorded in an Office Diary System/Out Board system. If an employee does not have or is unwilling to use their own mobile phone, a WBC phone should be provided for this purpose or arrangements made for a reverse charges call.

2.10. The employee must also report the time he/she finishes work. There must always be a designated person in the office to take these calls. If visits are made outside of normal working hours, arrangements are needed to use the Council's appointed monitoring station as an alternative.

2.11. In addition to the communication systems described in 2.8 to 2.10, line managers should consider whether it may also be appropriate for the employee to carry an attack alarm or operate a Personal Safety Monitoring System (e.g. INFORM) or a Blackberry fitted with tracking software.

2.12. Where an employee is attending a site where dangerous dogs may be present, a Dog Dazer must be carried.

3.   Guidance for circumstances where employees are handling money

3.1. There is an increased risk of violence and/or assault on employees when carrying money. The requirement to handle money while working alone should therefore be avoided.

3.2. If there are circumstances where an employee is working alone and carrying money, and confronted by a potentially violent or aggressive situation, he/she should hand the money to the perpetrator.

3.3. For more information please see the Procedure and Guidance for managing violence and aggression against staff.

4.   Guidance on Developing Safe Working Systems

4.1. Lone workers face particular problems and, when designing working systems, line managers should consider the following:

Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person or are more people necessary?	Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than staff who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations. Identify all places where staff work alone and ask: Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker? Is there safe access and exit for one person? Can one person safely handle any temporary access equipment (e.g. portable ladders, trestles etc)? Can all plant, substances and goods involved in the work be handled safely by one person? Can one person be expected to safely lift such items, if necessary? Will cash be handled and will there be any risk of violence?
Are there any reasons that would make it unsafe for an employee to work alone? (e.g. medical conditions, a known disability)	Advice can be sought from the Occupational Health Advisor, via the Human Resources Operations team, where appropriate.
What training is needed to ensure proficiency in safety	Training is particularly important where there is limited access to supervision. Lone workers need to fully understand the risks involved in

matters?	their work and understand how to take necessary precautions. Service area procedures must set limits to what can and cannot be undertaken when working alone and specify how employees should act in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training/experience.
How will the employee be supervised?	Lone workers cannot be under constant supervision, but appropriate control must still be provided. The extent of the supervision required will depend on the proficiency and experience of the employee and the risks involved. New/inexperienced employees or those doing roles with a higher level of risk will require higher levels of supervision. It is for the line manager to determine the level of supervision required – not for the employee to determine when supervision is needed. Safety supervision can generally be carried out when visits are made to check the progress and quality of the work. The line manager may chose to make periodic site visits coupled with discussions in which safety issues are addressed.
What happens if a person becomes ill,has an accident or there is an emergency?	Lone workers must be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established by the service area as part of the service-specific Lone Working Procedure, and staff should be trained to implement them. (This information should also be given to solitary contract workers who work on Council premises). Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities and mobile workers should have a first aid kit suitable to treating minor injuries. Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the condition of lone workers (see 2.8 and 2.9)

5.   Guidance on undertaking Risk Assessments

5.1. Risk assessments must be undertaken by WBC trained Risk Assessors and agreed by service/line managers in relation to staff identified as undertaking lone working. This is a legal requirement and Heads of Service must determine who,

among their staff, should be covered by this requirement. Advice can be sought from the Health and Safety team.

5.2. Support material for WBC trained risk assessors is available on the Health & Safety for staff webpages.(see page 1023) .

6.   Training and Support for Employees

6.1. Employees who are identified by their service manager/Head of Service as lone workers must undertake relevant training upon use of any special equipment provided (alarms, Blackberry etc) and procedures for contacting their own service area or the appointed Monitoring Station .

7.   Development and Communication of Service Specific Lone Working Procedures

7.1. Once controls over risks to lone workers are agreed by each service area, they must be listed within a 'service specific' risk assessment, a copy of which is to be provided to all Lone Working officers and posted into the Idrive/XSERVICE/'Risk Assessments for-Sharing' folder, so that other services may compare & contrast their risk control procedures.

7.2. Service-specific Lone Working procedures should be reviewed by the service area at regular intervals, and also when a serious incident occurs.

7.3. Line managers must ensure all lone working employees receive a briefing in the use of the procedure, and this should be included as part of the induction process for all new staff, where relevant.

7.4. Where changes are made to the procedure, service areas should ensure the changes are communicated to all relevant employees.

7.5. Line managers must monitor from time to time that agreed lone working procedures are indeed being followed by the staff concerned.