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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Increasing numbers of jobs can require people to be left alone and isolated. Many of the hazards that lone workers face are similar to those faced by other workers, however, the risks involved may be greater because the worker is on their own and some groups such as health, postal, security, and the emergency services are frequently attacked.

Working alone is not in itself against the law and it will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers to consider carefully, and then deal with, any health and safety risks for people working alone.

2.0   GENERAL STATEMENT

Lancaster City Council have a legal responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees while at work. There are times when staff are required to work alone, this may be as a substantial part of their working life or on an occasional basis. The purpose of this policy therefore is to assess the hazards and associated risks to lone workers and implement and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, such preventative measures as are necessary to eliminate where reasonably practicable and where not to minimise the risks to personal safety faced by employees who work alone or away from their base location.

Implementation: This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone, at any time, in any situation described in the definition below

Compliance: This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement.

3.0   DEFINITION

The HSE says defines lone workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision".

This includes those in fixed establishments e.g.

- People working alone in a residential home, small workshop, petrol station, kiosk or shop
- People working on their own outside normal hours, e.g. cleaners and security, maintenance or repair staff

and mobile workers working away from a fixed base – e.g.

- Workers involved in construction, maintenance and repair, plant installation and cleaning work
- Service workers, including postal staff, social and medical workers, care/support workers working in the community, social workers, estate agents, and sales or service representatives visiting domestic and commercial premises

A huge number of jobs can require people to be left alone and isolated. Many of the hazards that lone workers face are similar to those faced by other workers. However, the risks involved may be greater because the worker is on their own.

4.0   ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Organisation meets its statutory obligations and that effective arrangements for the management of health and safety are put in place.

Chief Officer

The Chief Officer of each department has executive responsibility to manage Health and Safety including compliance with Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. 1974 and other relevant legislation, best practice guidance and Company policies to meet legal and organisational requirements.

Health and Safety Team

The Health and Safety Team is responsible for advising on appropriate measures to meet legal and organisational requirements as required and for regularly monitoring and reviewing any incidents / accident that involve lone working issues to ensure that the provisions of this policy were implemented.

Line Managers

Line Managers will ensure:
- Avoidance of lone working where possible.
- Ensure that risk assessments regarding lone working are written and regularly reviewed.
- Ensure that safe systems of work are developed and implemented.
- Employees are informed of their responsibilities under this policy.
- Ensure that all employees comply with relevant guidelines and policies.
- Relevant training will be provided to lone working staff where necessary.
- All accident/incident/reports involving lone working are properly recorded using the relevant electronic system for staff and the people supported, investigated, and monitored.
- Ensure that Bank and Agency staff have undergone appropriate induction before assigned any lone working.

- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff following an incident e.g. debriefing, Human Resources, Employee Assistance Programme etc.

Employees / Contractors are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to the lone working policy and guidelines.
- Undertaking appropriate training related to lone working and health and safety.
- Reporting any concerns to their manager as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- Taking all reasonable steps to maintain their own personal health and safety and that of other work colleagues.
- Reporting of all adverse incidents, as soon as possible, on the relevant electronic system.

5.0   RISK ASSESSMENT

There is a legislative duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. This must include:

- Involving workers when considering potential risks and measures to control them.
- Taking steps to ensure risks are removed where possible, or putting in place control measures, e.g. carefully selecting work equipment to ensure that staff are able to perform the required tasks in safety.
- Instruction, training, and supervision.
- Reviewing risk assessments periodically or when there has been a significant change in working practice.

The following should also be considered in the risk assessment process:

- Arrangements for visiting residential site visits, including consideration of alternatives.
- Travelling between appointments.
- Reporting and recording arrangements.
- Communication (e.g. mobile telephones / radios) and traceability (e.g. visit log at base).
- Personal Safety training in relation to lone working and as work content may require e.g. violence and aggression.
- Being aware that some tasks may be too difficult or dangerous to be carried out by an unaccompanied worker.
- Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, informing that other employer of the risks and the required control measures.
- When a risk assessment shows it is not possible for the work to be conducted safely by a lone worker, addressing that risk by making arrangements to provide help or back-up.

Risk assessment should also result in managers being able to decide on the right level of supervision. There are some high-risk activities where at least one other person may need to be present. Examples include:

- Working in a confined space, where a supervisor may need to be present, along with someone dedicated to the rescue role;
- Working at or near exposed live electricity conductors;

Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and manager have a duty to assess & reduce the risks which lone working presents.

6.0   THE HAZARDS

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People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Accident or sudden illness may occur when there is no one to summon help or first aid.
- Having a medical condition which causes limitations in the workplace.
- Violent behaviour from members of the public especially in public places.
- Attempting tasks that cannot safely be done by one person, e.g. heavy lifting of heavy or unwieldy loads.

Other hazards that may occur are include:

- Fire
- Defective vehicles
- Driving including road rage
- Electric Shock
- Exposure to chemicals
- Faulty equipment
- Poor or lack of training
- Inexperience of the working environment or appreciation of the potential risks
- Pregnant or young workers
- Slips trips or falls
- Working over or near water, including canals, rivers etc.
- Confined spaces
- Poor lighting

The perception of these hazards or the actual risk may be different for different people. For example, the inexperience of a newly trained worker may underestimate the risks. Some workers may feel particularly vulnerable to violence away from the workplace or after dark. A medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.

The supervisor / manager must consider these factors when completing risk assessments and take the appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high risk activities.

7.0   ASSESSMENT OF RISK – EVALUATE THE RISK & DECIDE ON PRECAUTIONS

Supervisors and managers are to discuss with the employees concerned the situations they face and decide on the level of risk posed by the situation and whether or not additional precautions are required or even if the job / task can be completed safely by a single person. Depending on the results it may be required to introduce new precautions, safe working practices or provide personal protective equipment.

The findings should be clearly recorded on the risk assessment template and consider, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- The individual concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
    - Including the person undertaking the task
    - Including the client behaviours & associated risks
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations
- Staffing levels & availability
- Any other special circumstances

All available information should be taken into account. Where there is reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

While staff resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

Staff must remain vigilant and flexible regarding the current risk assessment & system of work as special circumstances may arise that increase the risk – a person's response, unpredictable nature of the client or resident, the indication of alcohol or substance use, the presence of a dog, or any other factors specific to the situation which might affect the assessment.

8.0   PLANNING

- Staff should be fully briefed in relation to the risks as well as the task itself.
- Communication, checking in and call back arrangements must be in place – the system must ensure that the return of the worker or a call from them is actively expected and waited for, and that action is taken to contact them if they do not return or the call is not made.
- The team manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.

9.0   MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF LONE WORKING

Supervision

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. However, supervisors/managers can ensure that the employees understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions. They can put into place arrangements for the individual to contact a supervisor if they need additional support or guidance. Employees new to a job or undergoing training may need to be accompanied initially. Regular contact by phone or radio may be appropriate. The supervisor or manager should assess what level of supervision is required.

Personal Safety

Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances whilst at work.

Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a backup plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk. Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made together with the supervisor / manager.

For occasional or low risk lone workers, all that may be required is a system of basic communication.
Staff must ensure they have informed their line manager / supervisor or other identified person of 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 tasks when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather then returning to their base.

The system must ensure that the return of the worker or a call from them is actively expected and waited for, and that action is taken to contact them if they do not return, or the call is not made. In the event a person does not report in after finishing a visit / task the designated person should instigate a contact procedure, i.e. a mobile phone call, if there is still no contact a senior manager should be informed and a decision taken whether to go to the last known address or to alert the police.

All employees involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal systems for safe lone working.

Staff carrying out resident visits must provide an accurate plan of the day's activities and must inform their line manager if they deviate from the plan.

Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team & work activity.

Issues to take into account include:

- Staffing levels and availability
- The identified risks
- Measures in place to reduce those risks.

Staff may be given a mobile phone or personal radio as an identified measure regarding lone working, they are responsible for checking that it is charged and in working order.

People Safe

The organisation uses a lone working system called People Safe as the preferred option. When staff members are given the People Safe system and equipment it is mandatory that it is used correctly.

People Safe is a lone worker alarm which is provided to an employee working alone so that they can signal for help when no one else is around. Without colleagues nearby, the outcome of any incident is likely to be more severe for lone workers. Equipped with a lone worker alarm, they can raise a SOS alert which is handled by a 24/7 Alarm Receiving Centre who can send help to their location.

10.0   SPECIFIC PROCESSES

Residents / Property Visits

Employees undertaking a residents / property visit and lone working must have access to the following information before they make the home visit:

- Any risk assessment carried out on the home, occupants, pets.
- Relevant information on previous visits.
- Details of incidents or crisis that may affect being a lone worker.
- Emergency contact details, including the 24-hour on call service.

Lone working in offices

All offices should have door entry systems so that entry can be restricted, and the identity of visitors verified. Lone working in the office will be included in the risk assessment which will identify particular risks associated with lone working and appropriate safeguards put in place.

Lone working out of 'office hours'

When making resident / property visits or working when the office will not be open, the employee must inform another colleague, manager or personal contact to tell them where they will be working and when they expect to leave particular locations. On leaving the working location they are to call the colleague, manager or personal contact to inform them that they have left safely.

If the colleague, manager or personal contact has not heard from an employee by the time expected, they are to call that employee on their mobile phone to check that everything is alright and no further action is required. If necessary a 'code' word could be used to indicate they might require assistance.

If no contact is made the colleague, supervisor or personal contact they might find it necessary to visit the location or alert the police.

All lone working should be subject to regular risk assessment on a case by case basis and where the 'risk' is considered low it may not be necessary to use the above procedures. This will be left to the discretion of the individual employee and the Manager.

Lone Working away from base location

When attending courses, seminars, workshops or visiting other organisations there should be regular contact with their line manager or other designated person to ensure the safety and wellbeing when travelling or lone working.

Emergencies

If a situation arises where it is necessary or appropriate to call for assistance or contact emergency services, the employee must have access to a mobile telephone with up-to-date emergency contact information.

If personal safety is compromised the employee should be made aware that they may leave the home/location immediately and find somewhere safe, preferably with other people. If the incident is serious a Senior Manager must be informed as soon as possible.

11.0   STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

Staff working from their own home should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential.

There should be regular contact with their line manager or other designated person if working at home for extended periods. An appropriate reporting-in system should be used if making visits from home, or for those staff who are required to drive long distances, the implementation of a buddy system for checking that each other are safe and well on a suitable basis (at the end of each day).

12.0   PERSONAL SAFETY

Reasonable precautions might include:
- Ensure your mobile phone or radio is charged and working at the start of your shift (radio check)
- Carry a People Safe personal alarm / pendant when issued by line manager.
- If issued with an alarm pendant, weekly check that it is functioning properly.
- Checking if a resident is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them.
- Checking directions for the destination.
- Ensure your car is roadworthy, has breakdown cover & suitable emergency equipment.
- Keep your car locked at all times.
- Fitting a discreet emergency call button.
- Ensuring that items such as laptops & mobile phones are carried discreetly.
- Taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night.
- Parking in lit areas under a streetlight.
- Avoid if possible poorly lit or deserted areas.
- Avoid walking down dark alley ways.
- Walk facing the traffic.

The agreed plan for contact or emergency response may be a standard one for the team or specific to the individual situation. It should be recorded and readily accessible by the identified person, and updated as necessary. It may be appropriate to agree a code word or phrase to indicate that assistance is required.

Pay consideration to the clothing you are wearing to ensure that specific items will not offer an assailant an advantage. Similarly, be aware that pens, pencils, keys or heavy bags may also be used to cause injury.

Record of vehicle details; those who use their private cars for conducting residents / property visits should have full vehicle details recorded by their line manager, i.e. registration, make and colour.

13.0 INFORMATION, TRAINING & GUIDANCE

Line managers are to identify which of their staff undertake lone working and ensure they have the appropriate level of training, equipment and information to enable them to carry out their duties as safe as reasonably practicable. By reading through this policy with staff it should ensure that all parties are well equipped and aware of possible hazards together with safety precautions that can be put in place to protect staff.

Everyone should remember that their own personal safety should be a priority, they should not get involved in any situation that is escalating or where there is concern that it might result in violence. If an individual's personal safety is compromised they should get out of the situation and summon help.

14.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process.

Where appropriate, lone working and risk assessment will be regular agenda items for team meetings.

Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with their supervisor / manager or with the team, as appropriate.
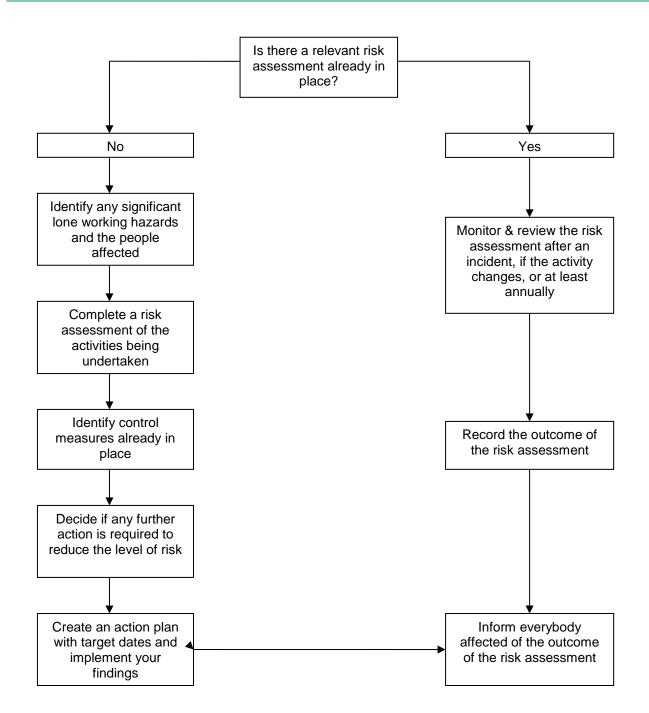
This policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

15.0 LONE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT FLOW DIAGRAM

Is there a relevant risk assessment already in place?

No → Identify any significant lone working hazards and the people affected

→ Complete a risk assessment of the activities being undertaken

→ Identify control measures already in place

→ Decide if any further action is required to reduce the level of risk

→ Create an action plan with target dates and implement your findings

Yes → Monitor & review the risk assessment after an incident, if the activity changes, or at least annually

→ Record the outcome of the risk assessment

→ Inform everybody affected of the outcome of the risk assessment

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