



LONE WORKING POLICY 2024

To be reviewed every 3 years or when legislation or guidance changes		
ADOPTED	AMENDED	REVIEWED
25 th October 2023 Minute Ref: 16	27 th March 2024 Minute Ref:69	

Purpose of this policy and procedure

The council recognises that some of our 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, and,
- 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

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

Policy

We 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 working occurs when employees work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

- Working alone in a building (this includes working at home, usually low risk but which must be acknowledged.)
- Working alone outside' normal working hours'
- Working 'out in the field', which, in the case of Rhosddu Community Council, can include visiting residents at home

Working alone is not in itself against the law, and it is often safe to do so, but anyone lone working should not be at more risk than other employees.

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 worker is competent to work alone;
- Ensure that all lone working activities must be formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;
- 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 and 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

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work
- To follow any instruction given by management or the council
- Raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working
- Use any lone working devices as instructed
- Not to work alone where there is adequate information to undertake a risk assessment.
- Inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone

Staff

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

Lone Working Risk Assessment

Managers must identify job roles that involve regular or occasional lone working and make sure that the risks from lone working have been assessed and controlled. Your risk assessment should identify any other issues that are relevant

Safe Working Procedures

Safe working procedures should be sensible (risk based) and designed to enable work to be carried out safely by one person. Effective communication between managers/supervisors and lone workers is a key requirement .

In the event of an emergency, it is important that lone workers are able to contact their manager or a nominated buddy .

Managers should ensure that lone workers fully understand the risks and precautions involved in their work and are able to recognise when to seek advice from elsewhere.

Supervision and Monitoring

As far as is reasonable it is important that a manager knows

- where lone workers are and that they are safe
- when the job is started and when the job is completed
- when the employee has returned safely
- what action to take if there is a problem

The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues. The level of supervision and monitoring needed is a management decision, which should be based on the findings of the risk assessment - the higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision and monitoring required.

Effective means of communication

These are essential to monitor lone worker safety. These may include managers/supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone , or :

- pre-agreed intervals of regular contact between the lone worker and supervisor
- lone worker alarm systems - manually operated or automatic warning devices
- a robust “buddy” system that checks if a lone worker has returned to their base or home once their task is completed

Whichever type(s) of monitoring is/are chosen managers must ensure that employees have received appropriate information, instruction and training and understand the reason/need for monitoring. For Rhosddu Community Council, as there is no joint work base to which employees return to or report in, consideration must be given to the most practical means of doing so, and communicating if in difficulty.

Working from home

Home working arrangements are usually low risk:

1. Breaks

Under the Working Time Regulations employees must have an uninterrupted rest break of not less than 20 minutes where the working day is more than 6 hours long. It is the employee's responsibility to take rest entitlements.

2. Laptop Usage

Display Screen Equipment regulations state that employees must not use laptops for extended periods and should take appropriate short breaks from looking at a screen.

3. Meetings / Supervision

Employees who are not office based need to make themselves available for work meetings, engagements and training at management request, given reasonable notice. Managers and employees can meet at mutually agreed locations during normal working hours.

Home contact details must not be given out to customers/clients. If homeworking involves more than low risk office type work more detailed risk assessments will be required.

Data Protection

Lone worker personal data

In the event of loss of contact with a lone worker, or in a potential emergency their manager or another colleague responding to the situation may attempt to contact the lone worker to check if they are ok. This contact should be by the lone workers work mobile in the first instance. If this contact with the lone worker is not successful it may be appropriate to try contacting the lone worker using their personal contact details , which are held for that specific reason. These will be(this list is not exhaustive): Home telephone number, spouses name and contact number, home address, Make and model of car, Car registration number.

Such personal details as necessary may be shared with the Police or other Emergency Services (to enable them to carry out their role effectively) if required even where consent has been refused/withdrawn.

Managers' and 'Buddys' personal data

Managers, Buddies or others required to monitor lone workers and respond to potential emergency situations should be provided with a work mobile phone for this purpose.

Managers should review their lone worker risk assessments and procedures annually, when there has been an accident / incident, when there has been a change to way the job is done, or when an employee raises a concern about lone worker safety. Any changes should be brought to the attention of the affected lone workers and where necessary additional training should be provided.

Lone Working Procedure- Practical arrangements

As previously "Lone Worker" refers to staff (or in some cases volunteers or Councillors) carrying out their role in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision such as in clients' homes or outside core working hours.

1. Introduction

Rhosddu Community Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff and volunteers who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety.

2. Responsibilities of Line Managers, staff, and others

Line Managers are responsible for the implementation of these guidelines. Staff are responsible for informing their Line Manager of any concerns about working alone. All members of staff must comply with any advice, procedures or working practice introduced to minimise the risks identified regarding working alone.

3. Safe Systems of Work

When staff and volunteers are required to work alone the following specifics should be considered:

- a) Required ability of staff, for example: professional training; experience; medical fitness/physical capability
- b) Suitability of equipment where appropriate
- c) Means of communication, for example: telephone; remote or manual alarm systems;
- d) Emergency procedures, for example: means of summoning help; means of raising alarm
- e) Supervision for new members of staff, who must be confirmed as being competent to work alone before supervision can be relaxed to occasional visits.
- f) Defined working limits: clear procedures should be established as to the limit of what can and cannot be done. Clearly this cannot be defined in general terms, but the general precautionary principle of 'if in doubt ask your line manager' should be observed.

4. Summary

Working alone is not illegal, but it can bring additional risks to a work activity. Rhosddu Community Council has developed these good practice guidelines to control risk and protect staff as far as possible. All those who are required to work alone should familiarise themselves with the guidelines and follow them. Apart from ensuring the lone worker is capable of performing the tasks associated with their job description without supervision, the other most important factors to be certain of are:

- a) The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risk to which they may be exposed
- b) All available information on clients is reviewed before visiting
- c) The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong
- d) A lone worker system is being utilised so that someone knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and the length of time that he/she will be working alone

5. Lone Working Precautions

Each service which requires staff to work alone requires a specific Lone Working Risk Assessment and the provision of good practice guidelines relating to the specific work area in terms of service users and location.

Risk Assessments and precautionary measures should take account of:

- Remoteness of the place visited
- Means of travel
- Potential communication problems
- Likely weather conditions
- Access to telephones or provision of mobile phones and alarms
- Emergency contact arrangements
- Medical conditions which might make a person unsuitable for lone working
- Providing and implementing safe systems of work
- Agreeing arrangements for the provision and use of work equipment
- Assessment of manual handling activities and suitable training
- Agreeing a lone working system which enables every lone worker to have a named member of staff who is aware of their anticipated work pattern

It is the responsibility of individual line managers to monitor the tasks being carried out by staff. In particular, they are responsible for ensuring that if the nature of the task changes in any way a new risk assessment is carried out. Line managers must ensure that any lone worker follows good working practices and safe systems of work.

Control measures will be identified by risk assessment and may include:

- First aid kits will be distributed on a risk management basis of assessment
- All staff working alone are to carry and use a mobile phone, and are responsible for ensuring that the issued phone is fully charged. Any issues with the phone such as loss of signal in certain locations, should be flagged up with the manager.

- Managers must ensure a list of lone workers' emergency contact details is available and up to date.

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF

The following points are listed as basic precautions to observe:

Meeting Clients at an outside location

- Where possible work to an appointment system
- Look after yourself as first priority – it may be necessary to leave the room
- Avoid keeping people waiting but, if unavoidable, keep them informed of the situation
- Make sure the area is welcoming and friendly and invite people to sit down
- Keep between the participant/interviewee and the exit door
- If persons to be interviewed appear drunk, angry or exceptionally agitated do not conduct the interview, if possible, make an alternative date
- Interview rooms must be vacated if members of the public use threatening or violent behaviour
- Note any problems you have had on the file after an interview

Working Outside Core Hours

Some staff may need to work outside core office hours. If you work alone late in the evening out of core office hours you must:

- Tell your line manager the hours you intend to work.
- Ensure you tell a family member what time you expect to return home if you will be working unusual hours. If you live alone have a nominated person who you will contact.
- Staff: record visits on the Outlook calendar including the client initials
- Inform your line manager/named member of staff of the client visit
- Have emergency contact numbers on your phone.

At any time in any circumstances where you feel threatened or unsafe, you should call for assistance. You should be mindful of your own safety.

Lone Visits

Before the visit

- Risk assessments, either by phone or in person, should be carried out prior to a member of staff visiting any client. Concerns should be referred to your line manager.
- If there are any concerns prior to a visit then the member of staff should not make a lone visit but should arrange to be accompanied by a colleague where appropriate or else arrange to meet the person in a more public setting eg library, café.

- Ensure that you have the correct address for the person you intend to visit.
- Ensure that identification is available and have a mobile phone containing emergency contact numbers within easy reach.
- Ensure that your phone is fully charged
- If you are delayed and no longer on schedule, advise your line manager/named member of staff accordingly.
- In case of emergency, make sure that your emergency contact is notified under the heading ICE (In Case of Emergency) on your mobile phone contact list.
- Specifically in relation to the Community Agent service, the Community Agent is encouraged to form an alliance with neighbouring Community Agents, in order that they can arrange to mutually support one another in the case of an anticipated difficult client or initial visit ('buddy up')

During the visit

- A dynamic risk assessment should be made on all visits.
- If on arriving the member of staff has any concerns whatsoever about entering the property, then they should cancel the appointment using their mobile phone or call their line manager/named staff member and give them the telephone number to cancel the appointment.
- If the client does not answer the door after several rings, try phoning their number, check with neighbours or look through windows if safe to do so
- If you have emergency contact details for the client, call them. If you still get no response call the office or named member of staff.
- If this is a regular client and you have a keysafe number, alert your named member of staff before going in and keep the phone line open.
- When the door is answered, show your ID and look at the individual for any signs of aggression or indication that they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, say you have had an urgent call you need to deal with and leave. Call your named member of staff immediately.
- If the client has a pet that is known to be excitable or dangerous, ask for it to be put into another room or secured during the visit.
- Put yourself in an alert frame of mind, , be friendly but always professional, let the client go into each room ahead of you and, where possible, keep yourself between the door and the client. Please remember if in doubt do not make the visit

After the visit

- Carry your keys in your hand
- Carry a torch at night
- Check the interior of your car, particularly behind the front seats before getting in
- DO NOT hang around making notes etc, drive off and stop later in a busy place
- Car alarms are effective as a warning mechanism

- Belong to a national breakdown organisation or have arrangements with local garages in the event of a breakdown
- Do not stop if flagged down at the scene of an accident; telephone the emergency services and check that it has been reported

Safety in your car

- Staff who transport clients must ensure they have the necessary level of insurance
- Always park in the direction that you need to leave
- If you think you are being followed, go directly to the nearest Police station or another 'safe haven', e.g. shop, GP surgery or straight back to base if you are sure someone will be there
- Keep car doors locked when driving around
- Whenever possible keep to well-lit main roads – do not take short cuts down poorly lit roads unless necessary
- Where possible avoid parking in deserted, poorly lit locations or in a confined space that you may get blocked into
- Secure the vehicle when you leave it, do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle

Emergencies at the client's home

- If faced with a medical emergency, then dial 999 and follow the instructions given. If unsure if it is an emergency, then dial 111 and ask for advice.
- If your client is unwell and unable to call the doctor, ask if they wish you to do so or whether they would like you to contact a family member. If they say no and you are concerned about them, contact your Line Manager or named member of staff or the on-call number
- If you smell gas, are aware of an electrical problem, or there is flooding, telephone the appropriate emergency number and follow the instructions given

Emergency system for staff

- There may be no prior warning signs and on entering a house, or other building or area, the member of staff may feel uncomfortable.
- If, at any time during the visit, you feel vulnerable, or a potentially violent or aggressive situation is developing, leave and notify your line manager or named member of staff.
- If you are unable to leave and are able to make a call then a call should be made to your Line Manager or named member of staff to alert them of the situation by using the **AGREED CODE WORD**. This should be done by the member of staff or volunteer, apologising to the client saying that they should have called the office with some information:
 - If concerned you need to ring and say that you should have phoned previously and If possible, also say “ if you need to speak to me further I am with Mr/Mrs/Miss Name, of address for the next ten-fifteen minutes”. The line manager/named member of staff will call after the interval given to see if everything is all right.

- If you leave the client's home before the time indicated please telephone your line manager/named member of staff before you drive off, and advise that you are all right and everything is fine.
- In the event you are very uncomfortable and **need someone to come out to you straight away**, and you are ringing to alert to the fact you are in a difficult or uncomfortable situation, ring your Line Manager or colleague and say: - "I'm in (such and such a place) , I need you to bring me the **PURPLE FILE**"
- The Line Manager will either come out to you(which may take up to 20 minutes) or will contact the local police and ask them to come to your location.

If a member of staff is missing

If a member of staff/volunteer has not returned to the office at an agreed time, the line manager/named member of staff will try to contact the member of staff on their mobile phone. If the phone is not answered, an urgent message to make contact will be left. If concerned a call may also be made to their home telephone number, and then to their partner/ spouse.

If the member of staff has not returned home at the agreed time ,and their partner/nominated person has not been successful in contacting them the partner/nominated person should call the office or on-call number

If the member of staff/volunteer cannot be contacted, the line manager/named member of staff will view the Outlook calendar and contact the client if possible, from their last visit to ascertain their whereabouts.

If the member of staff/volunteer is no longer with the client, the line manager/named member of staff will ascertain what time they left and how much time they would need to either return to work or return home.

If the member of staff/volunteer is missing for over 2 hours, the line manager/named member of staff will ring 101 and report the circumstances of the missing member of staff/volunteer to the police. The police should be provided with the name, address, phone numbers, car registration, details of last visit, time last seen and emergency contact details.

Therefore , with this procedure in mind, members of staff should always ensure that they have completed their task bar for the end of the day prior to going elsewhere, e.g. shopping!

After Incidents have occurred.

The underlying causes of incidents should be identified and put right. Lone workers subject to incidence of violence or aggression should be offered counselling via Occupational Health if necessary

Review

This guide will be reviewed every three years.

APPENDIX 1

Buddy Systems

An effective 'buddy system' allows the lone workers manager, or a nominated colleague, to know:

- where the lone worker is and that they are safe
- when the job is done and they are back safely
- what action to take if there is a problem

Responsibilities Managers must ensure that:

- there is sufficient cover to operate the buddy system effectively including out of hours working
- contingency arrangements are in place for someone else to take over the role of the buddy in case the nominated person is unavailable, for example if the lone working situation extends past the end of the nominated person's normal working day or shift, if the shift varies, or if the nominated person is away on annual leave or off sick.
- suitable means of contact are available to lone workers and buddies (mobile phone coverage, landlines, email, Lync), given the time & location that the work is carried out
- lone workers and nominated buddies receive appropriate instruction and training and understand the need for / requirements of the buddy system
- home and emergency contact details are available for lone workers and their buddy
- manager/senior manager contact details are available to the buddy for escalation purposes
- the buddy system is monitored to ensure it is used consistently and is effective

Lone workers must ensure that they:

- give details of their work schedule to their nominated buddy and agree contact times
- give their vehicle details to the buddy (if travelling as part of their work)
- update their buddy with changes to their schedule (e.g. an overrunning visit)
- make contact with their buddy at the agreed times

Lone workers will be asked give their personal contact details, including mobile and landline contact numbers, home address and next of kin details (name address & contact numbers) in order to assist their managers following up loss of contact/emergency situations. Explicit consent is required, which can be refused or withdrawn. If consent is refused or withdrawn this may hinder the Council's response.

Nominated buddies must ensure that they:

- have all necessary contact details for the lone worker, including emergency contacts (where consent has been given)
- have details of the lone worker's work schedule and agreed contact times
- they are available to receive calls / monitor contact from the lone worker and follow up as necessary contact the lone worker if he/she does not contact the buddy as agreed
- follow the agreed escalation procedures for alerting their senior manager and/or the police if the lone worker cannot be contacted

Work Schedules The lone worker must give sufficient detail of their work schedule and work location(s) to their buddy, so that the buddy or escalating manager can follow up if contact cannot be made with the lone worker.

If the information is not given directly (i.e. email/paper copy) to the buddy it is the lone workers responsibility to ensure that the location of the information is accessible to the buddy. For example details on signing out board, electronic access to shared Outlook calendar, physical access to desk diary.

Contact times Arrange appropriate contact times, for example on arrival at work/site, at set times during the day/shift, at the end of the task/visit/meeting and on arrival at home if not finishing at work base

Escalation Process

There must be clear escalation procedures, outlining who the buddy should be notify if a lone worker cannot be. The escalation process should include named contact points at appropriate stages, including a line manager, senior manager and, ultimately, the police.

Managers nominated as an escalation point should be fully aware of their role and its responsibilities and should not delay escalating concerns once a specified period of time where contact has not been made has elapsed.

In the event of the lone worker not 'reporting in' the buddy should carry out the following actions:

1. If contact has not been made within 30 minutes of the agreed contact time the buddy should phone the lone worker on the number(s) given. If there is no response, leave a voicemail message (if service available) with the time of the call, and state that the Lone Worker is overdue for reporting in.
2. Repeat this after 15 minutes and after another 15 minutes if necessary
3. If still unable to contact or locate the lone worker 1 hour after the agreed contact, the buddy should call the nominated manager.
4. The manager will then follow through the work schedule contacting the last known location if possible. The manager will then try contacting the lone workers personal emergency contacts, without causing undue alarm (if consent has been given for this purpose).
5. The manager will decide if North Wales Police should be informed by contacting 101 (or 999 if it is an emergency situation). If contacted the police should be advised of the Lone Working Procedures, the areas being visited, travel details, any known risks, reporting in times and any contact details; and they should leave a contact number should further information be required.
6. If the police have been contacted the manager should also inform the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council and Chair of relevant Committee.

Review / investigation of incidents

Non-contact situations / incidents should be reviewed after the event to identify what further action is necessary. These could include:

- false alarms (where the lone worker forgets to contact the buddy)
- failure in communications
- buddy / manager not available to respond to contact or escalation
- accidents or violence /aggression incidents

Risk Assessments

Managers must complete (or ensure the completion of) a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to every lone working activity and updated as appropriate. The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and 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. The plan for a groundsman lone working 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 you change your contact details, you must let your buddy and manager know.

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 your lone working, that may include;

- where you are 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 you intend to meet (any additional contact details for the location you are visiting);
- your mode of transport;
- when you are expected to return;

Your buddy must know what to do if you do not return or make contact at the anticipated/agreed time.

Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure your personal safety, it is important that you share any details of any aspects of your health that could lead to increased risk with your manager or specific councillors. This includes pregnancy. You can then jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by your circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with your 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, and,
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances you think 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 us to review our risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If you feel unsafe, unwell, or become injured call the emergency services if you need immediate assistance. If possible, call your manager, buddy or councillor or colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

Call your manager if your plans change because you feel unwell or if you have a domestic emergency when working alone.

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

Guidance

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

Important notice

This document was commissioned by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in 2019 for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.