

# LONE WORKING POLICY

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Name of responsible party	Jackie McNeill

# **Lone Worker Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

It is recognised that many people working within Patient and Client Council (PCC), by the nature of their job, can be required to work alone or can find themselves in such circumstances. The NHS Security Management Service<sup>1</sup> defines lone working as:

*‘Any situation or location in which someone works without a colleague nearby, or when someone is working out of sight or earshot of another colleague’.*

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) describes lone workers as those who:

1. Work from a fixed base, such as one person working alone on premises e.g. administrative staff in one of the satellite offices.
2. Work separately from others on the same premises or outside normal hours when no other staff are present.
3. Work away from a fixed base e.g. a Personal and Public Involvement Officer attending an event in a community setting.
4. Work at home or off site e.g. remote workers.
5. Mobile workers e.g. Complaints Support Officers out of on visits, meetings etc

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of lone workers i.e. a member of staff working alone, either on site or undertaking PCC duties within the community, in order to reduce the risks of lone working as far as is reasonably practicable.

## **2. Scope**

This Policy applies to all employees permanent or temporary and agency staff working in the PCC.

## **3. Legal requirements**

The PCC has an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare of its employees. The PCC has a duty to identify significant risks within the organisation and implement suitable risk treatments, to reduce those risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

Employees should take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

Where a person is required or requests to work a after normal working hours and alone, it is necessary to identify the degree of risk in assessing whether or not this is a safe practice. The PCC will make a “suitable and sufficient” assessment of any risks to the health and safety of its employees. Any

such risks identified are likely to be greater for lone workers. These findings will be recorded on local office risk registers.

#### **4. General principles**

The aim of this policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff who work alone are not exposed to risks to their Health and Safety and to outline the steps to reduce and improve personal safety to staff who work alone.

Principles to be followed in conjunction with Lone Working include:

- a) Staff whereabouts are known at all times.
- b) Mode of transport being used during business activities should be shared between staff member and line manager..
- c) Staff are fully aware of protocols to report near misses and incidents.
- d) All PCC staff are empowered to postpone or end meetings when they have concerns over their personal safety.
- e) Out of hours working is only conducted when there is an identified and agreed business need.
- f) All PPI and complaints staff should be trained on handling aggression.

#### **5. Objectives**

The objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- a) Lone workers are identified;
- b) That risks inherent in lone worker situations are assessed and suitable precautionary measures taken; and
- c) There is a local safe system of work which:
  - records the whereabouts of lone workers;
  - tracks the movement of lone workers;
  - follows an agreed system for locating staff who deviate from their expected movement pattern; and
  - identifies when lone working is no longer appropriate.

#### **6. Organisational responsibilities**

Responsibilities for the health and safety of lone workers are allocated as follows:

##### **7. Chief Executive**

To ensure the management of lone working within the PCC is adhered to under the Health and Safety Policy.

##### **8. Senior Managers**

It is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team to:

- a) Ensure that this policy and any local policies and guidelines are disseminated to relevant employees and self-employed panel members.

- b) Ensure the provision of appropriate training for all lone workers to enable the implementation of this policy.
- c) Monitor the implementation of this policy and its effectiveness on employee and self-employed panel members through training, survey, supervision, incident management, as well as ensure reporting systems are used properly in relation to lone working.
- d) Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that appropriate equipment, facilities and/or working arrangements are in place for the protection of lone workers.

## **9. Line Managers**

- a) To identify all staff likely to work regularly in isolation from their colleagues.
- b) To assess the risks that such lone working presents and carry out risk assessments as required.
- c) To ensure staff can be contacted at all times.
- d) Assess all risks, involving staff to decide whether lone working is reasonable or not in these situations.
- e) Carry out a risk assessment if required.
- f) If lone working is not considered reasonable, then the manager should escalate identified risks to the SMT.
- g) Line managers should agree within their teams a safe system to follow to ensure it meets the above objectives. Such as, a nominated person at base (“buddy”) must be identified for the lone worker to contact before and after the visit. In some circumstances where the lone worker is returning to a venue other than base after a visit, then a family member or friend may be nominated as “buddy”. The nominated person or office should be made aware of the location of the visit, general purpose of the visit and expected time of visit. Where a member of staff does not return home when expected – the line manager or senior manager should be alerted.
- h) To report to the Heads of Service any situation where the risks cannot be controlled.
- i) To ensure all staff that work alone are made aware of this policy.
- j) To ensure staff are provided with appropriate training to feel safe and confident in their role.
- k) To support staff who are victims of violence and aggression through the staff counselling service.
- l) Within seven days of any event carry out a formal de brief with staff member(s). This is an opportunity for staff to reflect upon thoughts and feelings evoked by the incident, current working practice, and whether any changes are necessary.
- m) Put in place emergency plans and contact points for staff.
- n) All staff should be made aware of any learning from any incident.
- o) Liaise with the Health and Safety Adviser/s as necessary. Contact can be arranged through the Head of Development and Corporate Services.
- p) Lone working should routinely be discussed at team meetings to identify any issues/learning.

See Appendix A for a Manager’s Checklist.

## 10. Employees

- a) To attend any training provided.
- b) All staff should be given Suzy Lamplugh guidance on induction and have access to this material.
- c) Details of all meetings should be recorded in the diary. This should include client's name\*/venue, start and approximate finish time, client's contact details including, address and tele number\* (\*case numbers for Complaints Officers).
- d) Home visits should be avoided if possible. A neutral, suitable venue should be used to meet with clients – rooms with windows or glass doors where others can see into the meeting are most suitable. Where a home visit is necessary a minimum of 2 staff members should attend.
- e) Comply with any precautionary measures – see checklist attached.
- f) Report to their managers any unsafe or potentially unsafe situations, and
  - i. to report incidents in which violence or aggression or threats using the
  - ii. Serious Adverse Incident reporting procedure.
- g) All client meetings in PCC offices should be conducted when there are other colleagues in the vicinity.
- h) Client meetings outside of the PCC should ideally be in an office which is visible to other stakeholders e.g. with glass partition and should not be in a remote vicinity.
- i) Notify your line manager of any changes to the daily out of base work plan (i.e. adhoc or “spur of the moment” visits).
- j) If at any time during the visit you feel vulnerable, or a potentially violent or aggressive situation is developing, leave the building and notify your local office.
- k) Take reasonable care for their own safety and not expose themselves to unnecessary risk.
- l) Ensure that your PCC identification is available and mobile phones are fully charged when working alone.
- m) Avoid parking in deserted, poorly lit locations, or, in a confined space that you may get blocked into.
- n) Secure the vehicle when you leave it and do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle.

See Appendix B for an employee's checklist.

## 11. Typical Scenarios

Whilst the points outlined in the above sections apply to all lone workers, this section highlights some of the specific scenarios that MAY arise and some issues that managers MAY need to consider.

## 12. Field Workers

- a) Ensure their whereabouts and intentions are known to their line manager;

- b) Be aware of the surroundings and exits when entering a property, in particular staff should wherever possible position themselves between the client / patient;
- c) Where appropriate, use a mobile phone or personal panic alarm; and report any incidents immediately to your line manager and a senior manager.

### **13.Office Based Staff**

Staff working out of hours in these areas should ensure the following:-

- a) Lock all entrances;
- b) avoid meeting patients / clients or visitors out of hours when you will be alone;
- c) ensure you work close to or have access to a phone;
- d) ensure someone is aware of your presence; and
- e) report all incidents to line managers and a senior manager .

### **14. Cars**

- a) Do not use mobile phone whilst driving, unless using a hands free kit;
- b) In slow moving traffic – make sure your doors are locked;
- c) Personal belongings and equipment to be locked in boot;
- d) Park your car in well-lit areas;
- e) Where possible equipment should be carried in the boot and placed out of sight; IT equipment should not be left unattended in the car for a prolonged period; and
- f) Patient's/carers's/client's records should not be visible within the car.

### **15. Risk Assessment for Lone Working**

- a) Risk assessment is essential to good risk management. Assessments should be carried out for staff whose working practice makes them vulnerable. This includes staff who are site based but work in isolation as well as mobile staff whose work takes them out into the community.
- b) Risk assessments for lone workers should typically include the following issues:
  - Safe access and outlet's entrances/exits; risk of violence;
  - safety of equipment for individual use;
  - channel of communication in an emergency;
  - site security;
  - security arrangements, i.e., alarm systems and response to personal alarms; and
  - level and adequacy of on/off site supervision.
- c) However, this list is not exhaustive and consideration must be given to all risk issues, which may arise within the operation being assessed.

- d) Heads of Service should ensure that the hazards associated with lone working have been assessed.
- e) Where the control measures are assessed as extreme or high, managers should initiate appropriate measures to reduce and/or minimise the risk to the lowest practicable level possible.

## **15.1 Emergencies**

- a) Heads of Service must ensure that there are suitable provisions for any accident and emergency situation, which a lone worker maybe involved in.
- b) Suitable provisions may include the following:
  - Access to adequate first aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers require training in first aid.
  - Provision of communication equipment for use in emergency or accident situation.
  - Communication procedure for alerting a central point of an emergency.
  - Provision of specialist equipment which automatically identifies an emergency or accident eg panic alarms connected to a central control point or gravity activated alarms which are activated when an employee remains at a low level for a given amount of time.

## **15.2 What to do if there is genuine concern**

- a) Where there is a genuine concern, as a result of the lone worker failing to attend a visit, or an arranged meeting, or returning to base within an agreed time, the Line Manager should immediately try to contact the staff member. If unsuccessful, utilise the information provided in the log to help track the lone worker and ascertain whether or not they turned up for previous appointments that day.
- b) Depending on the circumstances and whether contact through normal means (ie mobile phone, calling at location, calling other stakeholders) can or cannot be made; the Line Manager or colleague should involve the police.
- c) Where it is thought that the lone worker may be at risk after consideration of all the available facts, it is important that matters are dealt with quickly. If police involvement is needed, they should be given full access to the information held and personnel who might hold it, if that information contains data that might help trace the lone worker and provide a fuller assessment of any risks they might be facing.

## **16. Implementation of Policy**

### **16.1 Dissemination**

This policy will be made available to all staff through the PCC Web site. It will also

be cascaded through line management.

## **16.2 Resources – Training**

- a) Lone working issues should be included in team briefings and information sharing should be encouraged- particularly of known risks associated with some patients/clients and any known environmental risks. Thereby providing staff with clear lines of communication where risks are identified.
- b) All staff must follow agreed local procedures. Lone workers must undergo appropriate training, personal safety training (where appropriate) handling aggression and risk assessment training.
- c) All requests for training should be through respective Line Managers in the first instance.
- d) All staff identified as requiring training will be the responsibility of the Line Manager, who will also be responsible for ensuring that the training is carried out and that refresher training is also attended.
- e) If a lone worker has been given personal protective equipment, such as a mobile phone they must ensure that they have it with them and that it is working correctly and they use it before entering into a situation.
- f) Lone workers must remain alert throughout the visit or the work that they are undertaking and ensure that they are aware of entrances and exits, in the event of an emergency. Such techniques are taught through training and allow staff to consider the correct positions they should place themselves in, should they need to make an escape.

## **17. MONITORING**

1. All managers are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the measures in place to minimise risk and carry out appropriate investigation of all incidents involving lone working.
2. Managers should review their local arrangements in accordance with the timescales noted on the risk assessment pro forma, if circumstances change or following any significant incident.
3. Risk assessments must be continually monitored through the quarterly local risk registers, reviewed and revised as necessary.



## Appendix 1

### Manager Checklist

#### Managers should:

- Complete risk assessments for all staff in all departments, resulting in the development of risk management strategies including the provision of appropriate training;
- Disseminate to all relevant staff a copy of the SET Lone Worker Guidelines;
- Ensure all staff, including temporary staff, are trained in appropriate strategies for the prevention of violence;
- Brief all staff on local procedures for the area where they work;
- Ensure systems are in place to share information about the potential for aggression and violence in relation to patient/service user from all relevant agencies;
- If necessary, following risk assessment, issue staff with appropriate equipment, e.g., mobile phones, panic alarms and make sure they are aware of procedures for maintaining such equipment;
- Set up systems to determine staff whereabouts if working alone/not accounted for;
- Emphasise the importance of previewing cases;
- Create and maintain systems for staff to obtain support and advice from management outside normal working hours;
- Ensure staff know how to obtain authorisation for an unaccompanied visit;
- Should consider using other staff outside of the complaints team for home visits if needed,
- Support staff in understanding the circumstances under which interviews should be terminated where there is a risk of aggression/violence;
- Understand that staff should appreciate their responsibilities for their own safety;
- Record and report all incidents of aggression and violence; and
- Make staff aware of the PCC's staff confidential counselling services: Staff Care 24 hour careline free phone 0808 800 0002.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Employees Checklist**

Employees are obliged to inform their line manager of their whereabouts at all times during the working day. All staff are responsible for ensuring the line manager has sufficient details about every visit conducted in the community or during out of hours working. Details to be provided by staff to their line manager would include addresses to be visited, names of clients, time of scheduled visit and estimated time of return. Before conducting visits, particularly when risks may be higher than normal, staff should also agree a time at which they will contact their line manager by phone upon the completion of the visit/task.

#### **The home/interview area:**

- Do not enter a home/interview area if you have any doubts about your safety;
- End visit/interview if you feel unsafe;
- Be alert to potential risks presented by people who have been taking drink or drugs;
- Be aware of who else may be in the home;
- On the way into the home/interview area, follow the person from the door, so that they cannot block your exit;
- When in the house/interview area be aware of possible escape routes;
- Where possible be in control of the interview environment such as the seating arrangements and if possible have a table between you and the client;
- Agree code words or phrases so that you can let your colleagues or manager know the scale of the problems without escalating the situation; and
- Keep emergency contacts on speed dial on your mobile phone. Keep your phone charged and check if you have a signal.

#### **Your Transport:**

Consider:

- Keep all equipment out of view, e.g., in the boot;
- Checking your car for intruders before getting in; and
- Never transporting potentially violent or aggressive individuals alone

### **Working Alone in PCC Premises:**

- While working alone make sure the building is secure, ie, exit doors locked;
- Carry keys on person;
- Have access to a telephone;
- Know any relevant contact numbers, eg, Estate Services/Line Manager;
- Do not permit any unauthorised personnel into the building;
- Be aware of Fire Policy and familiarise yourself with emergency exits;
- If lighting around a facility is inadequate report this to the Head of Development and Corporate Services; and
- Be vigilant at all times.