

Lone Working in Children's Services

Briefing Note

July 2023

Introduction

The safety of staff at work is seen as a high priority in Children's Services and it is recognised that we must ensure our staff are enabled to feel safe and supported while they undertake their difficult roles. This document is designed to outline the approach to lone working in Children's Services and how this dovetails into the corporate approach and support.

Commonly lone working is used to refer to work undertaken when alone or without close or direct supervision and could be out of hours. This could take place at a place of work, at home, driving between sites or when visiting within the community.

GCC have reviewed their corporate lone working policy this year to outline how to best support individuals and teams within this wider definition. This is in its final stages before launch but has heavily informed this briefing too.

Children's Services Approach

This Children's Services briefing will focus in specifically on direct work undertaken with children, young people and families within the community or in a family home. This could be within or outside of core working hours.

This specific spotlight was discussed as it is the time identified as highest risk and of particular concern to staff undertaking this work. It also is a type of work more unique to Children's Services and is not covered in detail within the corporate policy.

It is recognised that staff undertaking these visits manage a number of risks on a daily basis, including:

- Physical harm or threat of,
- Emotional or verbally abusive behaviour,
- Health risks from the environment (dirty, disease),
- Unknown visitors – animals (big dog or snake), intoxicated individuals or unknown attendees,
- Risk of stalking in person or online, being filming and being shared in a negative way.

Risk Management

How we manage these risks will often dictate the response we are likely to encounter. It is expected that risk management forms a regular part of how we plan our visits – considering the location, who we are meeting, what activity we are going to do, what types of discussion we might be having. Additionally, we are always planning responses to scenarios in advance, thinking about what we would do if...

More information on risk management can be found on the SHE staffnet pages - [Personal safety whilst working out of the office/home - Staffnet \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

Accountability

When considering lone working there are responsibilities and accountabilities at all levels of an organisation. There is a need to set the right conditions and provide the right support at an organisational level, plans and management techniques at a team level and most importantly accountability and management of risks as an individual to try to reduce this as much as possible.

The diagram below shows how at each level of the organisation we can take steps to improve the safety of staff when undertaking these lone visits.

To bring this diagram to life it is expected that team managers will discuss lone working and make a plan that is shared and understood by all staff in their team.

Continued Development

This approach is one which will continue to evolve and should be kept under regular review. The diagram highlights some areas still pending but we have already begun making progress with further training to support staff being signed off.

