

# Staffing Committee

**Dorset County Council**



Date of Meeting	29th January 2018
Officer	Head of Organisational Development
Subject of Report	Lone Working Policy review
Executive Summary	<p>The following Health and Safety policy has been reviewed in line with the Forward Together for Support Services principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lone Working</li> </ul> <p>The changes aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the existing policy and replace with a modernised policy which also reflects other risks to staff;</li> <li>• Support managers and staff alike in how to manage identified risks to staff in relation to Lone Working activities;</li> <li>• Support managers and staff alike when incidents do arise.</li> </ul> <p>This report summarises the key changes and anticipated improvements.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment: Positive</p> <p>An EqIA screening has been completed and is attached. This has been considered by the Chief Executive Department's Diversity Working Group and circulated to the Chairs of all other Directorate working groups for comment. No issues have been raised in terms of the design of the policies and procedures.</p> <p>Use of Evidence: The report is based on evidence including feedback regarding the practical application of the existing policy from Health and Safety colleagues, managers and trade unions.</p>

## Lone Working Policy and Guidance Documents

	<p>Budget: There are no additional budget implications arising from this report and its proposals.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Low Risk</p>
	<p>Other Implications: N/A</p>
Recommendation	<p>It is recommended that Staffing Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the launch of the revised Lone Working policy and guidance</li> </ul>
Reason for Recommendation	<p>The Staffing Committee oversee matters relating to staff terms and conditions and people management policies.</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1. Lone Working Policy Appendix 2. Lone Working Guidance Document</p>
Background Papers	<p>None</p>
Officer Contact	<p>Name: Paul Downton, Health, Safety and Employee Wellbeing Team Manager (DCC) Tel: 01305 221515 Email: p.downton@dorsetcc.gov.uk</p> <p>Name: Alison Crockett, Service Manager – HR &amp; OD (DCC) Tel: 01305 22 Email: <a href="mailto:a.crockett@dorsetccc.gov.uk">a.crockett@dorsetccc.gov.uk</a></p>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This report summarises the rationale for revising the following health and safety policy:
  - Lone Working
- 1.2. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) sets guidance on matters relating to Health and Safety and states that all risks to employees from Lone Working activities must be identified and the risk reduced, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 1.3. Lone Working activities are prevalent within the County Council and can lead to workplace incidents. This in turn leads to a number of different issues for teams and individuals alike, such as injury through assault, stress, depression and anxiety which in turn can lead to increased sickness/absence and low morale within teams and increased amounts of litigation against the council.
- 1.4. The revised policy has been developed in consultation with the recognised trades unions.

## **2. Summary of Changes:**

- 2.1. The current Lone Working policy has been in place since March 2006 and this review is therefore required to modernise the policy and ensure that it meets the needs of the Council.
- 2.2. Changes to the policy and procedure will allow greater clarity and enable managers to address concerns more effectively by:
  - a) Identifying the risk to Lone Workers by using our risk assessment process;
  - b) Identifying the risk of violence, aggression and harassment and the impact this has on staff and their service;
  - c) Identifying other factors that can affect the way staff work alone, such as setting up of workstations to feelings of isolation.
  - d) Helping staff and managers to identify what support can be provided;
  - e) Broadening the scope of the policy to include risks from domestic violence by linking in with the Domestic Violence guidance.

## **3. Trades Unions View**

- 3.1. The trades unions have been consulted regarding the policy. Their feedback has been incorporated into the final version attached.
- 3.2. The policy will apply to all council employees (other than those employed in schools) and to volunteers and elected members.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1. The new policy introduces a greater expectation for managers at all levels to effectively identify, risk assess and manage risks of to their staff engaged in lone working activities. In order that the new policies and procedures are applied consistently and that managers are equipped to deal with matters effectively, a range of communications and training will be provided from within existing resources. This will include:
1. Publication of the new policies, procedures and associated guidance on SharePoint for all employees;
  2. Briefing sessions for teams in high risk areas and coaching for their managers to make effective use of our existing risk assessment tools and resources in this context;
  3. SharePoint and other staff news items to raise awareness;
  4. Promotion of the new policy and guidance at appropriate staff roadshows;
  5. Personal safety training, including helping staff to make dynamic risk assessments when working alone;
  6. Revision of Learning on-line materials
- 4.2 Other Health and Safety policies, procedures and guidance which refer to the affected policy will be updated to reflect the changes.

**Jonathan Mair**  
**Head of Organisational Development**

January 2018

## Lone Working Policy

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Dorset County Council takes the safety of employees seriously, especially when risks to their Health and Safety may not be as easy to identify as others. Lone Working and the risks to employee's personal safety from this may require extra effort in order to identify the risks.
- 1.2 The objective of this policy is to ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of staff is protected and that staff are aware of their own duties i.e. to identify the risk of such incidents occurring and to report such incidents when they do occur.
- 1.3 Information and support will be provided to managers and staff in order to fulfil their duties.

### **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all council employees (Including Volunteers and Elected Members etc).
- 2.2 This policy has been developed in consultation with the recognised trade unions and staff support groups.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 Lone Working is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as: 'Someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision'.
- 3.2 Lone Working can also be described as: 'Someone whose activities involve a large percentage of their time working in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or supervision'.
- 3.3 Whilst although in most cases, working alone is relatively straightforward and acceptable there may be risks to an individual's Health and Safety that must be assessed.
- 3.4 Working alone can include – A person working alone from a fixed base (i.e. Local Office, Library etc), Working away from a fixed base (i.e. Community Support Workers, Social Workers, Civil Enforcement Officers), Home Workers (as part of their working conditions) and Working from home (Flexible working) and Mobile Workers (Drivers, Travelling Officers etc).
- 3.5 Also covered by this policy are employees that work flexibly from other locations that are not their normal place of work, but may still be working on their own.

### **4. Risk Assessment**

- 4.1 Managers must ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out for employees who work alone or without close supervision.

- 4.2 All significant findings of the risk assessments are recorded and communicated to relevant staff.
- 4.3 Written arrangements should be in place to plan, organise, control, monitor and review any measures needed to deal with the significant findings resulting from the risk assessments.
- 4.4 Appropriate levels of information, instruction, training and supervision are provided as necessary to ensure the Health, Safety and Wellbeing at work of all employees who are lone working.
- 4.5 The risk to staff from lone working may come from general risks within their place of work, or come from factors such as having to visit a member of the public in their own home (whether there is a known risk of violence or not), driving, handling hazardous substances, working at height or significant manual handling tasks. Home workers also face additional risks from workstation setup and domestic violence (please see link 8.7 for additional information and guidance in relation to Domestic Violence risks).
- 4.6 Staff have a duty to make their manager aware of any perceived risk to their Health and Safety.
- 4.7 Further guidance on risk assessments is available by following this link – (LINK)
- 4.8 Control measures to reduce the risk to employees and to react to serious and imminent danger must be in place and may range from two people working together where appropriate, regular contact with staff with managers knowing where they are working, personal safety training, lone working applications for smart phones etc.

## **5.0 Incident and Accident reporting**

- 5.1 All incidents that occur to an individual whilst lone working must be reported via the DCC Accident/Incident report form.
- 5.2 This includes any 'Near Miss' or incidents of violence or aggression that the employee has experienced.
- 5.3 (LINK) to accident incident policy and form.

## **6. Training**

- 6.1 Lone Working training is available for all staff to complete. This can be found on <https://www.dorsetlearningonline.org.uk/login/index.php>
- 6.2 Personal Safety training is available for all staff to complete.

## 7. **Legal Requirements**

7.1 Lone Working, although not covered by specific Health and Safety legislation does fall under the following pieces of H&S Law.

### **The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974:**

Which specifies that the employer must provide –

- A safe place of work
- Safe access and egress
- Safe and well maintained work equipment
- Safe Fellow Employees

And specifies that employees must –

- Must care reasonable for themselves and others
- Must co-operate with their employers to enable them to meet their H&S obligations.

### **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

Which sets out the framework for –

- Risk Assessments
- Training
- Young Persons

## 8.0 **Further Information on what guidance, information and support is offered**

- General Policy of Health and Safety – (LINK)
- Lone Working Guidance for staff and managers – (LINK)
- Violence, Aggression and Harassment Policy – (Link)
- Violence, Aggression and Harassment Guidance – (LINK)
- Accident Incident Reporting Policy – (LINK)
- Accident/Incident Investigation guidance – (LINK)
- Personal Safety at Work Guidance – (LINK)
- Domestic Violence Guidance Document – (Link)

For further advice and guidance on anything Health and Safety related please contact – [HRhealthandsafety@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:HRhealthandsafety@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

# Lone Working – Guidance for Managers and Staff

## 1. Introduction

Most hazards and risks at work are easy to identify and control, but other areas of work place health and safety are more difficult to identify and define.

One such area of work is lone working.

Lone working is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as: 'Someone who works by themselves or without close supervision', it can also be described as: 'Someone whose activities involve a large percentage of their time working in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or supervision'.

Most of the time working alone or lone working is perfectly acceptable and safe, but sometimes it may increase the risks to a persons Health and Safety.

This policy seeks to make managers and staff aware of the risks and give them the tools to control the risks in order to stay safe and healthy.

Lone working can include –

- A person working alone from a fixed base (i.e. Local Office, Library etc),
- Working away from a fixed base (i.e. Community Support Workers, Social Workers, Civil Enforcement Officers),
- Home Workers (as part of their working conditions) and Working from home (Flexible working) and
- Mobile Workers (Drivers, Travelling Officers etc).

Also covered by this policy are employees that work flexibly from other locations that are not their normal place of work, but may still be working on their own.

Dorset County Council takes the safety of all employees seriously and wants to Protect staff from risks, so far as is reasonably practicable, to their Health and Safety, resulting in or from lone working activities.

## 2. Risk Assessment

As a Manager, you must complete a risk assessment to identify the risk to you and your team from lone working activities. Risk assessments are an effective way to aid decisions and ensure you have the right resources in the right place.

In simple terms, a risk assessment is thinking what could go wrong and deciding if enough has been done to prevent it.

Risk assessment should be reviewed and checked regularly to ensure that they are still effective in managing the risks identified, or if any further risks are now present.



For further guidance on risk assessments ([Link](#))

Some of the factors you may need to consider are –

- The task being completed by the lone worker
- The risk to the persons health and safety from completing such a task
- Plant, machinery and work equipment
- Hazardous substances and working environment
- Working at height activities
- Confined spaces and/or permits to work
- Means of access and egress
- Risk of Violence, Aggression or Harassment
- Criminal activity from another person
- Communication problems
- The location of work, remoteness or isolation
- Any first aid or medical requirements
- Anticipated 'worst case' scenario
- Musculoskeletal disorders from poor workplace layout (DSE for home workers etc)
- Significant manual handling tasks

Once a risk to the employee's health and safety has been identified you must try to reduce the risk as far as possible –

- Is it possible to improve tools used for communication
- Monitoring of staff on a regular basis
- Changing the task so that only higher risk activities are carried out when someone else is available.
- Using less hazardous substances that cannot cause harm
- Preventing working at height activities
- Doubling staffing (especially in higher risk areas with regards to Violence and aggression)

#### Guidance for the management of Lone Workers

Lone Working issues	Questions to consider
The Lone Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have they had sufficient training and/or experience for the task?</li> <li>• Have they the ability and qualifications to carry out the task?</li> <li>• Has a homeworking/Flexible working 'home self-assessment' been carried out to ensure working environment is safe?</li> <li>• Have mental health considerations been considered whilst working in isolation?</li> </ul>
The Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the employee seen and understood the risk assessment?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they understand the hazards and risks associated with the task and the steps to take to reduce the risk to the lowest practicable level?</li> <li>• Is task the carried out according to the assessment or are short cuts used?</li> <li>• Has the task changed in any way that would require a review of the risk assessment?</li> <li>• Are time scales realistic?</li> <li>• Is the client/customer/service user known to the as a potential risk? (from Violence/Aggression)</li> </ul>
Working Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the environment or terrain of high risk geographical nature or a known trouble spot?</li> <li>• Could there be changes in weather conditions likely to increase the risk?</li> <li>• Is there a risk of criminal activity? (i.e. Interference, Vandalism)</li> </ul>
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is supervision achieved (i.e. Telephone, Skype), with what frequency?</li> <li>• Can employee contact be initiated by the employee and/or line manager?</li> <li>• Does the level of supervision need to be appropriate to the risk identified?</li> <li>• It is important for the supervisor to stress how important it is that should the lone worker find themselves in a situation which is hazardous/stressful to withdraw without fear or prejudice.</li> </ul>
Information, Instruction and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has all relevant information been given to the employee to enable them to recognise the hazards and risks involved whilst lone working?</li> <li>• Is this recorded formally?</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be commensurate with the risks involved.</li> <li>• Should be easily and readily utilised.</li> <li>• May include mobile phone, Skype, hand held or vehicle two way radio.</li> <li>• Is coverage adequate, i.e. is the phone/radio signal strength adequate.</li> <li>• Decide on the frequency of contact.</li> <li>• May range from monitoring checks, regular pattern of calls and contact or an automated device if signals aren't received.</li> <li>• Are records kept of work patterns, where staff are, when they are expected back, contact details when working away from base?</li> <li>• What contingency plans are there is communication breaks down?</li> </ul>
First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are suitable arrangements in place for first aid, including location of nearest first aid kit and suitably trained person?</li> </ul>
Suitability of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection and use of all equipment must be in line with the requirements of Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulations.</li> <li>• It is imperative that only tools/equipment supplied by the employer are used and only as instructed/trained.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standby equipment must be labelled as such and only used in emergencies.</li> <li>• Can the equipment be safely handled by one person?</li> <li>• It must be suitable for the task it is being used for.</li> </ul>
Accident and Emergency Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the employee capable of mentally and physically responding to the incident?</li> <li>• What procedures are in place for reporting accidents/incidents/near misses?</li> <li>• What actions should be taken if an employee fails to call in or report back? Who must be notified?</li> <li>• Who is the contact for out of hours work?</li> <li>• Consider equipment failure, uncontrolled exposure to harmful agents, physical assault or vehicle breakdown and any other significant risk as identified by the risk assessment.</li> </ul>
Personal Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be determined by the risk assessment and following the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations.</li> <li>• Supervisory checks are critical to its continued safe use.</li> <li>• Must be easily replaced when required.</li> </ul>
Double Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double staffing should be considered in order to eliminate or reduce a risk if other means are not practical.</li> <li>• Used as part of a safe system of work for higher risk areas and activities.</li> <li>• Advice should be obtained prior to work commencing.</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can area of work or premises be reached by ordinary vehicles?</li> <li>• Will adverse weather conditions affect this?</li> <li>• Are adequate procedures in place for maintenance and servicing of vehicles?</li> <li>• Are advanced driving courses required?</li> </ul>
Contact with the Public or animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of violence and aggression is related to contact with members of the public.</li> <li>• Is money being handled?</li> <li>• Is expensive equipment needed?</li> <li>• Is there are Violence and aggression risk assessment available?</li> <li>• Is it feasible that an animal will be used to provoke an attack?</li> </ul>
Permits to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permits to work may be required where the risk is considered high or where specific legal requirements exist. Some or all of the above procedures may be contained in a written permit to work, without which the activity may not take place.</li> <li>• Where time limits are a consideration from exposure or fatigue the permit to work should state the start/stop time or maximum duration of the task.</li> </ul>

## LONE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT

### Identification of the hazards

1. A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm.
2. Whilst hazard identification should be thorough, it is generally advisable to ignore the trivial and concentrate on the significant hazards.
3. It is essential that employees are consulted as they will often have a clearer idea of the hazards associated with their tasks and/or workplace.
4. Staff perception of hazard and risk is important, particularly in relation to the personal safety elements of lone working.
5. Record each hazard and state how the particular risk associated with the hazard has been identified

### Evaluation of the risks

There is no prescribed method for evaluating the risks and it could be done by simply categorising a risk as low, medium or high based upon personal judgement and/or experience.

However, a more objective and accurate method of evaluating risk is to consider the **severity** and **likelihood** relating to identified risks:

- Severity requires an assessment of the worst outcome in terms of injury or ill health relating to the given hazard and/or risk
- Likelihood requires an assessment of the probability of that injury or ill health actually occurring. Consideration may also have to be given to the number of people exposed to the hazard, and should include non-employees

This will facilitate risk prioritisation, e.g. the greater the severity of the harm and the more likely the risk is to occur, then the greater the risk.

The **Lone Working** risk assessment proforma at Appendix A allows for a numerical approach to severity and likelihood, the scores are then multiplied together to give an overall risk rating.

	<b>Hazard risk severity</b>		<b>Likelihood of occurrence</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>insignificant</b> - minor or 1 <sup>st</sup> aid injury	<b>1</b>	<b>unlikely</b> to occur – no history
<b>2</b>	<b>significant</b> - injury, but unlikely to be serious	<b>2</b>	<b>possible</b> - history exists
<b>3</b>	<b>serious</b> - injury - > 3 day injury	<b>3</b>	<b>likely</b> - has occurred before
<b>4</b>	<b>major</b> - major or fatal injury	<b>4</b>	<b>highly probable</b> - occurs nearly every time

### Measures to control the risks

The outcome of the evaluation of risk should be a prioritised action plan, based on the risk scores, to implement 'risk controls'.

Risk controls should follow the hierarchy of risk control as follows:

- Eliminate – can the hazardous activity/risk be eliminated altogether. Does the activity have to be carried out at all?
- Substitute – can the hazardous activity/risk be substituted with something less hazardous? Can alternative ways of working be found to replace those identified as high risk?
- Reduce – reduction of the risks by control methods. Control methods may be many and various, but should include safe working procedures, supervision, increasing staff levels, improved communication, training etc.
- Personal protective equipment – should be used as a last resort.

### Monitor and review

Risk assessments are living documents and must be continually monitored, reviewed and revised as necessary. (see section 6 'Monitoring' for further details)

In particular, they should be reviewed as and when circumstances change or there is reason to suspect that the existing risk assessment is no longer valid. Unchanged risk assessments should be subject to review at least annually and integrated into team meetings, appraisal and other internal management systems as required.



Once a risk has been identified, action must be taken. Rather than attempt to deal with all of the risks identified at once, the assessor should work through the prioritised risks in order to establish risk controls.

Are risk controls sufficient to minimise identified hazards/risks to a reasonably practicable level ?  <b>Yes / No</b>  Line Manager <b>MUST</b> be consulted if identified hazards/risk cannot be reduced enough to enable task to be carried out safely	Name:
	Date of assessment:
	Date of review:

