



Lone Worker Policy

Arrangements for Review:

Pat Bacon and Marian Horton are responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews. This policy was adopted in July 2010 and will be reviewed in **May 2011**

Policy Context:

Employers have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their staff members. The Children's Centre management has a legal responsibility to provide safe systems of work and individuals have a responsibility to follow safe working practices within the community.

Lone workers are those who work by themselves, without close or direct contact with other staff members, in a wide range of situations.

Lone working should be avoided wherever possible, to minimise the risks to staff members. When lone working is necessary, then both employers and lone workers have a responsibility to assess the risks and put in place strategies to safeguard staff.

This policy guidance is informed by the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

This policy is linked to the centre's other policies including: Child Protection, Fire Procedure, First Aid, Medication, Health and Safety, and Risk Management.

Aims:

To ensure all staff who work alone feel safe and that potential risks to lone workers are identified and addressed to minimise the potential for an incident to occur.

Purpose:

- To raise awareness of the potential risks brought about by lone working in order that full risk assessments can be put in place;
- To set out a framework of responsibilities for managers and staff members to minimise the risks of lone working.

Responsibilities for Lone Workers

Lone working – whether conducting home visits, running activities in different venues or working outside of normal hours in the setting – should be avoided wherever possible. If lone working practices do need to be in place, then staff members have a responsibility to ensure they are fully aware of potential risks, follow policy guidelines set down by the centre, and take action to mitigate any potential problems.

a) Working outside normal hours at the centre

Staff are responsible for the following:

- Ensuring that they are fully aware of the potential risks of lone working and regularly refreshing their knowledge of this Lone Working Policy.
- Following the centre's security procedure and being aware of security measures on site
- Knowing the nearest place of safety

- Ensuring they have access to personal alarms / mobile phones on their person at all times
- Calling another staff member to let them know when they arrive / leave the centre
- Following the Centre's fire safety procedures.

b) Home Visiting for Lone Workers

Staff are responsible for the following:

i) Before the visit:

- One the first visit, where the risks are unknown, serious consideration should be given to paired working.
- Ensuring that they have had appropriate training to conduct the visit and regularly refresh their knowledge of this lone working policy
- Obtaining information about the location of the home visit as early as possible and clearly recording this information in line with the centre's purple folder procedure, leaving full details of the visit, where, phone no, time, with a buddy/responsible person.
- Obtaining sufficient background information on the family (cross-checking with other agencies where possible) prior to making any home visit to check if anyone in the household is likely to be violent or aggressive
- Where possible, planning visits to vulnerable areas in advance so that risk is minimised
- Requesting additional support if they feel uneasy about making a visit alone
- Making contact with the family beforehand; informing them of the reason for the visit and who will be visiting and agreeing a convenient time
- Having a working means of communication with them at all times – mobile phone etc – to ensure they can remain in contact with the centre
- Signing out and back in again on the staff register when they leave the centre.

ii) Travelling to the visit

- Contacting the centre regularly to ensure centre staff know their movements, and how they can be contacted, at all times. Staff should contact the centre when they leave a home visit, so that the centre staff know that they have left safely, and give details of their onward movements if they are not returning to the centre. They should also advise the centre if they have visited and not made contact with the family, or if there are unexpected delays.
- Being aware of their own safety whilst travelling: cars should have sufficient petrol, be well-maintained and covered by the correct insurance; enough time should be left for the journey, and expensive-looking items should not be left on display.
- Those travelling by public transport should leave extra time for the journey to avoid rushing and be aware of the last service

iii) While making a visit:

- Wearing a name badge
- Taking care to dress appropriately: respect should be shown to the family's culture, expensive-looking jewellery should be avoided, and shoes / clothes should not impede ability to move quickly when needed
- Asking politely that any potentially aggressive animals be put in another room

- Being aware of their own safety whilst making home visits, understanding that they should leave an unsafe situation immediately and knowing in advance where the nearest place of safety is.
- Being aware of their own behaviour and the ways in which it can increase / reduce the potential for confrontation: particularly, maintaining a non-judgemental approach, being sensitive to each family's culture and circumstances, and remembering that they are a guest in the house
- Knowing how to enable a person to have their say, and calm them down when their aggression is not aimed at them, but at the situation.
- Maintaining professional boundaries with the family
- Considering confidentiality and child protection policies
- Being considerate of the family's commitments when arranging further visits
- Ensuring that everyone is satisfied with the interaction that has taken place, and that everyone knows what should happen next, and what they have agreed is to be carried out.

iv) If violent or potentially violent incidents occur:

- Lone workers should put their own safety first and leave a situation if it feels unsafe
- If an incident occurs lone workers should call for assistance from the centre or from the Police
- Lone workers should never use control and constraint techniques
- After the incident, lone workers should be debriefed, given time to recover and be given practical support from line management / colleagues following difficult home visits
- After an incident, lone workers should contact their line manager, inform them of the incident and complete an incident report form.

Responsibilities for Management

Management are responsible for the following:

- Providing safe systems of working for all staff
- Appropriate security systems are in place to secure the building
- Appropriate security measures are in place for staff working alone in the building – e.g. personal alarms, CCTV, mobile phones etc.
- Conducting health and safety risk assessments for lone working staff, ensuring that the risks of lone working are reviewed and addressed as far as is reasonably practical.
- Providing monthly field workers meetings for any staff that work directly with families and would like to discuss issues/dilemmas this causes for them - to offload, to get ideas, to check moving on the right track with other staff in similar situations. One to one discussions of work-related dilemmas is available to fieldworkers in addition to group support
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the Lone Working Policy and that it is part of induction for new staff
- Ensuring checks are in place to ascertain whether staff are satisfied with the safety measures in place

- Identifying training needs and ensuring that staff who work alone access appropriate training for their role, on topics such as personal safety, violence at work etc.
- That a clear system is in place to record information regarding home visits, and for lone-working staff to report their location regularly. This is particularly important at the end of the day.
- That clear systems for raising the alarm are in place, and that the response is practised.
- That vulnerable staff who cannot raise the alarm are not left alone.
- Ensuring lone workers are fit and healthy to work alone
- That a lone worker can request additional support for a home visit if they feel it is necessary
- That checks are in place to ensure that all staff regularly consider this policy, including within team meetings.
- Debriefing lone workers who have encountered an aggressive or violent incident, giving them time to recover and providing practical support.
- Monitoring all incidents and feeding them into risk assessments

Policy Implementation

- All staff are made aware of this policy as part of their induction, reviews, and training.
- Lone-working staff receive appropriate training.

Arrangements for complaint

These are defined in the Children's Centres Complaints Policy.