Lone Working Policy and Procedures

Approved/reviewed by	
SLT body	
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This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Contents

1. Lone working policy

Lone working activities are a necessity for certain roles in school.

WSL recognises its health and safety responsibilities towards staff who are involved in lone working processes and others who may be affected by these activities. Lone workers should not be put at more risk than other staff and specific control measures may be necessary in order to achieve this.

This document outlines a sensible risk-based approach towards lone working. Safe lone working can be achieved by ensuring that safe systems of work are made available through management processes and used by all employees.

All staff are expected to report all incidents which occur in relation to lone working in order to ensure that the organisation can prevent future events by risk assessing appropriately in each case.

2. Defining lone working

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. Lone workers may be found in a range of situations:

People in fixed establishments where:
- Only one person works at the premises.
- People work separately from others, e.g. in isolated areas of a site.
- People work outside normal hours, e.g. maintenance employees.

Mobile, or peripatetic workers operating away from their fixed base:
- Tutors, peripatetic teachers, senior staff,support staff, risk assessors, off-site activities or unfamiliar sites.
- 'Service' workers, for example, Social Workers, Tutors, Local Authority SEND Officers, Case Workers.

This list is not exhaustive.

3. Note on lone working risk assessment

There is no general legal prohibition on working alone. However, a risk assessment of lone working tasks must be carried out.

Lone working can be included as part of an overall risk assessment for an activity or a specific lone working assessment must be carried out. A lone working risk assessment template and an example of a Lone Worker Risk Assessment is included with this guidance.

The individual lone worker is responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment has been carried out prior to commencing their task.

4. Identify the hazard

Activities identified need to be assessed to determine the level of risk they present. This involves looking at factors such as:

- The potential for violence and aggression
- The environment and other activities taking place in the same working area.
- The journey to and from the site and adverse weather conditions.

In addition, the risk assessment must take account of foreseeable emergencies which may arise, such as equipment failure, illness and accidents.

4.1 Potential for violence and aggression and physical hazards

It is recognised that the hazards presented by a particular lone working activity will vary.

The following table identifies four areas for consideration as they are applicable when assessing lone working risks. This table does not contain an exhaustive list and should be used as a starting point.

Parents, carers and the general public.	Individual characteristics can have the potential to contribute towards violence and aggression, e.g. previous history, or the fact that the person is unknown and there is no available information to use as part of the risk assessment process.
The employee who is lone working	Factors which may increase or decrease the chances of violence and aggression occurring, e.g. their competence (level of training, experience, cultural awareness etc), role (e.g. representing authority in enforcement work) and the things they might do (e.g. arriving late for a home visit)
Interaction	The interaction which takes place between school staff and parents, carers the general public, for example, enforcing rules, asking questions about family backgrounds, carrying valuable or personal items, home visits.
The work environment	Off WSL Sites For example; a home visit on another person's property, visiting areas that have poor lighting, internet connection, trips etc. The table below provides further information about the work environment. On WSL Sites Lone working Staff need to be able to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency.

	Lower risk lone working activity includes attending meetings at another site belonging to WSL and home working. Where there is the potential for violence and aggression involving a client, both staff and visitors need to be able to move to a place of safety if a difficult situation arises, for example, exit the meeting room that you are working in.

5. Who is at risk (and when)

The lone working assessment must consider who might be harmed as a result of our activities, for example, pupils, employees, parents, carers, visitors and contractors.

The following table provides details of some specific aspects for consideration when assessing the suitability of lone working for WSL employees:

Pupils with EHCP	Assessment to be carried out in respect of their specific needs and the impact on lone working. Lack of experience and level of maturity. Inability to concentrate for long periods.
New and expectant mothers (pupils and/or staff)	Impaired ability to carry out physically strenuous work. Later stages of pregnancy may increase the risk of falls through reduced visibility and changes to mobility. Risk of early labour or miscarriage through physical assault. Please note: a specific risk assessment is provided for New and Expectant Mothers on Schools' PeopleNet.
Disability (pupils and/or staff)	Impact on ability to make unassisted evacuation. Ability to identify that evacuation is required.
New employees, trainees including inexperienced volunteers	Lack of familiarity through level of experience or training needs. This would be assessed by SLT and training needs to be addressed in advance.
Specific medical conditions (pupils and/or staff)	Some individuals may have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. These may include some health conditions, such as unstable epilepsy or diabetes. The consideration of medical conditions should include both routine activities and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

The following table provides examples of individual consideration for non-employees

Contractors and visitors	Unfamiliar with site layout and emergency procedures.
Person who uses the service attending the school site for a one to one meeting.	● Unfamiliar with exit route from meeting room. ● May become agitated and need to leave the room in anger. ● Need to leave the site urgently.

A lone worker may be seconded to other schools or vice versa, in both cases adequate lone worker arrangements must be put in place.

Lone working may be encountered during part of a working day as well as for lone working occupations, for example, locking and opening up an office base, driving to different work bases to attend meetings.

All of the above considerations are just a guide and are not exhaustive. Each risk assessment must consider the vulnerabilities of the person involved in the lone working task and identify controls to reduce to an acceptable level.

6. Controlling the risk

It is important to ensure that control measures are proportionate to the risk.

A key factor in controlling lone worker risk is to ensure that lone workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their Head of Centre. The extent of supervision must be proportionate to the risk and the competency of the lone worker. The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring that safe working arrangements are in place for all stages of the activity, from the task planning to implementation and completion. These arrangements include ensuring that lone workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their Head of Centre.

6.1   Withdrawing from lone working activity

Head of Centre /Senior Leaders must ensure that the lone worker is supported if they decide that they need to terminate the work they are carrying out to protect their (or others') safety. For example, when adverse weather conditions occur during the course of the work or when the person being visited becomes verbally aggressive and threatening. In this instance a review of the arrangements for similar future work must be carried out.

6.2   Unsafe lone working

In circumstances with all control measures in place, if the assessment identifies that it isn't possible for the task to be carried out safely then lone working should not proceed.

If you are unsure about what controls are needed because the task is considered higher risk or requires more technical/specialist knowledge, further guidance should be sought from the Head of Centre /DSL.

6.3   Supervisory monitoring of lone working

The Head Teacher or, if absent, the Senior Leader in charge must ensure that lone worker monitoring takes place. Monitoring can include:

- Signing off and reviewing risk assessments for lone working

- Making regular contact with the lone worker using mobile phones or telephone to call or text (please refer to Emergency Arrangements in this document for the arrangements needed if a lone worker cannot be contacted). An overview of contact systems are detailed below.

6.3.1 In house contact systems

A contact system is used to maintain telephone contact at predetermined intervals between a nominated contact and lone worker in order to confirm safety. The lone worker must provide the contact with an itinerary. In house contact systems rely on:
- All contact staff knowing the actions to be taken in the event of a lone worker either raising an alert or emergency.
- Staff having the time and concentration to be able to fulfil the requirement of the role
- Full participation of all staff who are involved in system use in order to ensure that it remains robust and has credibility.

A contact can also be used to monitor lone workers in person and respond to meetings for example, when meeting with a service user at the work base. The contact can check through a door vision panel into the room where meetings are carried out /or come into the room and ask a set question at a predetermined time; if assistance is needed it can be established through the response made without raising an alert to the other person(s) in the room.

6.4   Mandatory control measures for potentially violent and aggressive situations

Where there is the potential for violence and aggression the following three risk categories and mandatory control measures are provided. Some staff may fall into more than one category of lone working, therefore all control measures against each individual category may apply.

Additional information is provided for consideration, this information is a guide only and isn't a fully inclusive list of control measures.

Risk Category	Control Measures
Category 1 Staff working in offices or other secure locations outside of normal working hours or who routinely work in these locations on their own. Work of a low risk office type. Examples would include: Teachers, office based employees, travelling to meetings.	**Mandatory** ● Staff must be briefed on the measures required to ensure their workplace is secure if they are lone working and emergency procedures. ● All staff must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their manager/colleagues. Details made available should include location, car make, model, registration number and mobile phone number.
	For guidance and consideration Refer to low risk office lone working procedure
Category 2 Staff working in locations where security is inadequate or where shared premises would allow non-authorised access to their work area. Staff working in unfamiliar locations but not meeting members of the public. Staff visiting established clients who have been assessed as presenting no risk to employees. Staff responding to intruder alarm calls for WSL property out of hours. Firefighters conducting home fire risk assessments or similar activities. Examples would include: Staff whose duties include responding to out of hours intruder alarm calls,	**Mandatory** ● For out of hours alarm calls each team must have clear instructions for employees. ● Staff who are expected to respond to alarm call-outs must have access to a personally issued work mobile with appropriate reception or have indicated that they are willing to use their personal mobile in such circumstances and that it has appropriate network coverage for the area in question. Where possible, lone working to respond to an alarm should be avoided through the use of contracted key holder arrangements. Where it is not possible then a contact arrangement must be put in place. ● Where dealing with violence and aggression training is not provided, the Head Teacher should give clear information to lone workers on what work can and cannot be done alone;

WSL Staff working in shared offices with poor security arrangements.	when to withdraw or stop work; communication and check-in procedures; signs of escalating violence and aggression and emergency procedures. ● Where the problem relates to poor security allowing unauthorised access to work areas, the security of the building should be reviewed, if necessary with the other occupiers or landlord and appropriate measures introduced. ● Daily work tracking arrangements must be put in place in line with the level of risk involved ● All Staff must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their manager/colleagues. Details made available should include location and mobile phone number. ● Provide all other relevant assessment information.
	For guidance and consideration All staff are given appropriate training and support to ensure that staff are confident in dealing with confrontational situations.
Category 3 Staff who visit unknown clients or clients who are known to present challenging or aggressive behaviour in their own homes in order to provide a service. Staff who routinely work alone in remote locations.	**Mandatory** ● Staff will receive training on dealing with confrontational situations. ● Information to include what work can and cannot be done alone; when to withdraw or stop work; communication arrangements and emergency procedures. ● Staff must be briefed on the procedures for lone working before they start such work for the first time. Records of these briefings should be maintained (Induction). ● Where a client presents a known risk of violence, then the visit should be rearranged for a venue where appropriate levels of security or assistance are available. If there are particular reasons for the visit to take place at the client's home then at least two people should attend. ● Provide all other relevant assessment information

6.5 Personal safety - guidance on lone working control measures

A guide on control measures can be found on the Home Visit Risk Assessment outline.

6.6 Violence at work

Detailed guidance for Head of Centre/Senior Staff can be found in the Health and Safety Policy and should be used alongside this document as it applies to lone working activities.

7. Emergency arrangements

Lone workers should be capable of responding to foreseeable emergencies through the development of planned arrangements, for example, fire and first aid needs. The requirements for emergency will depend on the nature of the work being carried out.

Where it is possible a lone worker should withdraw from circumstances of escalating violence and aggression towards them.

Where a lone worker monitoring system is used it must include a means to raise the alarm in the event of (a) failure to contact a lone worker (b) an emergency request for assistance. If there is no response from a lone worker to confirm their safety the police should be contacted and informed of the last known whereabouts after no more than a 30 to 45 minute period of trying to make contact.

8. Risk assessment recording

Lone working issues may be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. However, where lone working has not been considered as part of other risk assessments, a specific risk assessment must be carried out. It is important to note that the original risk assessment may change as the activity itself progresses and further information on the competency of lone workers has been provided in this guide.

9. Risk assessment review

Lone working risk assessments must be regularly reviewed in line with changes which have been identified, for example, a violent incident has occurred during the last visit and it is no longer safe to lone work in the future. All incidents and/or previously unforeseeable risks must be reported by the lone worker as soon as possible, reviewed by the Head of Centre and/ or Senior Staff in their absence and flagged on any systems which will warn other workers of the risk. If no changes have occurred within a twelve month period then lone working risk assessments should be reviewed at that point.

Head of Centre / Senior Staff must ensure that there are adequate reporting and feedback mechanisms are in place which allow for new information to be gathered about any changes which impact on the risk assessment. Changes to working practice must be assessed and communicated to all relevant employees.