

Lone Worker Policy

Introduction

There is often confusion or concern about the circumstances in which it is, or is not, safe to work alone. There is no general legal prohibition on working alone, but risk assessments should specifically consider whether the fact that a person is likely to undertake a task alone creates an unacceptable level of risk.

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees, but it is necessary to consider any particular additional hazards of lone working. The end result should be that lone workers are at no greater risk than other workers.

This document gives general guidance on working alone, covering the Clerk's home-based working, time spent alone at the Council's office or village hall premises, and site visits such as inspections of the cemetery and the pavilion. It offers advice on how to comply with duties towards lone workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999, and should be read alongside the Council's Health and Safety Policy and Homeworking Policy.

The Parish Council's Policy

The Council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees, visitors and contractors, and the safety of those affected by the work, e.g. members of the public.

These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is the Council's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary.

Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work, and to co-operate with the Council in meeting its legal obligations.

Who Are Lone Workers?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They are found in a wide range of situations, for example where only one person works on the premises, such as in an office, when working from home, or when visiting other premises or sites alone.

The Clerk works from home for most of their working time, attends the Council's office or the village hall for meetings or other work, and undertakes site visits such as inspections of the cemetery and the pavilion. The Clerk does not receive members of the public at their home. Where a member of the public wishes to meet the Clerk, the Clerk will first establish the visitor's details and the purpose of the meeting, and the meeting will normally take place at the village hall rather than at the Clerk's home.

Where the Clerk is accompanied by another person, such as the Handyman, during a site visit (for example at the cemetery), this reduces the lone working risk for that visit, and this should be reflected in any risk assessment for the activity concerned.

Issues to be Considered

The main issues to be considered in the risk assessment are:

- Is there a risk of violence?

- Is the person medically (and psychologically) fit to work alone?
- Is any special training required?
- Are the individual(s) concerned, and any necessary safe working practices, adequately monitored?
- Are there adequate arrangements in the event of an emergency?
- Can all plant, substances and equipment involved in the work be safely handled and/or operated by one person?

Assessing the Risks

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 still apply. These require identifying the hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

Controlling the Risk

Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment, mobile phones, and 'calling in' systems. The Council will take steps to check that control measures are used, and will review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure it remains adequate.

When 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 will be put in place.

Where a lone worker is working at another organisation's premises, that organisation should inform the Council of any risks and the control measures that should be taken, to help the Council assess the risks.

Safe Working Arrangements

Some of the issues which need special attention when planning safe working arrangements are as follows:

- Can the risk of the job be adequately controlled by one person? Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees; this may require extra risk-control measures, taking account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents.
- Does the workplace or site present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and a safe way out for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? Medical advice should be sought if necessary, and both routine work and foreseeable emergencies which may impose additional physical and mental burdens should be considered.
- What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters? Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision, and is critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations.

Monitoring

Procedures will be put in place to monitor lone workers to ensure they remain safe. These may include regular contact between the lone worker and a nominated person using a mobile or landline phone, and checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.

Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events, and emergency procedures should be established with employees trained in them.

Lone workers should have 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 need training in first aid.

Control Measures

Practical guidelines for the Clerk and any other lone worker include:

1. Outside normal working hours and in isolated buildings, lone workers should telephone a designated person and advise their place of work and expected duration of stay as they leave the building, and record the time span and location on the whiteboard in the office.
2. Ensure a working telephone is available at all times.
3. Lone workers should not undertake dangerous work, for example using dangerous chemicals or operating dangerous machinery.
4. When undertaking off-site visits, such as inspections of the cemetery or the pavilion, the checklist below must be considered prior to the visit. Where the Clerk is accompanied (for example by the Handyman), this should be noted, as it reduces the lone working risk for that visit.
5. Where the Clerk attends a site visit alone, the Clerk should carry a fully charged mobile phone at all times, and should check the surrounding area for anything of concern before getting out of the vehicle on arrival.

Off-Site Visit Checklist for Lone Workers

Consideration	Yes	No
Is there a risk of violence?		
Is there safe access and exit for one person?		
Is manual handling undertaken?		
Is the lone worker medically fit to carry out the task?		
Is there first aid provision?		
Can an emergency service reach the location if necessary?		
Is there a clear understanding of how long the work will take?		
Are transport arrangements to and from the location adequate?		
Is there a system for maintaining contact with the lone worker?		
Will the lone worker be accompanied (e.g. by the Handyman) for this visit?		
Is there CCTV at the site being visited?		
Has the lone worker received training to deal with violence and aggression, if relevant?		
Is the lone worker briefed about the area they are visiting?		
Does the lone worker have all available information on those being visited?		

Has an itinerary been left with a nominated contact?		
Have plans been made to keep in contact with the lone worker?		
Does the lone worker have the means to contact the Chair of the Council?		
Does the lone worker know how to complete an incident form?		