



Lone Working

Code of Practice

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Working Alone

Background

This Code of Practice gives general guidance on working alone. It offers advice on how Managers can comply with their duties towards lone workers under the ***Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*** and the ***Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999***.

Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and the health and safety of those affected by the work e.g. visitors, contractors and self employed people who employers might engage.

These responsibilities cannot be transferred to employees that work. It is the employers' duty to assess the risks to lone workers and to take steps to avoid or control the risk where necessary.

Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others that may be affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

Assessing and Controlling the Risks

Although there is no general prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of Health and Safety legislation apply. These require the Manager to identify the hazards in the workplace, assess the risks involved and put into place appropriate control measures to avoid or control the risks.

It is important to discuss the issues with employees and their safety representatives, as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate control measures chosen; consultation with employees and their health and safety representatives is a legal duty.

Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, safe systems of work, protective equipment etc. Managers should also take steps to ensure that control measures are being used and carry out a periodic review of the risk assessment to ensure that it is still adequate.

When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back-up should be put into place.

Extra considerations may be required for pregnant workers or young employees.

The significant findings of your risk assessment must be recorded and communicated to those affected.

Safe Working Arrangements for Lone Workers

The following issues should be considered:-

General Issues

- There should be a single point of access into the building (main entrance)
- All other entrances should be secure and not give access into the building (whilst still allowing people to escape in an emergency)
- Have clear signs directing visitors to the main entrance/reception
- Ensure that there is a clear visitor management system in place i.e. signing in book/visitor badges etc

Meetings on Site/Parents Evenings etc

- Make sure that someone else knows who is being seen and that the person being seen knows that their presence has been recorded
- Avoid isolated rooms
- If necessary hold the meeting with another colleague
- A pre-arranged interruption by another member of staff can give added support
- Parents/Carers/Visitors may be in an irate state and under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Have a clear system for summoning help. Those responding should be clear about what action they should take

Home Visits

- The requirement for home visits should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Where staff are expected to carry out home visits there should be a formal procedure in place that is known, understood and followed e.g.
 - ❖ Clear communication i.e. telling someone where you are going and what time you will be expected back
 - ❖ A clear procedure if an employee fails to return as expected
 - ❖ A means of communication i.e. radios/walkie talkies/ mobile telephones
- Avoid unplanned visits.

- Before a visit takes place, check whether there have been any previous incidents that may give cause for concern and therefore may require extra precautions e.g. sending two members of staff.
- A system for sharing information on known or potentially violent pupils/parents/carers.
- Employees should be trained in recognising potential situations i.e. reading body language and learning diffusing techniques as well as being able to deal with aggressive/violent situations.
- Employees should never put themselves at risk and they should be advised to walk away if they feel unsafe. They should always be aware of their possible escape routes.
- Incidents should always be recorded and discussed at team meetings/staff meetings for future learning. Employees may also find this a useful debrief in a “safe environment”.
- Trust your instincts; if you have any doubts about your personal safety or feel that your professionalism may be compromised, you should end the visit/meeting as soon as possible.
- If you are concerned about visiting/meeting a family/client alone ask for the support of a colleague.
- If a dangerous situation is taking place when you arrive for a home visit or develops whilst you are there;
 - ❖ Leave as quickly as possible. As a general rule you should not intervene or try to diffuse the situation
 - ❖ If you feel that a child or other person is at risk contact the Police as soon as possible
 - ❖ If someone needs medical attention, ring for an ambulance
- Following a home visit, it may become clear that there are risks that were previously unknown. These issues should be brought to the attention of your Manager so that the risk assessment can be reviewed and appropriate control measures introduced.

Building Supervisors, Caretakers and Cleaners

- Consideration should be given to the layout of the building, especially :-
 - ❖ dark areas where it is possible for people to hide
 - ❖ location of alarm panel so the alarm can be set as the Building Supervisor/Caretaker leaves the building
 - ❖ isolated buildings e.g. mobile classrooms etc

- Clear communication i.e. telling someone where you are going and what time you will be expected back.
- A clear procedure if an employee fails to return as expected.
- A means of communication i.e. radios/walkie talkies/ mobile telephones etc.

Action

Carry out a formal written risk assessment; identify the hazards and associated risks; implement control measures. The findings of your risk assessment should be discussed with employees.

Remind staff of the importance of reporting and recording incidents.

Arrange to review your risk assessment periodically or following an incident.

Further information on this subject can be obtained from the Health and Safety Team – 0114 2734082 email healthandsafety@sheffield.gov.uk