



LONE WORKING POLICY

APRIL 2020



Healthy Minds (Calderdale Wellbeing)

LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy Statement

Lone working is defined as someone who works alone at a service venue or in an office building, including Healthy Minds' premises. Healthy Minds has a duty of care and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of its staff, volunteers and trustees in the workplace. Healthy Minds will seek to ensure that the need for a staff member to work alone is minimised. A Healthy Minds volunteer or trustee should not work alone, unless it they have had specific training and where agreed with Volunteer Coordinator and Manager (eg peer mentoring). Wherever possible Healthy Minds will try to secure venues where staff from other organisations are present in the building.

Where a staff member is involved in lone working, Healthy Minds will conduct a thorough risk assessment and agree safeguards to lessen risk.

Please also read ***Healthy Minds Healthy and Safety Policy***.

Responsibilities

The Chief Officer is responsible for implementing this policy and ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read the policy.

Aims of the Policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable
- Ensure that appropriate support and training is available to all staff that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working

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1. Legal Framework

There is no legal prohibition on working alone. However, there are General Duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and requirements to assess and control risks in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992.

2. Risk Assessments

Comprehensive risk assessments will be used to maximise the safety of lone workers

Risk assessments should be carried out where lone working is a regular occurrence.

A risk assessment should be carried out by both the worker and the line manager and jointly signed off. Copies will be made available to the Committee for information.

Risk assessments should take into account the following:

- Are access and exit arrangements safe
- Is the lone worker fully familiar with how to respond in an emergency, e.g. how to operate the fire alarm?
- Are there effective communication links?
- Is there access to a First Aid kit?
- Can the lone worker make regular contact with another person i.e. before and after a shift?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is the lone worker fully trained for this area of work?
- Are the whereabouts of the lone worker known by another staff member within the organisation?

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 in place.

In other circumstances lone working may be permitted but only when the work activity has been subject to a careful and comprehensive risk assessment.

As with all risk assessments the findings should be reviewed at reasonable intervals and in light of experience.

Risk assessment may not always be necessary or practical for one-off or irregular activities.

3. Volunteers

Volunteers *should not* be left alone. All volunteers should either be with another volunteer or with a staff member. Volunteers performing tasks together should follow all the procedures outlined in the policy.

Also see Healthy Minds' Volunteer Policy.

4. Procedures

The following procedures apply to the different circumstances in which Healthy Minds Staff work alone:

4.1 First to arrive on the premises

If, on entering the building, it becomes apparent that an unauthorised person may have entered and/or is in the premises, the worker should leave the building immediately and telephone the emergency services.

4.2 Lighting

The building should have adequate lighting outside to be able to see.

4.3 Interviews

Staff should take reasonable precautions when interviewing people alone. They should arrange the seating so they have a safe exit if required. They should inform another member of staff they are conducting the interview and when they expect to finish. Interviews should take place on Healthy Minds premises, during usual working hours, when other people are in the building.

4.4 Home Visits

Staff should ensure their line manager knows when, where and with whom they intend to carry out a home visit. Staff should enter the name, address and contact number of whom they intend to visit in the on-line diary. They should communicate their arrival and departure from the premises and be available by phone at all times.

4.5 Out of Hours Working

If a job entails a staff member being out alone at night e.g. to attend an evening meeting they should ensure:

- a) They let someone know their movements – where they are going, who are they meeting
- b) They carry a mobile phone and keep it charged and carry a personal alarm if they feel it is necessary
- c) Where appropriate they ask someone from the meeting to escort them to their car or to wait with them at the bus stop until the bus arrives at the end

The following procedure is in place for any member of staff working alone at night or out of hours.

- a) A full list of venue addresses and hirer contact numbers are kept in the office and on the computer.
- b) Workers should arrange to contact their Line Manager at the end of a session at an agreed time. If no contact is made at the agreed time the Manager should contact the Worker.
- c) In the event of no contact being made, the Manager should a) contact the venue and b) contact the alternate number supplied the worker. This should take place within an hour.
- d) If there is no response from either number the Line Manager is to contact employees closest and available to visit the venue. If the worker is not there, they should visit the workers home.
- e) In the event of the worker not being found the police should be informed.

5. Training

Healthy Minds recognises that training is of particular importance for lone workers to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may reduce panic in unusual situations.

Line Managers should ensure lone workers are sufficiently experienced and have a full understanding of the risks and precautions involved in their work. All staff should be clear about what can and cannot be done while working alone.

Where appropriate, staff and volunteers should receive specific training in how to handle aggression and when to seek advice. They should be trained on how to handle emergency situations and who to contact. Healthy Minds will arrange access to suitable training.

6. Communication

Lone workers are responsible for following the guidelines and procedures set out in this policy

Lone workers are responsible for ensuring they are always contactable by phone

Lone workers and their line managers should keep regular contact by phone

7. Personal Responsibility

Lone workers are responsible for not putting themselves at unnecessary risk and for following the procedures and guidelines set out in this policy.

Staff should discuss serious concerns with their line manager and expect all reasonable action to be taken to minimise risk as far as reasonably possible.

Lone workers are expected to take reasonable safety precautions when carrying files, laptops or mobile devices containing personal information. **See *confidentiality policy and data protection policy***

7.1 Check List

- Does anyone know where you are?
- Can you be contacted?
- Will this situation make you vulnerable?
- Do you park in a safe place?
- Do you carry money or valuables when you are working alone?
- If you choose to carry an alarm do you know how to use it?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is there safe access and exit for you?
- Are you aware of the emergency procedures?
- Can you safely handle all necessary equipment?
- Has your induction covered this area of work?

8. Personal Safety and Alerts

If a lone worker is in a situation where they feel unsafe, they should try and alert someone by the easiest means available.

Before an incident of lone working out of hours the worker should agree with someone that they will have their phone number with them, should they need to contact. The staff member is then responsible for being 'on call' during the incident of lone working.

If possible send a text message with the word "Pizza" to the staff member, and then this person will be responsible for raising the alarm. It is very important that lone working staff let the member of staff know as to what venue they will be in and at what time.

If it isn't possible to send an alarm, try to explain to the person causing concern that if you don't contact the office by a certain time then an automatic alarm will engage. Call the number that was previously agreed and calmly say,

"Hello, this is <staff member> just checking in, all is well".

These are both codes for members of staff on call, or office workers during the day, that the police need to be called to get to the venue. If you feel that your safety is threatened, even if nothing has happened yet, please use this method to discretely raise the alarm.

9. Monitoring and reporting

Lone workers must report incidents such as accidents and near misses, including all incidents where they feel threatened, in the incident book. This includes incidents of verbal abuse. During supervision, managers will ask people working on their own whether there are any safety concerns that aren't being addressed. Lone workers are encouraged to seek help and advice if any safety concerns arise.