CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

PART C ARRANGEMENTS

SECTION 21

LONE WORKING

CONTENTS:

Document Tracker

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V1	New arrangement	2007	Peter Dempsey
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INTRODUCTION

Many of the council's employees work alone, either all the time, or as a part of their working day. This gives workers flexibility and autonomy and allows for more efficient service delivery. If it is not carefully managed, however, lone working can place staff in a more vulnerable position. This part of the council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy has been produced to explain some of the hazards and the steps that should be taken to protect our workforce. It should be read in conjunction with other parts of the policy:

- Managing Health and Safety (section 1)
- Violence at Work (section 9)
- Working Remotely (section 22)

Lone working is when a person works by themselves without direct or close supervision. This can include:

- Staff in fixed establishments, such as staying behind to work late at the office, or a school caretaker locking up the school,
- Mobile workers who regularly work away from their fixed base, such as Social Workers and Environmental Health Officers
- Home workers, who are based full or part time at home

Although there is no specific legislation concerning working alone, lone workers should not be placed at any more risk than other employees. The broad duties of health and safety law apply and require identifying hazards, assessing risks, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies.

1.   RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors are required to make sure that arrangements are in place to ensure that appropriate assessments are made of lone working activities

They must ensure these arrangements include;

- measures to control the risks associated with lone working
- financial provision for any additional control's identified as a result of the assessment
- training and advice to staff on understanding and avoiding lone working risks

Managers must ensure that sufficient time and resources are provided for carrying out assessments and for staff training. They must also ensure that;

- measures identified as a result of lone working risk assessments are implemented
- staff undertake any lone working training provided

- lone working arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate
- inform staff any safe working procedures and guidance for working alone safely

Employees have some responsibility for their own health and safety, and this is particularly important in lone working situations. Staff working alone must:

- Follow the procedures designed to protect them,
- Report any safety related problems that they experience
- Take reasonable care of their safety and that of other people,

In addition to these general duties, employees should inform their managers of any health condition, such as diabetes, that might create a greater risk for a person working alone than it would for someone working with colleagues.

2.   CONSULTATION

As with any risk assessment, there must be consultation with employees and employee representatives, such as Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives. They are a valuable source of information about the risks that exist, and can draw from the experience of working in the field in order to help identify suitable and realistic control measures. Guidance on consultation on health and safety issues is contained in the corporate health and safety policy.

3.   TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

As lone workers are not under direct supervision and must take more direct responsibility for their own health and safety, managers need to pay particular attention to their competence, training and supervision. For information on training, contact the CSG Safety, Health and Wellbeing team on 020 8359 7955.

4.   FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about health and safety aspects of lone working refer to the Corporate Health Safety and Welfare Policy:

- Section 1, Management of Health and Safety
- Section 5, First Aid
- Section 9, Violence at Work
- Section 10, Work at Height
- Section 14, Electricity at work
- Section 22, Remote Working

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance (click here)

LONE WORKING

TOOLKIT

PART:

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1.   RISK ASSESSMENT

Managers must ensure that a risk assessment is carried out for any situations where an employee works alone, even if briefly. In some services, lone working is so common that lone working must be considered as part of all risk assessments. Detailed advice on risk assessment is contained in the health and safety arrangement 1, Management of Health and Safety. As with all risk assessments unless very simple, Lone Working Risk Assessments need to be recorded, communicated to employees involved and kept up to date. It is particularly important that control measures identified are carefully managed.

A risk assessment for lone working will need to examine all the significant risks that exist; these may include

- Violence
- Slips, Trips & Falls.
- Road Traffic Accidents
- Using Public Transport
- Needle Stick Injuries
- The employee having an accident or falling ill
- Fire
- Manual handling
- High risk activities, such as working at height, working with harmful substances, dangerous machinery or in harmful environments.
- Isolation, Anxiety/Stress, Boredom.

Risk assessment should help decide the correct level of supervision. There are some high-risk activities where at least one other person may need to be present. Examples include some high-risk confined space working where a supervisor may need to be present, as well as someone dedicated to the rescue role and electrical work at or near exposed live conductors where at least two people are sometimes required.

Dynamic Risk Assessments - It is not always possible to identify all the hazards relating to a role, especially where the work place or area is outside of the council's immediate control. In such situations staff and especially lone workers should be trained to undertake *dynamic risk assessments* at the work location on arrival.

This would cover situations where the actual presence of hazards cannot necessarily be detected in advance such as an unsafe environment or premises, potentially violent person, the threat posed by animals, etc. It is vital that in such circumstances workers are empowered to make the decision as to whether it is safe to remain in that environment.

Step back - Don't rush in. Stop & think
Threat Assessment - Identify potential danger
Options - Need help? Is it safe? What alternatives?
Proceed With caution - Implement safest option

2.   GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

Managers must identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a risk of violence, both physical and verbal?
- Are persons with a disability or young people especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What happens if the person becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency?
- Do first aid arrangements need to be considered?
- Do they work with dangerous machinery?
- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person? Can any temporary access equipment which is necessary, such as portable ladders or trestles, be safely handled by one person?
- Can all the equipment, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.

3.   INCLUSIONS IN LOCAL SAFE WORKING PROCEDURES

Safe working precautions will be identified as control measures in the risk assessment process. These precautions can usually be described as organisational and physical. Many of these precautions will already be in place for employees that spend all of much of their time working alone, for example Violence at Work risk assessments should already have been completed. In this case, it is not necessary to perform a separate assessment, but it should be reviewed and noted.

Organisational precautions - These are precautions such as training, supervision, communication and periodic checks on employees that help ensure safety. An example of this will be a procedure for calling a designated person at certain intervals to confirm that the employee is safe and well and will need to be backed up with detailed procedures in case the employee does not call in, for example, if there is a system for checking on lone workers if they do not call in by an agreed time, there should be periodic tests of the system, to make sure it is working properly.

Physical precautions - These are precautions, such as communication equipment, tracking devices, alarms and protective clothing that are necessary to keep the employee safe. When identifying physical precautions, managers must remember to include other measures and procedures to ensure that they are being used.

Partnership working - Where a lone worker is based at another employer's workplace, the host employer must inform the council of any risks and the control measures that should be taken and managers of lone workers in this position must request this information. Similarly, the council should inform our partners of any risks associated with lone workers working at council workplaces. Effective risk assessment and communication of the risks is essential. For further information, on working in partnership please refer to section 25, of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

Staff at particular risk - Some employees could be at increased risk from lone working, for example, new and expectant mothers, young people under the age of 18, staff with certain medical conditions or disabilities. Advice on risk assessment for people in these groups is contained in health and safety arrangement 1, Management of Health and Safety. In some cases, it may be necessary to consult Occupational Health for advice on medical fitness to work alone.

Accident, Emergency and First Aid Arrangements

Part of the risk assessment will be to consider what kind of accidents and emergencies are foreseeable and what precautions, such as first aid equipment and training are necessary. Detailed information on first aid provision is provided in section 5 of the health and safety policy.

4.   TRAINING

Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and responsible to work alone, and to deal with the unplanned challenges they might face to avoid panic reactions. For example, they need to know when to stop work or withdraw from a situation they consider to be dangerous. Managers must consider this before sending an employee out to work alone. This may be particularly important with new and younger more inexperienced workers.

It is likely that training will be necessary to ensure the level of competence required to do the job safely and effectively without direct supervision and support. Depending on the type of risks present, there may be a need for training in:

- Personal safety
- Dealing with aggression
- Local procedures for obtaining emergency help
- Assessing situations to decide if it is safe to continue
- Procedures for checking in with the office and reporting accidents and incidents
- Basic first aid and fire safety

5.   SUPERVISION

Managers are still responsible for monitoring employees' activities and in particular how well they understand risks associated with the work and follow health and safety instructions. Health and safety supervision is part of general supervision to check the progress and quality of work. Issues such as the correct use of personal protective equipment and following the correct safe procedures for work are particularly important.

There are various methods of supervision, including:

- Studying accident and incident reports, and investigating how these problems have arisen,
- Periodically visiting and observing people working alone,
- Regular telephone contact and meetings
- Alarms or other systems designed to raise the alarm if an employee needs help

As a general rule, the need for supervision is greater for less experienced workers or if the risk of serious injury is higher. Supervision, or some kind of emergency contact with the base, needs to be available at all times.