

TIDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL - LONE WORKING AND OUTREACH POLICY

Purpose of this policy and procedure	2
The scope of this policy	2
Policy	2
Definition	2
Responsibilities	2
Risk assessments	3
Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced	4
Health and wellbeing	5
Reporting incidents	5

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 Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- A caretaker who opens and closes a hall either early in the morning or late at night
- A groundsman tending to green space
- Office workers who work alone in the premises, and,
- Homeworkers.

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.

'Outreach' is when support provided by Tidenham Parish Council staff is carried out at locations other than Parish Council premises. This includes meeting people outside, or at the premises of a partner agency and home visiting.

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
- 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)

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
- Personal Safety App
- Internal WhatsApp Group

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.
- Make, model, colour and registration number of the lone worker's car.
- 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.

Personal Safety App

Free safety apps such as Holly Guard offer a range of safeguards such as monitoring of movements, nonresponse alerts, and alerts if in danger.

Internal WhatsApp Group

Agreed group including staff and/or councillors to share messages at agreed checking in times.

Transporting in Own Vehicle

Staff should only use their own vehicles to transport members of the community when other means of transport are not available or not practical.

Prior to transporting in their own vehicles, staff should ensure that their personal belongings and/ or information cannot be seen or accessed.

Details of the passenger, destination and expected time of arrival and return must be notified through the 'buddy' system and any significant changes to time or location which the staff member makes should be communicated.

If there are any problems whilst driving, staff should stop the car in a safe place as soon as possible and call for assistance.

Written consent from a parent / carer must be obtained before transporting anyone under the age of 18.

Staff using their own vehicles must have Business Use vehicle insurance.

Visiting Somebody in Their Own Home

Prior to undertaking an initial home visit to an unknown person, staff must make use of all available information provided by the referrer to assess the risk of visiting that individual in their home.

Initial visits should include a brief visual check of the environment, including exit routes and areas of the property in which escape routes could be blocked, so that future sessions can be delivered safely.

Wherever possible, all visits should be arranged in advance.

Home visits to somebody aged under 18 years may be undertaken, providing that a risk assessment has been undertaken and the member of staff is satisfied that all necessary control measures are in place.

If a member of staff arrives at someone's home to find other people present who were not expected to be there, they should consider whether to continue with the session, or whether it would be preferable to offer to come back another time or ask for the visitors to be moved to another room for the duration of the session.

A parent / carer must be present at the premises when visiting somebody under the age of 18.

Working from Other Agency Venues

A single staff member can deliver services from another agency as long as sufficient staff from the host agency or other organisations will be present at all times.

Where practicable staff should avoid carrying out lone working in another agency's premises.

Staff are responsible for ensuring that the host agency is aware of the nature of the work that will be offered whilst using their premises.

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.

Adopted – October 2021, Minute 21/22 Page 18 Item 14.

Reviewed and Re-adopted to include Outreach elements February 2022, Minute 21/22 Page 33 Item 14.

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 is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

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This document has been written by the HR Services Partnership – a company that provides HR advice and guidance to town and parish councils. Please contact them on 01403 240 205 for information about their services.