

LONE WORKING POLICY & GUIDANCE

Health & Safety September 2008

Purpose of Lone worker Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide managers and employees with guidance for council employees and others who may be “lone workers” and the practical steps to be taken to keep people safe when they are at work whether on Council premises, shared offices or elsewhere in the community. People who work alone should not be at any greater risk than others.

Equality Statement

This policy applies equally to all Council employees, as above, regardless of their disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Care will be taken to ensure that no traditionally excluded groups are adversely impacted in implementing this policy.

When is a worker a lone worker?

A ‘Lone Worker’ is any person whose work involves either brief or a large portion of their time in situations where there is no close, frequent or regular involvement with other workers or supervision.

Who is a lone worker?

- *Where only one person is in the premises, it could be an administrator in an office working early or late, a single person in a workshop, kiosk or shop or someone working at home. People who work outside of normal office hours, cleaners, security or maintenance workers.*
- *Service workers, social workers, parking attendants pest control workers, drivers, teachers and other workers who visit commercial or domestic premises.*

Responsibilities See the Corporate Health and Safety Policy <http://insight/h-s-policy.pdf>

Chief Executive and Commissioners

- Delegated day to day responsibility for ensuring the day to day management for health, safety and welfare within their areas.

Executive heads of services & Head teachers

- Responsible to the chief executive for ensuring that safe working conditions are maintained for all employees, visitors, members of the public, and contractors within their respective business units and schools for the areas they control.

Line managers and team leaders

- Are responsible to their executive head of service or head teacher for the day-to-day maintenance of health, safety and welfare of the employees and pupils within their areas of control.

Employees

- Responsible for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and members of the public who may be affected by their work activities.

Health and safety team

- Will actively support the council and its employees in meeting their health and safety obligations by producing effective policies, procedures and general guidance.

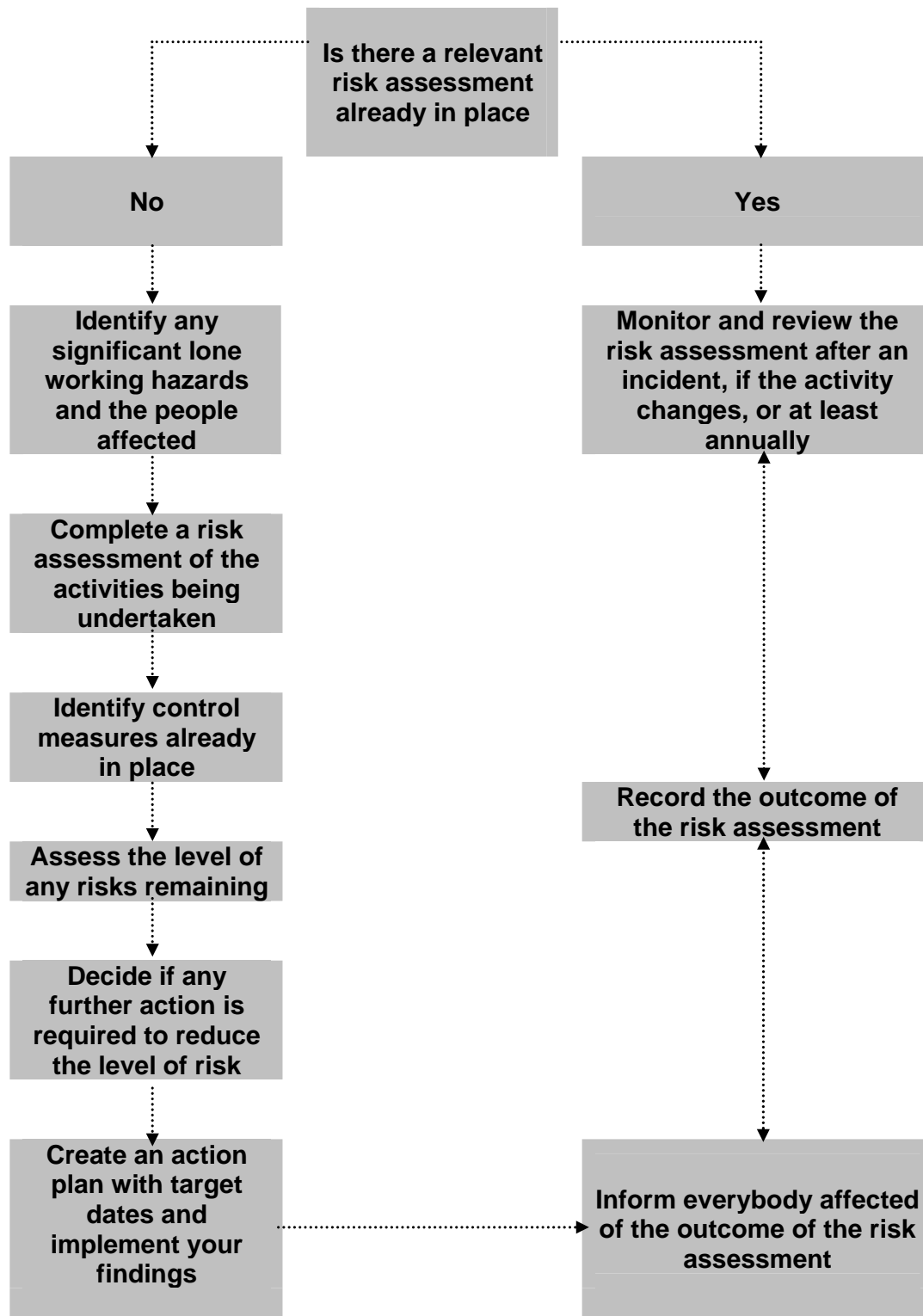
Can workers legally work alone safely?

There is no general reason why people can not work by themselves. The answer to this question will be based on the outcome of your risk assessment, the environment and conditions that apply. There are a few high risk activities which would require at least one other person to be present to provide assistance in the case of an emergency arising:

Examples include:

- High risk confined space work
- Electrical work near live equipment
- Diving
- Visiting clients or customers at home with a known history of violence or aggression
- Working at height

Lone working



Management arrangements

Managers need to ensure that their employees remain healthy and safe whilst at work; this includes working in buildings or remote or isolated areas. The council has developed procedures to support people whilst working alone, it is part of a manager's role to ensure that the procedures are adapted to suit their areas and that their employees are provided with suitable and sufficient training and information on these procedures.

The basis for developing any procedure is through carrying out a thorough risk assessment and then applying the findings to develop suitable safe working practices.

Risk Assessment See <http://insight/riskassessment.pdf>

The procedure for carrying out risk assessments is no different from the normal work place assessment process. i.e.

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who can be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings and implement them
5. Monitor and update them as necessary

1. The Hazards (things with the potential to cause harm) see [Hazards](#) appendix1.

Whilst the hazards are similar to everyday working situations they may be exacerbated by the fact that a person is alone and perhaps not in the immediate vicinity of aide and assistance.

e.g.

- Abusive customers or clients
- Animal attacks
- Cash handling
- Defective vehicles
- Driving and/or road rage
- Electric shocks
- Exposure to chemicals or biological agents
- Faulty equipment
- Fire
- Manual handling heavy or unwieldy loads
- Noise
- Poor or lack of training
- Pregnant or young workers
- Remoteness or isolation
- Slips, trips or falls
- Sudden illness rendering the worker unable to summon help
- Violent clients, members of the public or other staff.
- Working at height
- Working in confined spaces
- Working over or near water

2. Who can be harmed?

Employees or other people who may potentially be injured or ill as a result of work being carried out. In particular you should consider vulnerable groups such as those with special needs, young or pregnant workers and those called upon to rescue or give aid to injured people.

3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions see [Precautions appendix 2](#)

In consultation with employees and their representatives decide on the level of risk posed by the situation and whether or not extra precautions are required or whether or not the job can be undertaken safely by a single person. Depending on the results you may need to introduce new precautions, safe working practices or provide personal protective equipment
e.g.

- Access to communications
- Automatic warning devices
- First aid equipment & training
- Further specialist training
- Introducing a "buddy system"
- Lifting equipment
- Maintenance checks on equipment and vehicles
- Out of office recording procedures
- Periodic supervisory checks
- Personal alarms
- Regular supervisory meetings
- Safe working practices
- Security staff

4. Record your findings & implement them

Keep records of the significant findings of your risk assessments. Ensure people are informed of the results and any new safe working practices. Records of risk assessments should be retained for as long as they are effective or superseded. In the majority of cases they should be held for the minimum of one year.

5. Monitor and update findings as necessary

Risk assessments and the outcomes will be monitored as often as required to ensure they remain effective. They should be reviewed or updated when there are major changes to the organisation, work practice or working environment. Should an accident or incident occur which indicates a failure of the precautions that have been developed then they should be reviewed immediately, all risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually?

High risk situations

Where a risk assessment identifies that lone working poses a high risk to a lone worker, lone working should be avoided or arrangements for providing assistance and support put in place. Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace similar arrangements will apply.

As far as reasonably practical employers should co-operate with one another on the measures to be taken to ensure the Health and Safety of their employees.

Home visits or out of office visits

It is essential that you leave a daily diary or record of visits and movements with your line manager or a nominated person. [Checklist](#) See appendix 3

Everyone who visits people at home or in the community must have their vehicle details, i.e. registration number, make of vehicle and colour recorded by their line manager. These details should be held securely but accessible in case an emergency arises. Managers are to ensure these details are kept up to date. In the event that a person does not report in after finishing a visit the manager or nominated person should instigate a contact procedure, i.e. mobile phone call, if there is still no contact a senior manager should be informed and a decision taken whether to go directly to the last known address or alert the police.

Dealing with animals

If there are animals known to be at a property you have to visit it is recommended that the occupants are contacted (if possible), to secure the animals(s) before you arrive.

Communications

Mobile phones should always be kept fully charged and spare batteries made held available for use. If not personal mobile phones employees must be shown how to use them effectively. Mobile phones should not be relied on as the only protective measure, they provide a degree of comfort and support to those working alone in the community. Remember to check signal strength and make sure you have left a record of your visit with your line manager or nominated person.

Information and Training

Employees and others will be provided with the necessary information, training and supervision, to support them in the recognition of hazards and appreciation of the risks associated with working alone (and in any other working environment) and the precautions or safe working practices they should be using. Employees are required to follow the safe working practices which will include contact arrangements, the provision of first aid, keeping safe in lone working situations, and emergency procedures. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that their employees attend the appropriate training

Everyone should remember that their own personal safety should be a priority they should not get involved in any situation that is escalating or where there are concerns that it might result in violence. If they cannot avoid it, intervals should make sure they have a way out. If an individual's personal safety is compromised they should:

- Get out of the situation
- Summon help

- Call security or the police

Where people are involved in an incident where they felt threatened or intimidated they should complete an accident/occurrence report. See <http://insight/accident-incident-investigation.pdf> and report it to their line manager and the health and safety department. Line managers will take action and provide support as necessary. The Council will support individual staff members in line with the zero tolerance stance towards violence and aggression towards its employees.

Awareness register

Prior to making first appointment with a client or member of the public, staff should ensure that the name and address of the person is checked against the Councils awareness register to ascertain if there is any history of violent or abusive conduct against Council employees see <http://insight/hsm-violent-aggressive-threatening-behaviour.pdf> If there are any known events then the risk assessment should be revised to take this into consideration. Where the person is known to be violent or aggressive or if the person has a history of making allegations against staff, all appointments should be made at one of the interview rooms within the Council offices which have alarms fitted and security are advised so they may attend if required.

Working from home

Whilst employees are working from home they have the same level of support and assistance as they would if they were working from an office or other council building. Line managers should ensure that suitable risk assessments are completed prior to people working from home and consider the additional measures which may need to be taken to keep the employee safe and healthy. These measures would include considering the security of the home e.g. keeping doors locked when alone, and not giving out home addresses or phone numbers to clients or customers and any other equipment and training which may be required.

Reception areas

Building managers should ensure all buildings have a local procedure for management of lone working situations and staff are provided with instruction and training.

Interview rooms.

All rooms that are used for client or member of the public interviews should consider having an alarm system fitted with appropriate support procedures in place (see appendix 3) Where security alarms are fitted, line managers must agree a process for testing to ensure the systems are kept in effective working condition and staff are aware of how to respond.

Room layout

The overall aim in the layout of a room is to make the atmosphere as non-oppressive or threatening and conducive to a relaxed atmosphere as possible. At the same time consideration for personal safety is vital. When conducting an interview awareness of the following points will reduce the risk:

- Ensure you can reach an exit without being obstructed

- Arrange furniture so that it cannot be used against you
- Remove or secure objects that could be used as missiles
- Prevent any door locks from being activated by others
- Direct visitors to seats of your choice
- Inform others when you have someone present
- Have another person with you if you are apprehensive
- Prepare an urgent signal or call sign in the event of an emergency

Whenever possible prepare adequately for interviews or consultations, the physical design can always be in place as can a contingency plan or procedure for emergency situations, stay alert and avoid complacency.

Hazards

Appendix 1

The following list is not designed to be comprehensive but a guide to the hazards which may exist in any working environment. It is not specific to lone working which may heighten the risk when taken into consideration. You should consult with your employees and their representatives to get an all round view of the work undertaken and known hazards.

- Abusive customers or clients
- Animal attacks
- Cash handling
- Confined spaces
- Defective vehicles
- Driving or road rage
- Drowning
- Electric shocks
- Exposure to chemicals or biological agents
- Faulty equipment
- Fire/explosions
- Highway working
- Inappropriate or no personal protective equipment provided
- Infection
- Manual handling – especially heavy or unwieldy loads
- Noise
- Physical attack
- Poisoning
- Poor illumination
- Poor or lack of training
- Pregnant or young workers
- Remoteness or isolation
- Road traffic accidents
- Slips, trips and falls
- Sudden illness rendering the worker unable to summon help
- Tools and machinery
- Unknown area or workplace
- Use of vehicles
- Vehicle movements
- Verbal abuse
- Vibration
- Violent clients, members of the public or other staff.
- Working at height

Each hazard should be suitably assessed to the threat or risk it poses to employees and others who could be affected by the nature of the work being undertaken. Where the risk is not being controlled to the lowest reasonably practicable level, new precautions must be devised and implemented.

Precautions

Appendix 2

The following list is again not designed to be comprehensive but a guide to some of the precautions which may be taken to reduce the risk to lone workers. You should consult with your employees and their representatives to get an all round view of the work undertaken, known hazards and the precautions already in use. See <http://insight/vatb-leaflet.pdf>

- Access to communications – lone workers should have immediate access to communications to summon assistance whether by phone, mobile, alarm system or radio. The risk assessment process should identify the type, given the nature of the environment, telephone/mobile or radio coverage and distance from support.
- Alarms – manual alarms which work by pressing a switch or button to summon assistance. Ensure people are trained in the use and the assistance which is required and that the system is maintained.
- Automatic warning devices – similar to alarms to summon assistance, but could also take the form of a pendant or device carried by a person which triggers when all movement ceases for a period of time.
- Fire extinguishers – people working within environments with a medium to high fire risk should have access to suitable extinguishers and be trained how to use them.
- First aid equipment – the provision of first aid equipment may be necessary for anyone working away from immediate medical or first aid assistance.
- Further specialist training – training in the procedures, safe systems of work and equipment provided is a necessity, it is a line manager's responsibility to ensure that all staff are provided with and attend suitable training.
- Introducing a "buddy system"
- Lifting equipment – where work requires the movement of heavy or unmanageable loads it may be necessary to provide special lifting equipment such as hoists.
- Maintenance on equipment and vehicles - a routine maintenance regime should be undertaken on all council owned vehicles, vehicles owned by individuals should be subject to licence and document checks (at least annually).
- Periodic supervisory checks – for people working alone a periodic visit or phone call will assist in providing support and reducing isolation.
- Personal protective equipment – identified through the risk assessment process and provided to everyone as necessary.
- Records of visits – it is imperative that people visiting clients or customers at their home address or anyone away from their main base have a procedure in place for recording times of visit and estimated time of return. For those people not returning to their home/base the line manager must ensure that there is a procedure in place to locate the person if necessary.
- Regular supervisory meetings – regular contact and supervision meetings to discuss progress and targets, and general health and safety issues or other issues that may arise as a result of working alone or at home.
- Safe systems of work – line managers will insure that safe systems of work are identified through the risk assessment process, devised and implemented as required.
- Security staff – in certain circumstances it may be necessary to obtain the services of security personnel to provide support and assistance to employees.

- Training - all safe systems of work, use of equipment and technology require training to be carried out to ensure that employees are competent in its use. Line managers are responsible for ensuring employees attend the relevant training courses.

Checklist for outside or home visits

- 1 *Before leaving*
 - 1.1 *Check*
 - *Ensure your vehicle details are on record*
 - *There is an up to date risk assessment*
 - *Awareness register and available client records*
 - *Location and route to get there*
 - *Vehicle maintained and sufficient fuel*
 - 1.2 *Let others know*
 - *Where you are going & how long you will be there*
 - *When the visit has finished*
 - 1.3 *Difficult visits*
 - *Ring prior to and after visit*
 - *Does the risk assessment indicate it should be an accompanied visit*
 - 1.4 *Colleagues covering your visits*
 - *Brief colleagues on difficulties*
 - 1.5 *Accompanied visits*
 - *Has security or the police been notified of attendance?*
- 2 *Enroute*
 - 2.1 *Procedures*
 - *Lock the car – whilst driving if necessary*
 - *Do not leave mobiles or computers on view*
 - *Being followed? Uneasy? Uncertain? Remain with or return to your vehicle, drive away for a short while, drive to a place of safety.*
 - *If your suspicions are confirmed call the police*
- 3 *On arrival*
 - *Be alert, be aware, and be safe.*
 - *Park with care, ensure you can pull straight out from parking position*
 - *If in doubt do not enter the premises*
 - *Seek advice, seek assistance*
 - *Plan your actions*
- 4 *Personal Safety*
 - *Park in well lit area*
 - *Don't take short cuts through alleys or isolated areas*
 - *Walk facing oncoming traffic*
 - *Wear sensible footwear*
 - *Carry a torch if its dark*
 - *Have a personal alarm readily at hand*
 - *Avoid groups of rowdy people*
 - *If provided carry a mobile phone or radio, make sure it is charged*
 - *Have your keys ready*
 - *Check the interior of your car before getting in*
 - *Lock the door immediately you get in*

Checklist for outside or home visits

- 5 *Keeping you and your car safe*
 - *Close your windows and lock your car*
 - *Don't leave property in view*
 - *Fit and use security locks*
 - *Don't leave registration documents in the car*
- 6 *Personal protective equipment*
 - *Torch*
 - *Personal alarm*
 - *Mobile phone/radio*
 - *Spare batteries*

Further Information Sources

Health and Safety Manual <http://insight/index/information/riskmanagement/hs/hsmanual.htm>

HR Policies on Home working <http://insight/homeworking-guidance.doc>

Health & Safety Executive http://www.hse.gov.uk/a-z/l.htm#lone_working

Policy Feedback

Should you have any comments regarding this policy, please address them to the H & S Department healthandsafety@torbay.gov.uk

History of Policy Consultation and Changes

This guidance was first published in draft form on 10th September 2008. The policy was formally agreed at the Torbay JCC in December 2008.

Date	Page	Details of Change	Agreed by: