

ALDERMAN RICHARD HALLAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lone Working Policy



Lone Working Policy

Introduction

Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School and its Governing Body have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff while they are performing their work duties. At any given time, there are numbers of staff who are working alone, whether as a substantial part of their working life or on an occasional basis. The Governing Body have a responsibility to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary, and staff have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to outline the Governing Body's responsibilities towards staff working alone by:

- Defining what 'lone working' is.
- Taking action to reduce risk to lone workers.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibility to use necessary guidance to assist lone workers.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, including temporary workers and those employed on a casual basis. It should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those 'who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. They may include:

- People working separately from others in a building.
- People who work outside 'normal' hours.
- People who work away from their fixed base without colleagues, e.g. visiting people in their homes.
- People who work at home.

The definition can cover staff in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures. This policy will refer to high risk and low risk activities

Some staff members may spend most of their working lives with others but find themselves working alone occasionally, for example, when working late. Others will work alone on a daily basis. This policy will refer to both frequent lone workers and occasional lone workers.

Potential Hazards of Lone Working

People who work alone will, of course, face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses may happen when there is no-one to summon help or first aid.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Fire.
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use certain equipment.
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in).

The perception of these hazards or the actual risks may be different for different people. For example, a more inexperienced person may underestimate the risks of an activity, some workers may feel particularly vulnerable to violence away from the workplace or after dark, or a medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.

The school must consider these factors when doing risk assessments. If there are lone workers within an area, the manager must take appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high-risk activities. They should consider:

- Does the workplace present any special risk to a lone worker?
- Can all the equipment, substances and goods used on the premises be safely handled by one person? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
- Is there a risk of violence or the threat of violence? Is the nature of a visit or the person being visited likely to increase the risk? Will the staff member be alone in a dark or remote location?

Risk Assessments

A general lone working risk assessment is in place for Premises staff, Cleaners and other staff who could potentially be lone working. A risk assessment for any further staff who wishes to work alone should be completed as required.

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Lone Working

Supervision

Lone workers are, by definition, not under constant supervision. However, line managers can ensure that staff understands the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions. They can put into place arrangements for the individual to contact a line manager if they need additional guidance. Occasional site visits may be appropriate,

particularly if there are high-risk activities. Staff new to a job or undergoing training may need to be accompanied initially. Regular contact by phone or radio may be appropriate.

Checking System

All out-of-hours, lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with family, friends, or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers provide a relative or friend with a telephone contact number (e.g. their line manager's) to call if the lone worker fails to return home at the expected time.

Reporting back

A system should be in place to ensure that a lone worker returns to their base or their home at the completion of a task away from the normal workplace. For high risk or frequent lone workers, the Site Manager may stipulate that the staff member must inform them of their whereabouts and the expected duration of the visit so that, if the staff member has not reported in or cancelled the call by the expected hour, a call will automatically be triggered to check the staff member is safe.

For occasional lone workers or low-risk lone workers, they should inform a colleague where they are going and when they are expected back, arranging to ring the office at the conclusion of the visit or call, issuing a mobile phone number to allow a contact call to be made if the staff member's return is overdue. Use of diary systems or notice boards to indicate whereabouts can form part of this system. All staff involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal systems for safe lone working.

The school should also consider staff who meet with visitors on a one-to-one basis on the school premises. Whilst they are not alone in the building, they may be alone with the visitor in a place where other colleagues cannot see them. The school should consider systems for ensuring that they have emerged safely from such a meeting and systems for raising an alarm if necessary.

Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. This should include being made aware of special arrangements for out-of-hours incidents. First aid may be available from school staff, or it may be prudent for an individual frequently working away from the base to carry a basic first aid kit if there is a foreseeable risk of injury. It is also necessary for staff working alone in a building or part of a building to let their colleagues know they are there, so they can be accounted for in case of fire.

Medical Conditions

Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

Tasks Not Suitable for Lone Working

Risk assessment will identify the hazards of work. When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up should be put in place, or the work reassigned to another member of staff or done in hours when they are not alone. For example, a staff member who arrives before other colleagues may be instructed not to attempt heavy manual lifting, working at heights etc. until another colleague arrives to assist.

Intruder

Staff should not enter the school premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to wait for the security firm arrive or immediately contact the police.

Violence at Work

Staff who undertake home visits must use a system to reduce the risk of violence by not visiting alone or meeting in another location. The risk of violence may not be directly related to a particular property. It may be associated with the environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents. Staff likely to be lone workers in such situations should be trained in dealing with difficult people, in ways to recognise a risk and in behaviour which may reduce the risk (up to and including terminating the visit). All incidents of violence must be reported. Please see our Home Visits Policy for further details and a template risk assessment.

Personal Safety When Working Off-Site

- Reduce the number of valuables carried and avoid wearing expensive jewellery or watches.
- Carry a personal alarm or other device to attract attention in an emergency.
- If possible, small change should be carried for emergency calls – even if mobile phones are available as they may not always work.
- Dress for safety on visits, e.g. wear flat shoes. Do not stand out as it may attract attention unless this is deemed appropriate.
- Mobile phones should be small enough to fit into pockets or kept out of sight.
- If an item is grabbed – let go!
- Avoid going by foot if feeling vulnerable. Use convenient public transport, private car or a reputable taxi firm.
- Plan the route in advance and always take a map, including method of transport.
- If in dark areas, carry a torch.
- Always carry identification with contact details in case of emergency.

As well as the danger of personal injury, the possibility of exhaustion or hypothermia should be considered.

Conclusion

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. The school must ensure that they have not only introduced measures to reduce any risk but must also ensure that they have communicated their expectations to lone workers and trained them appropriately. All staff, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and all staff can take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with their normal working life.

Policy Links

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following other policies and documents:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Home Visits Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct