

# Lone Working Policy

Guidance

## About this guidance

This guidance has been designed as a source to support creating a lone working policy for youth work settings. It is guidance only and should be adapted for your organisation

# Lone Working for Youth Workers

## Principles

This policy has been designed as a source of advice for the managers of staff who may be required to lone work within the Youth Work organisation. The guidance is to be read in conjunction with the organisation's Lone Working Procedure, Safer Working practices and a specific, up-to-date risk assessment. Whilst it is the legal responsibility of the organisation to provide safe systems of work, individuals have a responsibility to follow safe working practices, both within the office environment and outside of it.

These guidelines intend to protect young people, staff and volunteers from any potential risk, where working together one to one might expose them to physical, emotional, medical or other difficulties, and ensure that lone working sessions are well-planned and positive.

It is important to note that lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This requires extra control measures. Precautions should take account of the work involved and unforeseeable emergencies.

## Management of Lone Working

Managers must ensure that they have put into place the following systems to ensure that, once a lone working necessity is identified, a risk assessment is completed which reflects the following:

- Who will be responsible for identifying all possible lone working situations?
- Which fully trained person(s) will carry out the risk assessment?
- Who will review the risk assessment and how often?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring the lone working system to ensure it is working?
- Who will co-ordinate any lone working "buddy system" or other introduced system?
- Who will deliver any related training?
- Who will implement any emergency procedures where necessary, and what will these entail?

## Definition of a Lone Worker

Lone workers are defined by the Health and Safety Executive ([hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)) as "those employees who work by themselves without close or direct supervision". Any lone working requirements of a job must be explained during the recruitment and induction procedure.

All persons falling into this category must have a risk assessment carried out for the time they are working alone, whether a short period or the majority of the time. For example:

- Youth Workers attending late meetings (e.g., Community Forums).
- Working from home.
- Attending Courses.
- Driving to meetings, etc.
- Youth Workers undertaking visits.

## Risk Assessments

The key to maximising Health and Safety wherever lone working is being considered is the performance of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

The risk assessment should address three main features:

1. Whether the work can be done safely by lone workers.
2. What arrangements are needed to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that lone workers are not exposed to significantly more risks than employees who work together.
3. Deciding the level of additional training that will be required for persons working alone, including the training of line managers.

Risk Assessments will be carried out and must be read, approved and signed by the appropriate line managers.

The risk assessment should be about identifying who is at risk and from what, including if current control measures for lone working are adequate, or if more needs to be done to ensure that the person is not at a greater risk than any other employee. If the risk is greater, the employer has a responsibility to eliminate or reduce that risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is important to note that, where a training need is identified in a risk assessment, then that training is **mandatory** and must be delivered within a suitable timeframe.

Employers also have a legal duty to provide certain health and safety provisions for their employees and these duties will apply to lone workers and include facilities under the following legislation:

- The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.

Any accidents, near misses and dangerous occurrences must be reported to a relevant Senior Manager and an incident report form be completed to record the event, making special reference to the fact that a lone worker was involved. All recorded accidents and near misses reported must be reviewed, to ensure lessons are learnt from the incident and if necessary, alterations to the lone working risk assessment and/or risk control measures are made.

## Training

Relevant additional training will be required for lone workers, to promote:

- A reduction in possible incidents.
- A reduction in the seriousness of incidents.
- An improved response to incidents.
- Confidence in staff that they are being supported.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be vital to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations.

## Training & Support programme will include:

- All relevant staff and volunteers attending a training session which includes training related to lone working.
- Volunteers are supervised on a monthly basis, where issues relating to lone working are raised as an agenda item.
- Volunteers attending regular skills sharing sessions where issues relating to lone working are shared and discussed.
- Staff involved in lone working with young people receive regular supervision from their line manager. Any issues relating to lone working are discussed and acted upon.

## Training for lone workers will cover the following areas:

- The lone working guidance, including individual responsibilities.
- The risk assessment in relation to lone working.
- The prevention and management of risks to lone workers.
- The lone working procedures.
- How to use personal attack alarms or other equipment.
- Understanding how to react to violence and aggression.
- Post incident action: reporting, investigation, counselling and other follow-up.

All training delivered to an employee, including lone working training, should be recorded on their CPD training record and should take place during the induction period for new starters, who it is known will be expected to undertake lone working or, for other members of staff, before any lone working tasks are undertaken.

## Travelling advice for lone workers and their managers

Lone workers should provide their line managers with contact details, an explanation of the work they will be doing and the schedule they will be following or working out of hours.

Duty managers with responsibility for lone workers should ensure that their mobile phones are switched on and that they are available. They should ensure there is an effective buddy system in place. They should also have available a list of home contacts and emergency numbers in the event that a concern is raised.

Duty/Line managers have responsibility for following up incidents where lone workers appear to be delayed.

## Establishing an Effective Lone Working Buddy System

A lone working buddy system is a way of staying in contact with someone who is working alone. The buddy is usually a designated person who the lone worker can contact at any time for the duration of their shift. It could also be an automated system that lone workers use simply to check in and out of their work activities.

It is the responsibility of the organisation to decide what level of supervision is required. It is not up to the individual lone worker to decide when they need assistance, or whether they require it at all.

## Responsibilities of a Buddy

The lone working buddy should be a colleague/staff member who understands the nature of the lone worker's job role. It is most important that they're immediately available throughout the duration of the worker's shift.

### A lone working buddy should:

- Have all of the required contact details for the lone worker, including phone number, email address, home address, and information about their next of kin.
- If the lone worker has a vehicle, have details of the vehicle's make, model and registration number.
- Be clear on all of the lone worker's predicted movements during the shift. The buddy must know where the lone worker is meant to be at all times.
- Have all of the above information written down and available to-hand.
- If the lone worker does not get in touch at the agreed intervals, attempt to contact the worker every 10-15 minutes for up to an hour, before escalating the matter.
- If the lone worker can still not be contacted after an hour, notify the Senior Manager in the first instance, and then the emergency services if the lone worker remains out of contact.

The lone worker must have a buddy available at all times during their shift. This means considering shift patterns, and early/late working, and ensuring there are no gaps of unaccounted-for time during the handover from one buddy to another. Careful consideration should also be given to the contingency arrangements:

- What will happen if the nominated buddy is sick or away on leave?
- Is there someone else who is knowledgeable enough to take over if needed?
- Who will communicate this to the lone worker?

## Lone Working - one to one with children and young people

- The work of a Youth Worker may sometimes require an element of one-to-one working to allow the child to talk openly about sensitive issues. For the protection of children and adults, the settings chosen and behaviours adopted must be carefully considered.
- Staff and volunteers will choose public areas such as cafes, instead of secluded or remote meeting places, to meet a child or young person, and only with the knowledge and consent of management and parents/carers.
- Staff and volunteers will have appropriate background knowledge of the young person in advance of the session, including their personal risk assessment, and any medical information. This information is used to plan for a session with a young person, in the choices made, consents sought and preparation for meeting the young person's needs throughout the session. If longer or high-risk activities are planned, this is shared in advance with the relevant Senior Manager and advice followed.
- Sessions should not be for extensive lengths of time. Longer sessions or greater regularity must be agreed with a Senior Manager.
- When lone working, staff and volunteers ensure they always have a charged mobile phone with them, that somebody knows where they are and for how long, and they are aware of the following contact numbers - office and designated staff mobiles.

- All lone working activities undertaken must be age-appropriate and meet requirements outlined in the Health & Safety Policy. Any exceptions to this are agreed and risk assessed in advance with the Senior Manager. It is the responsibility of staff / volunteers to ensure that they and the young person have appropriate clothing, food, drink or equipment for any activities undertaken. Any incidents or accidents must be reported in accordance with our Health & Safety Policy.
- Staff / volunteers will not engage in lone work if either party is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If the young person appears to be under the influence during the session, the adult ends it immediately and ensures the young person is safely returned home in the most appropriate manner.
- If the young person behaves inappropriately in a way likely to expose themselves, staff, volunteers or third parties to offence or harm, the adult must inform a designated member of staff immediately by phone and take their instructions.
- If during a lone working session a child or young person makes any allegations about the adult present or another volunteer or staff member, the adult must ensure the young person is safely returned home in the most appropriate manner and then immediately inform the Senior Manager.
- It is sometimes necessary to collect or return a young person to their home. No home visits should be made other than that necessary. Visits are never without prior arrangement with the family and are always recorded. Staff and volunteers must never remain alone with the young person in their home or visit private areas such as a bedroom.
- The organisation assesses and mitigates any risk to staff or volunteers of visiting the young person's home prior to such an arrangement being made.
- If a child or young person becomes distressed or angry in a lone working situation, this must immediately be reported to the Senior Manager, who will take appropriate risk assessment action.

## Travel Arrangements

### Transporting Children and Young People

Car journeys unavoidably require a secluded one-to-one situation and should be avoided where alternative transport options are possible. Where alternatives are not possible, these journeys should be undertaken only with a specific purpose relevant to the work of the organisation, by prior arrangement and with the permission of the young person and their parent/carer.

Youth work organisations should have an operating procedure for transporting young people in cars that specifies the safeguarding and personal safety arrangements. Any worker who may need to transport young people in a car should be provided with a copy of this procedure and sign to acknowledge receipt of this, with the approval of their line manager. The operating procedure should include the practical measures listed below and any others that are identified by the youth work organisation's risk assessment.

[The HSE provides guidance on driving safety that can be downloaded here.](#)

- Only workers who are approved to transport young people and who have signed to acknowledge the risk assessment and operating procedure will be authorised to do so.
- Lone working with any young person who it is assessed poses a risk to the worker or themselves should not be transported in a car by a single worker.
- If a child or young person urgently needs a lift without prior arrangement, and if there is no alternative, and they may potentially be exposed to a safety risk by a lift not being provided, the journey and the reason for it should be immediately reported to the organisation and parent/carer. If possible, this should be communicated before the lift. If this is not possible due to the safety of the worker or the young person, inform the organisation and parent/carer at the earliest opportunity.
- In making this decision the worker needs to assess if the risk presented through not giving a lift is greater than that of giving a lift. If the risk posed to the young person is greater by not providing a lift the worker should give a lift to the young person. While it is not possible to identify the exact situations where this might be necessary in advance, it is recommended that workers undergo dynamic risk assessment training and discuss scenarios, so staff are empowered to act quickly when necessary.
- If a young person must be transported in a vehicle alone with the driver, they should be asked to occupy a rear seat rather than sit alongside the driver.
- Staff using their own vehicles for transporting children must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, complying with all legislation with its MOT and road tax up to date and appropriately insured\*, that the maximum capacity is not exceeded, and that they are fit to drive without any impact from drugs or alcohol. The driver is legally responsible for ensuring all passengers wear seat belts and that younger, shorter children and those with additional needs use car seats where required under current legislation\*\*.
- Where adults transport children in a vehicle which requires a specialist license/insurance such as a PCV or LGV6, staff must have an appropriate licence and insurance to drive such vehicles. They should also receive familiarisation training in the vehicle from a competent person.
- If the behaviour of a young person is felt to be putting staff, volunteers or other passengers at risk whilst driving, the driver should park the car at the first safe opportunity, take the keys out of the car, and step out of the car in order to call a designated staff member and take their instruction.
- Staff / volunteers will not be asked to drive more than 2 hours without at least a 15-minute break as recommended in the Highway Code. More detail on drivers' hours can be found online [www.gov.uk/drivers-hours/overview](http://www.gov.uk/drivers-hours/overview). When considering drivers' hours, youth work organisations and drivers must consider non-driving work prior to journeys and the fatigue that may arise from this. On residential programmes for example, drivers who may have other duties such as overnight supervision of young people should be well rested the evening before a long journey.
- Only fully trained staff, with agreement from Senior Manager, can transport more than one young person to and from group sessions. Such staff may drive a maximum of three young people. If a car can accommodate more e.g. a 7-seater, an additional adult must also be present throughout the time the young people are being transported.

\* most motor insurers consider driving a young person as part of a voluntary arrangement to fall under social, domestic and pleasure, provided that driving is not described as the main purpose of volunteering and they are not paid for driving, apart from reclaiming costs. Volunteers should check with their insurance provider that this is the case.

\*\*Currently a child must use a booster seat until they are 12 years old or 135cm in height, whichever comes first. Always check for updates.

Lone workers should familiarise themselves with any routes they will be taking. Having planned your route in advance, you should ensure that estimated times of arrival/departure/return/etc are recorded and shared with a designated staff member.

If visiting another agency or institution, request best travel routes and safe parking locations beforehand.

## Additional Driving Considerations:

- Ensure the vehicle has sufficient fuel and is well maintained.
- Try to avoid driving while under undue stress which may affect concentration or the ability to deal calmly with problems that arise.
- Drive defensively to avoid the risk of causing road rage.
- If faced with aggression, go to a location where people are about, e.g., a petrol station.
- If it is necessary to conceal anything while at a visit or location, do so before setting off, so that it is not apparent that things are being hidden when parking up.
- Leave nothing visible in the car.
- The door to the car should be locked
- Park as near as possible to the address/venue being visited and, in a position, so as to be able to drive off straight away: if possible, reverse into the position.
- Go in daylight, where possible. If it is necessary to visit at night, park under streetlights.
- Have your car keys ready as you approach your vehicle and consider carrying a pocket torch.

## On Foot

- Don't 'switch off the world' by wearing a personal stereo.
- Keep to busy, well-lit roads.
- Avoid short-cuts, unless they are known to be as safe as the longer route.
- Walk facing the oncoming traffic to avoid kerb crawlers. If it is necessary to walk in the same direction as the traffic and a driver stops, simply turn and walk the other way.
- Stay aware of the nearest place of safety, such as shops.
- Avoid, as far as possible, waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, especially at night.
- Walk in a confident and positive manner.

Please remember that the guidance in this document is intended for all staff and if you find that lone working will form part of your job, check with your line manager that the necessary risk assessment has been carried out and discuss the safety methods you will be using.

Above all, you have responsibility for your own safety and should not proceed with any visit, journey or action that you do not feel comfortable and safe with. In the first instance you should discuss your concerns with your line manager, but you may also wish to discuss matters with your Health/Safety/Wellbeing Adviser.

## Post-incident Reporting

All incidents, accidents, near misses, or similar must be reported. Any injuries, however minor, must be recorded on the relevant form and if necessary, in the accident book. This includes recording the details of any vehicle related incident that occurs whilst travelling to a business meeting.

Since it is impossible to guarantee safety, post incident support will be available to anyone who does become a victim of violence. Such services ensure the organisation is able to respond in terms of providing support, practical help and access to sources of specialist help if required.

Research has shown that most people who have been subjected to violence feel the need to talk through their experience as soon as possible after the event, preferably within 24 hours. Staff will be provided with an opportunity to discuss their experience accordingly and if necessary, signposted to appropriate supportive services.