

Lone Working

1. Background

- 1.1** There is no specific legislation relating to lone working, but there are general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to manage risk or injury. Gateshead Council will so far as is reasonably practicable manage the risk for employees who work alone.
- 1.2** Employees also have a responsibility to use their professional judgement and take appropriate precautions to minimise the potential risk to themselves and others.

2. Definitions

2.1 The definition of lone working includes the following:

- Those who work from a fixed base, such as one person working alone on the premises
- Those who work separately from others on the same premises (e.g. security staff) or who work outside normal hours
- Those who work from home
- Mobile workers

3. Introduction

- 3.1** Where an employee may experience harm, injury or be vulnerable due to lone working, measures to eliminate or avoid this should be undertaken. This should be through use of a risk assessment approach.
- 3.2** Gateshead Council recognises that any form of violence, aggression, intimidation, assault, abuse or the like are unacceptable. The Council will support anyone who experiences this type of behaviour.
- 3.3** This guidance aims to assist in reducing risks that employees are likely to face when lone working and increase awareness of those risks.

The objectives of the guidance are to:

- Provide guidance on how to stay safe when working alone.
- Highlight the need for managers to risk assess lone working environments and give guidance on how to do this.
- Provide details of further sources of information to ensure safe lone working.

4. Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

- 4.1 **Ensure that** the requirements of this procedure are implemented.
- 4.2 **Carry out** a review to identify employees classified as lone workers and the tasks they carry out.
- 4.3 **Complete a** risk assessment to identify and control risks associated from lone working (refer to HS RA 03 in section 9 of the managers' health and safety handbook for guidance – this is on the Intranet). The risk assessment findings should establish risk control strategies to ensure that one person can adequately control the risks of the job. Employees should be involved in the risk assessment process and control measures introduced should be discussed with them.

When undertaking a lone worker risk assessment, the following should be considered:

- Area where the employee is working (physical layout and environmental conditions).
- Client factors both group generic and person specific.
- First aid and emergency arrangements.
- Handling of cash.
- Individual factors relating to employees including competence and experience; gender; physical ability and age.
- Level supervision required by the employee.
- Methods of communicating.
- Risk of violence or aggression.
- Training and experience that employee may require (e.g. how to deal with difficult situations).
- Travel arrangements including parking, vehicle breakdown and travel on foot.
- Unsocial working hours (health issues).
- Use of work equipment / hazardous substances.
- Visiting client's homes.

Further guidance on Risk Assessments is available in the manager's health and safety handbook, which is available on the Council Intranet. Refer to HS 40 (Section 4: Implementation of Risk Control Measures). Risk Assessment templates can be found at HS 06 (Section 8: Appendices).

- 4.4 **Develop and implement** when appropriate case specific action plans as a result of the risk assessment to include the provision of mobile phones or personal alarms; details of planned contact arrangements; means to respond to any distress call or failure to communicate when one is expected; task specific safe systems of work; supervision arrangements and arrangements covering a accident occurring or ill-health suddenly developing leading to a debilitating condition whilst operating alone.
- 4.5 **Carry out** as a result of the risk assessment a safety training needs analysis covering the needs of lone workers.

4.6 Provide adequate training to all employees who are lone workers. The training should be appropriate to the degree of risk to which employees may be exposed. Training should enable employees to assess the potential risk and use their professional judgement to identify appropriate precautions and deal competently with the situation. The training may include the following;

- The hazards of lone working
- The carrying out of 'dynamic' risk assessments
- Emergency arrangements
- The understanding and avoidance of aggression/conflict management

Refresher training should be provided at regular intervals.

4.7 Ensure that employees are assessed for their competency to carry out work activities involving lone working. This should include a regular assessment of their health.

4.8 Make employees aware of the specified best practice guidelines in Appendix 2 relating to lone working in a department; working off site; home visits; personal safety in car (or other vehicle); and personal safety for pedestrians.

4.9 Arrange for employees to use the Care Call lone monitoring service particularly where significant risks have been identified. Refer to appendix 1 for details.

4.10 Familiarise themselves with the Violence at Work Guidelines and make employees aware of its contents where applicable. This can be found on the Council Intranet under Council Handbooks, Human Resources Framework.

4.11 Ensure that when an employee experiences a violent or aggressive incident that it is reported using the online incident report and investigation form, HS 20 found in the Health and Safety Handbook or HS 21 Incident Report and Investigation book as appropriate.

4.12 To be supportive of employees who have been affected by a violent or aggressive incident in the course of their duties and, if appropriate refer the employee to Occupational Health Unit for advice and referral to an appropriate counsellor if necessary.

4.13 Hold regular meetings with lone workers particularly when working alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation. Work issues e.g. best practice and concerns can be discussed and feedback provided. These meetings should be held at least quarterly.

5. Employee Responsibilities

5.1 Take care of themselves and others and cooperate with their manager concerning arrangements to protect them at work. In doing so they must follow safety professional practice.

5.2 Notify their manager of activities or situations of which they become aware that foreseeably could give rise to an unacceptable level of risk.

6. Sharing Information

- 6.1** Share information where appropriate and in cases of significant risk obtain and share information with colleagues and other professionals and agencies that may have direct contact with the service user.
- 6.2** Managers will need to carefully consider on a case-by-case basis, the extent to which information should be shared.

7. Further guidance

Further guidance covering the following can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

- Care Call – Lone Working Monitoring
- Lone Working in a Department
- Working off site
- Home visits
- Personal safety in the car
- Personal safety for pedestrians

8. Provision of Information

8.1 The following is a list of measures that Gateshead Council have in place for employees who are lone workers:

- Violence at Work Policy
- Home Working Policy
- Dealing with Difficult Situations Training – contact Organisational Development on ext 8276 / 8355 / 7345
- LES Security (0191) 433 7228
- Northumbria Police (0191) 454 7555.

Footnote: Further assistance and guidance is available by contacting Health and Safety, telephone number 0191 433 2272 / 2281 / 2270 / 2237 / 2371 / 3827

Care Call Lone Worker Monitoring

1. Care Call Lone Worker Monitoring

- 1.1** The Council's Care Call Service can provide lone worker monitoring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to any employee within any service area.
- 1.2** Any employee connected to care call's monitoring service will be given a unique ID number which allows them to connect to the Lone Worker Service and leave a voice recorded message, giving details of where and who they are visiting. A database record will be established for the lone worker holding information on name, work and home address, mobile number, description, vehicle make, model etc.
- 1.3** Employees wishing to make use of this service must complete a Lone Worker referral form giving their personal details to hold on the system. It is vital that these details are accurate and kept up to date. Refer to Appendix 3 for the Lone Worker referral form or in the manager's health and safety handbook as HS 28 (Section 8: Appendices).
- 1.4** Once connected to the service the employee will be contacted directly whilst they are "lone working" at specific intervals between 10 and 900 minutes (the choice is with the employee or service area) to ensure that they are okay and given a series of options.
- 1.5** If the employee fails to respond to the prompt the call will automatically divert to one of the care call assistants on duty to further escalate and investigate. This may include contacting designated contacts provided by the employee or service as part of their "no response" protocol.

Other options can be used eg passwords that the employee can use when generating a "live" call to Care Call where assistance is required.
- 1.6** The Care Call Service can also provide GPS (global positioning satellite) products for employees /services. These products offer the ability to locate someone 24/7 with text or phone alerts also available. The products also have inbuilt emergency alarms which can be activated simply by the press of a button.
- 1.7** If you require any further information on how to access this service please contact the Care Call Officer on 0191 433 2649

Health and Safety Information and Guidance for Employees who are Lone Workers

Distribution: To be brought to the attention of all Lone Workers

1. Lone Working in a Department

- 1.1 Within office hours (07:30 – 18:30) employees should ensure that they are near a telephone and that access to unauthorised visitors is prevented. Panic alarms and their testing should be considered within the Risk Assessment process.
- 1.2 During out of office hours, employees should ensure windows and doors are secured so as to prevent unauthorised access. They should lock windows and doors on leaving their office/department.

2. Working off Site

- 2.1 When working off site and alone, employees who are not intending to use the Care Call monitoring system should advise colleagues of:
 - Where they are going and if applicable who they are seeing.
 - Contact telephone number.
 - Time of appointment.
 - Estimated duration of visit.
 - If they are not intending to return to the office.

If an employee is delayed and not going to return to the office, they should contact the office to confirm this.

- 2.2 Employees must carry and show their identification badge on every visit.
- 2.3 Employees should carry mobile phones and personal alarms when working off site together with a small amount of loose change in case of emergency. Additional measures may need to be taken when employees are visiting geographical areas where it may be difficult to get a signal to use a mobile telephone in an emergency.
- 2.4 Employees are advised to park near to the site they are visiting and in a well-lit area.
- 2.5 If an employee has concerns about their safety when working off site, they should abandon the visit and make alternative arrangements.

3. Home Visits

- 3.1 Prior to a first home visit, employees should:

- Determine if a home visit is necessary or whether the meeting could take place at the office or a more public place.
- Get as much information on the service user as possible and where applicable their relatives/friends/environment.
- Agree all details with the service user prior to the event. Doing this by telephone will help in doing an initial screening of the service user.
- Check the address and obtain clear directions in advance. Check if there are any specific access details.
- Check if other colleagues or services know the service user and if they can provide useful information. The group / service warning alert system should be consulted as a primary source of information.
- On arrival at the home ask to see the service user you are visiting. If they are not there, do not enter and make alternative arrangements to visit when you return to the office.
- Show the service user your identification badge and introduce yourself. Wait to be invited into their home. Consider your body language when on the visit and be polite at all times.
- Where possible, sit near the exit and make a mental note of the environment and way out. If a service user goes to lock the door, request that they do not do this.
- Ensure you are introduced to anyone else present and where appropriate ask that you see the service user without them present or arrange an alternative appointment. Ask for pets to be taken out of the room.
- If anyone appears to be under the influence of drink or drugs or the employee feels uncomfortable, make an excuse and leave.
- If “put on the spot” play for time. Where necessary, say you need to consult with you manager before making a decision.

3.2 If a service user or their relatives are known to have violent or aggressive tendencies, serious consideration must be given to not having lone visits or to having a second person present during the visit.

3.3 All violent and aggressive incidents must be reported as soon as possible to the relevant manager and an Incident report and investigation form HS 20 (Section 8: Appendices) should be completed.

4. Personal Safety in the Car (or Other Vehicle)

4.1 The following is a guide to ensuring employee safety when travelling alone in a vehicle on Council business.

- Ensure the vehicle is in good working order, serviced regularly and adequately fuelled.
- When driving keep doors locked and windows closed if you think there may be danger.
- Keep valuables out of sight when driving and lock in the boot when leaving the vehicle.
- Always park in the direction of your exit route.
- Plan your route before setting out and take maps so you don't have to stop and ask directions.
- Carry breakdown organisation details.
- Let someone know where you are going and how long you are likely to be.

- Lock your vehicle, even when paying for fuel.
- After dark, park in a well-lit area busy area whenever possible. Look around before you get out.
- If you think you are being followed or in danger, drive to a busy area such as a police station or garage.
- Keep a torch in the car.
- If you breakdown, turn on your hazard warning lights and summon assistance. Stay inside the vehicle and keep the doors and windows locked. If you have a personal alarm, keep it at hand.
- If a missile is thrown at your vehicle do not stop. Drive on to the nearest police station and report it.
- If someone seems to be in trouble, only stop if you are convinced it's genuine. Otherwise, drive on until you find somewhere safe to stop and ring the police to report it or drive directly to a police station.

5. Personal Safety for Pedestrians

5.1 The following are a guide to ensuring employee safety when travelling alone on foot on Council business.

- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes that do not restrict movement and will allow you to escape quickly if necessary.
- Keep valuables out of sight (eg in an inner pocket). Do not wear excessive jewellery or carry too much money. Surrender valuables if personal safety is at risk.
- Avoid walking alone when it is dark and where possible use busy, well-lit routes and avoid short cuts.
- Back down from any confrontation and call for help if necessary.
- Use personal attack alarm if necessary

Footnote: Further assistance and guidance is available by contacting Health and Safety, telephone number 0191 433 2272 / 2281 / 2270 / 2237 / 7245 / 2371

Gateshead Care Call – Lone Worker Referral Form

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

First Name:
Last Name:

Department:
Services:
ID Badge No:

Mobile Number:

Telephone numbers
Work:
Home:

E-mail:

Home Address:

Post Code:

Work Address:

Post Code:

Vehicle Details (if applicable)

Registration No:
Make:
Model:
Colour:

Personal Details

Height:
Hair colour:
Distinguishing marks:
JPEG Photo Attached: Yes/No

Other comments:

Contacts
(Minimum of two work place contacts required)

Name:
Location:
Contact No: 1)
 2)

Name:
Location:
Contact No: 1)
 2)

Name:
Location:
Contact No: 1)
 2)

Employee Authorisation

I give permission for my id badge photograph to be used by care call's database.

Signed _____

Referral Authorised by:

Name:
Job Title:
Extension:
Cost Centre:
Account Code/Invoice address:
Date Monitoring to Commence:
(At least 24 hours notice should be given, if urgent contact care call on 2648)

Escalation Protocol

The following procedures should be adhered to by care call in the event of no contact with the lone worker. (Please attach additional sheet if required)