

# **CHRIST CHURCH YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE**

## **LONE WORKING POLICY & GUIDANCE**

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## **LONE WORKING**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

There are no absolute restrictions on working alone; it will depend on the findings of a risk assessment.

There are two main pieces of legislation that will apply:

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: Section 2 sets out a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work.

The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999: Regulation 3 states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of -

- the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and
- the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking

While many hazards at work are relatively easy to identify and control, other aspects of health and safety are less easy to define.

One such instance is the risk posed to staff who work alone, as in many situations it may be difficult to foresee the potential for harm.

This briefing note is intended to assist managers in identifying staff who are classified as lone workers, it will give some examples of the specific risks associated with lone working and provide guidance on undertaking a risk assessment in this area.

### **2. IDENTIFYING LONE WORKERS**

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of lone workers is:

“Those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, either employees who work separately from others in an establishment, or mobile workers who work away from a fixed base”.

Examples of employees who may be classed as lone workers include:

Staff with responsibility for opening up and closing buildings

Maintenance workers

Staff working outside normal working hours

Staff visiting service users in their own home

Staff accompanying and supporting service users in the community

Staff working in an isolated part of the building.

The above list is by no means exhaustive.

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENT**

Although there is no specific legislation in relation to lone working, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to carry out a risk assessment in relation to all significant hazards faced by their employees. Consideration needs to be given to the potential risks faced by lone workers, and identified control measures should be put into place to avoid or control the risks.

#### **3.1 Identifying those at risk**

The first step in assessing the risks is to identify those members of staff who are at any time required to work alone, ie those who work alone within the workplace, visiting other premises and travelling between places or work.

#### **3.2 Assessing the risks**

Having identified the lone workers, the risks to which they are exposed need to be assessed. This assessment should take into account the risk inherent in the task and the environment, along with any additional risks associated with the fact that the employee is working on their own.

The main risks associated with lone working may be identified using the checklist below:

#### **3.3 For people who work alone in a fixed location ie Area Office Access**

- Is access to the building adequately controlled?
- Who knows who is in the building?
- Is there any way of identifying legitimate visitors?
- Could people just wander in?
- Is there a procedure for removing people from the building if necessary?
- Have there been any problems with people gaining unauthorised entry to the building?

#### **3.4 Isolation**

- Are employees working alone in isolated offices or parts of the building?
- Do employees meet with service users or members of the public in isolated offices?
- Who knows where employees are and whom they are with?
- Can employees in isolated areas summon help or raise an alarm?

Can anyone see or check on a colleague who is alone with a member of the public?

Have there previously been any problems arising from employees working in isolation?

Have staff expressed concern about feeling isolated?

If there are interview facilities, are these isolated? Who controls access to them, has the layout of interview rooms been considered, ie fixed furniture, no potential weapons etc.

### **3.5 Reception**

Is there a reception area, is it a secure counter?

Is the person/s covering reception vulnerable?

Is there a signing-in and out procedure for visitors to the building?

Are visitors' badges issued?

Is there access control on the door to the main part of the building?

Have there been any previous incidents of violence in the reception area? Could they have been prevented?

Are there any potential weapons in the reception area?

Is there a panic alarm fitted?

### **3.6 Handling Cash**

Are the arrangements for keeping money in an establishment adequate?

Is money paid into or collected from banks, posts offices or elsewhere regularly? Are the times, days and routes varied?

If money has to be carried, is it kept to a minimum?

Do staff feel anxious about collecting money?

Are staff provided with personal attack alarms?

Are staff aware of what action they should take in the event of an attack?

Are there safer ways of dealing with cash?

### **3.7 Communication**

Are there suitable lines of communication between the lone worker and a designated person ie telephone, two-way radio?

Is there regular contact between the lone worker and another person, with contact coming from a designated person to the lone worker?

Are procedures in place if contact with the lone worker cannot be established as required, are staff aware of these?

### **3.8 Night working, late working**

Have night workers been afforded the same protection as others, if the risk is considered greater, have more control measures been implemented?

Do others know where they are?

Do they have a means of getting in contact with others, mobile phones, etc?

Is consideration given to the safety of staff who work late eg emergency cover staff?

Is there a safe procedure for locking up the building?

Would it be beneficial for staff to be issued with a torch or panic alarm?

### **3.9 For employees who are required to work alone and away from a fixed location, the main risks can be identified and controlled, using the following checklist:**

Have you signed in/out from your location?

Do other staff know where you are going? How long you will be, your estimated time of return?

Have you planned your journey?

Can you get in contact with others or them with you?

Do you have a panic alarm, is one available if required?

If the person(s) you are going to see is considered to be potentially violent, has a recent history of violence, or the reason for seeing them could ignite a violent situation, ie sensitive issued, can you bring them into your office, or visit in pairs?

If you are conducting an interview within a client's home, always try and stay located nearest the door, in case you need to make a quick escape. If at any time prior to an appointment you feel your safety is compromised in any way or that a situation may become unsafe/violent, always speak to your manager beforehand and obtain further advice.

If at any time during a visit you feel vulnerable or that your safety is compromised in any way, calmly try to leave without making the person become more agitated, (even if this means making an excuse).

### **3.10 Management Controls**

Having assessed all the risks, which affect lone workers, both in an establishment and away from the workplace, you then need to ensure that suitable and sufficient control measures are put in place, many of which have been previously mentioned. A summary of suitable controls would be as follows;

Are there suitable lines of communication and monitoring?

Have emergency procedures been identified, and are staff aware of these, are they clear about action to be taken?

Have staff received suitable training ie dealing with violence and aggression?

Have lone workers been given all necessary information to enable them to carry out their job safely, are they aware of all known risks and appropriate control measures to follow?

Have considerations been given to welfare facilities, ie toilets, first-aid, particularly for maintenance workers?

Does the lone worker have any medical condition, physical or psychological, which may make them unsuitable for the task?

Have clear procedures been established, which the lone worker can follow, to cover all foreseeable outcomes?

Are staff encouraged to seek advice/assistance if they are unsure about a situation or to report any problems/concerns, ie supervision or as a standing item on team meetings?

Is post traumatic incident counselling and/or assistance available?

Having undertaken the risk assessment and implemented all necessary controls it is important that all lone working situations are monitored and continually reviewed. The views of all relevant people, including managers, staff and trade unions should be taken into consideration.

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