

# Corporate Health & Safety Manual

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3.5 LONE WORKING

**Guidance and Procedures**

## Summary

* Lone Working is not, in itself, against the law, and it will often be safe to do so.
* Managers to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out and, if appropriate, that clear written procedures are drawn up and put into place to ensure that the work can be carried out safely and without risk to health
* Managers to ensure that Lone Workers have suitable and sufficient training, monitoring and where required supervision.
* Managers need to check that lone workers have no medical conditions that may make them unsuitable for working alone.
* Lone Workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations.

1. **Legal Requirements**

There is no overall legal prohibition on working alone, but the general duties of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the specific duties of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 still apply. These require the identification of the hazards at work, assessment of any significant risks involved, and devising and implementing safe working arrangements to ensure that the risks are either eliminated or adequately controlled.

Many employees work alone and in the majority of cases they do so without significant risk. For example, persons working alone in offices carrying out typical office activities outside normal working hours are unlikely to be at significant risk. However, there are occasions when it is not possible to devise arrangements for work to be done safely by one person. In these cases, alternative arrangements involving help or back up have to be put into place.

1. **Important Definitions**

‘Lone Working’ refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of individuals or in their own home, or may be the only staff member present in an office or other establishment maintained by South Tyneside Council or by one of its partner agencies. They will be physically isolated from colleagues, and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

It is recognised that any employee may spend a limited amount of their working time ‘alone’.

1. **Procedures**

**Lone Worker Risk Assessments**

Where a person may have to, work alone, it is the responsibility of Managers to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out and, if appropriate, that clear written procedures are drawn up and put into place to ensure that the work can be carried out safely and without risk to health. Lone working must not be undertaken where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the work might result in personal injury or trauma. Those tasks which are deemed unacceptable to be performed by a lone worker under any circumstances must be documented together with the local arrangements for safety for those tasks which are deemed acceptable.

Any risk assessments and written procedures are shared with relevant staff

**Safe Working Procedures**

Establishing safe working procedures for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees. The obvious question that has to be asked is whether one person can adequately control the risks associated with the work.

Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than others who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations. All situations where employees may be working alone should be identified.

**Responsibilities**

*Heads of Service or Assistant Heads of Service Responsibilities*

* + Ensuring their risk assessments are completed within their service areas.
  + Developing local arrangements to reduce the risks
  + Putting processes in place to deal with any emergency situation e.g. in the event that a

member of staff cannot be contacted or phones in to report they are in immediate danger

* + Implement any necessary remedial action identified by incidents, audits or inspections.
  + Allocating sufficient resources . funds for procurement of equipment or changes to

working practices where it will reduce the risk of injury or ill health.

• Liaising with the controllers of premises where STC staff are based to ensure their safety in those premises, ensuring lone working has been considered.

* + Where appropriate will consult with the Occupational Health & Safety Team.
  + Periodically review and monitor the status of the risk assessments in place.

*Manager / Team Leader Responsibilities*

* + To undertake and record risk assessments and review their effectiveness at regular

intervals

* + Involve staff when undertaking the required risk assessment process.
  + Communicate the significant findings of the assessments and monitor compliance with

the recommendations and control measures.

* + Ensure that other agencies are informed of risk assessments, any subsequent reviews

and changes to work plan.

* + Review operations and work activities to identify situations where employees maybe

exposed to foreseeable risks etc, verbal abuse, physical violence or a work related safety hazard.

* + Establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done while

working alone, and where appropriate when to stop work and seek advice.

* + Ensure control measures are in place, which include instruction, training and

supervision.

* + Effectively implement and monitor processes within their service / department to deal

with emergency situations and ensure they are frequently tested. This should include having details of lone working readily available.

* + Ensure the staff have access to the Risk of Harm Marker and Vulnerable Indicator

information

* + Managers should advise staff to complete the Incident Reporting Form (IRF) form

where necessary.

* + Incidents should be reported to the Occupational Health & Safety Team and were

appropriate the Community Safety Team.

* + Lone workers to have mobile phones, and / or other lone working safety devices that

can assist in call for help in an emergency.

* + Always notify the Police of serious incidents.

*Employee Responsibilities*

* + To take care of themselves and other staff affected by their work activities.
  + To cooperate with their Manager in assessing lone working activities.
  + Ensure they have checked the Risk of Harm Hazard Mark and Vulnerable Indicator

information before lone working.

* Ensure any personal protective equipment (PPE) provided is available, worn and any devices where appropriate are fully charged and working e.g. lone working devices, body cameras.
* Report any incidents of violent and aggressive behaviour at work using the IRF form, which should be completed in conjunction with their manager. The IRF form should then be forwarded to the Occupational Health & Safety Team and where appropriate the Community Safety Team.
* Notify the Police of serious incidents.
* Comply with the risk assessment recommendations and any lone working procedures and report to their manager any problems encountered whilst working alone.
* Comply with any information, instruction and training which are provided to minimise the risks to their health and safety.
* Report to their Manager any personal conditions which may affect their capability to undertake certain activities.

*Occupational Health & Safety Team Responsibilities*

* Provide support and guidance to both managers and staff throughout the process.
* Investigate aggressive incidents involving staff via the IRF Form.
* Inform Community Safety Team of reported incidents.

**Training, Monitoring and Supervision**

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore, need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced. Managers should, therefore, establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone, and, where appropriate, when to stop the work and seek advice.

Although Lone Workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on STC to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision complements information, instruction and training and helps to ensure that staff understands the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of the supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work to identify and handle safety issues. Persons new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job, which presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first.

The extent of the supervision required is a management decision, it should not be left to the individual to decide they require assistance.

**Apprentices over the age of 18**

The decision for allowing apprentices over the age of 18 to work alone is the responsibility of their supervisor. The supervisor is better placed to know the apprentice’s capabilities and competence to be able to work alone.

**Personal Safety**

* Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone / other electronic lone working safety device is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction in risk.
* Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety as they would in any other circumstances.
* Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager.
* Staff must inform their manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when the staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their office base.
* Manager must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, (e.g. flexi system) and that staff use it.
* Staff to keep their calendars updated with appointment details
* Staff to inform managers if they are to deviate from any pre planned visits
* If a member of staff does not report in as expected an agreed plan should be implemented to ensure that colleagues raise the alarm and alert management, and assist in the tracking down of the missing person.
* Staff should provide their manager’s with personal details such as next of kin, car registration which will only be used in the event an emergency.
* Reasonable precautions to consider might include: checking directions for the destination, checking whether a person is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them, ensuring your car, if used is road-worthy and has breakdown cover, avoid where possible poorly lit or deserted areas taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night ensuring that items such as laptops, or mobile phones are carried discreetly.
* Out of normal working hours, should an emergency arise staff should contact the out of hours contact.

**Illness, accidents and emergencies**

Lone Workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established in departments and the appropriate persons given clear and concise training and instructions on how to implement them.

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of Lone Workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period. In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

* Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors Lone Workers.
* Procedures where regular contact between the Lone Worker and a member of Supervisory staff is maintained using an effective means of communication.
* Lone working devices, which can raise the alarm in an emergency and are activated by the absence of activity from the Lone Worker.

**If a person has a medical condition, are they able to work alone?**

If an employee discloses a disability or chronic health problem that may make them unsuitable for working alone they should raise this with their Manager. The Manager should complete a Risk Assessment of the employee and the work they complete and should seek further advice and guidance from the Occupational Health Department if necessary.

**Working from home**

Whilst employees are working from home they have the same level of support and assistance as they would if they were working from an office or other STC buildings. Managers should ensure that suitable risk assessments are completed prior to people working from home and consider the additional measures which may need to be taken to keep the employee safe and healthy. These measures would include considering the security of the home e.g. not giving out home addresses or phone numbers to clients or customers and any other equipment and training which may be required.

1. **Links to Guidance**

HSE - Protecting Lone Workers

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

HSE - Example Risk Assessments/Case Studies

[www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies)

HSE - Violence at Work: A guide for employers (ING69)

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

Suzy Lamplugh Trust

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/>

Legislation, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/contents/made>

3.1 Risk Assessment Procedures <http://intranet.stc.local/documents/documentLibrary_DocumentSummary.asp?pk_document=6513>

3.11. Violence at Work Procedures <http://intranet.st.net/documents/documentLibrary_DocumentSummary.asp?pk_document=6532&class=1858>

3.15 Accident and Incident Reporting Procedures

<http://intranet.stc.local/documents/documentLibrary_DocumentSummary.asp?pk_document=6536>

1. **Review**

These guidance and procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## Document approved by: H&S Policy Review Group

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