WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Staff Safety and Lone Working

July

2022

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Next Update: July 2024

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This guidance on safe working arrangements for staff in the management of cases and lone working applies specifically to Children's Services.

1.2 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 staff within Children's Services who may be classed as lone workers include:

- 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 a building.

2.0 LONE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT

2.1 All situations where an individual is classified as a lone worker should be risk assessed prior to the individual undertaking the required work and control measures put in place for any identified risks. Decisions need to be made about the following issues that concern the safety of the worker:

- Whether the work presents any threat to the safety of the worker
- Whether a required piece of work should be undertaken individually or with another worker
- Whether the work should be undertaken within or out of main office hours
- Whether any safety equipment is required e.g. mobile phone/panic alarm
- The monitoring and reporting arrangements for the worker's safety.

2.2 In completing the risk assessment consideration should be given to:

- The environment within which the worker will be working
- Issues associated with the service user(s) receiving a service e.g. gender, history of violence, history of drug/alcohol misuse, mental health issues, unknown service user
- The nature of the work to be undertaken e.g. is it likely to engender violence
- Whether the worker has the relevant experience and support.

RISK ASSESSMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE

For people who work alone in a fixed location e.g. a residential home or centre
Access
- Is access to the building adequately controlled?
- Who knows who is in the building?
- Is there a 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?

Isolation
- Are employees working alone in isolated offices or parts of the building?
- 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 and contents of interview rooms been considered?

For people who handle cash
- Are the arrangements for keeping money in an establishment safe?
- 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?

For people who are required to work alone and away from a fixed location
- Is there a signing in/out system?
- Do other staff know where the worker is going and their estimated time of return?
- Are there means of communication between the worker and a designated person. Is a panic alarm required?
- Are there reporting arrangements established for reporting safe completion of task?

2.3   Having undertaken the risk assessment and implemented all necessary controls it is important that all lone working situations are monitored and reviewed to ensure the controls remain relevant and sufficient to the safety of the worker.

3.0   Staff Safety

3.1   Staff should wear their identity badge at all times whilst engaged in their employment. Persons on the premises who are not identified as staff or visitors may then be challenged and asked to leave if not on legitimate business. If there is resistance to a request to leave, assistance should be sought from other staff in enforcing the request or the police.

3.2 Each team should have a system for signing out on visits indicating each place where the worker is visiting while away from the office and the anticipated times of visits and return to the office. If the worker is not returning to the office, they should comply with reporting requirements as specified in Section 5.0.

3.3 Staff must also exercise a degree of personal responsibility for their own safety:

- If at any time prior to an appointment it is felt that the worker's safety may be compromised in any way or that a situation may become unsafe/violent, the staff member should speak to their manager for safe arrangements to be put in place.
- If at any time during a visit the worker feels vulnerable or that their safety is compromised in any way, they should calmly try to leave without making the person become more agitated e.g. by supplying a reason why they need to be elsewhere.
- Staff should try and maintain an exit route e.g. by staying located near the door in case a quick escape is needed.
- Staff should not give out their personal mobile phone numbers to service users with whom they are working

- Staff should ensure all relationships with service users remain within professional boundaries

> **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**
> A store of mobile phones is kept for agency workers to use for work purposes.

4.0 STAFF TO WHOM REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD APPLY:
- Staff responding to emergency/unknown situations
- Staff undertaking home visits and not returning to their work-base that day
- Staff working beyond their normal work-base hours

5.0 REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Staff must notify an identified manager when they are working in all the above circumstances. An identified manager may be:

- The relevant Team Manager or Service Manager
- The On-Call Manager
- The Manager of the Out of Hours Service

4.2 Staff must inform the manager of:

- The hours they will be working/the estimated time for completion of the task
- Where and whom they are working with.
- Vehicle registration, contact telephone number and home telephone number.

4.3 All staff working in the above circumstances must report to the identified manager when their work is completed.

4.4   If the identified manager does not receive a completion of work report at the expected time they should try to make contact with the worker.

4.5   If contact cannot be made with the worker, the identified manager should alert the Police that a member of staff may be in danger and direct the Police to the address provided.

4.6   If the identified manager passes on the responsibility for ensuring the worker's safety e.g. to the Out of Hours Service, they must provide the delegated manager with all the relevant information and inform the worker of the changed reporting arrangement.