

Heighington Parish Council

LONE WORKER POLICY

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Lone Worker Policy

1. Purpose

Heighington Parish Council (“the council”) recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves for periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community, sometimes in isolated work areas, in the office on their own, working from home, or out of office hours.

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work regulations 1999, the council has a duty of care to advise and assess risk for workers when they work by themselves in these circumstances.

This policy sets out the responsibilities for assessing and mitigating the risks (as far as is reasonably practicable) involved with working alone.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of the council. The principles of this policy can also be applied to councillors and volunteers.

3. Definitions

The Health & Safety Executive¹ defines lone workers as “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, either during or outside normal working hours”. This covers all council employees and/or councillors who are required to carry out their duties for all or part of their working day working in isolation.

Examples include:

- One member of staff alone in the office.
- Member of staff visiting or working at other council sites.
- Member of staff working outside normal office hours.
- Office staff working from home.

Workers under the age of 18 or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.

¹ HSE guidance on Lone Working: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/index.htm>

4. Aims

The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working.
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure that appropriate support and training is available to all staff which equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone.
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working.
- Ultimately reduce the number of incidents and injuries to personnel related to lone working.

5. Responsibilities

Employees/other personnel are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions.
 - Being familiar with the building/environment they are working in, including location of First Aid facilities.
 - Being cautious of situations where members of the public could turn up unplanned.
 - Being cautious if there are unsupervised animals (such as dogs) in the vicinity.
 - Have emergency contact numbers readily available.
- Following guidance and procedures designed for safe working.
- Flagging up any health issues which may make them more vulnerable in a lone working situation.
- Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy.
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of lone working.

The Clerk, on behalf of Heighington Parish Council as the employer, is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working.
- Providing resources for putting this policy into practice.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy.
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly.
- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone. This will include

ensuring access to a mobile phone and other personal safety equipment where this is determined as necessary.

- Ensuring that staff are given appropriate information, instruction and training.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in an incident.
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through a system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

6. Assessing the risk

Risk assessment is essential to good risk management.

Assessment will be carried out for and by all 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. Recommendations will be made to eliminate or to reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

7. Incident Reporting

An incident is defined as “an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health or damage”.

In order to maintain an appropriate record of incidents involving lone workers it is essential that all incidents be reported to the clerk who will prioritise each incident and identify any immediate action. Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or “unsafe” (even if this was not a tangible event/experience) are reported. This includes incidents of aggression or verbal abuse.

8. Contacting/involving the police

The council is committed to protecting staff from violence and assault and will support criminal proceedings against those who carry out assault. All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to the police and will be supported by the council throughout the process.

Except in cases of emergency, employees should inform the clerk of any incident immediately. The clerk will thereafter take responsibility for contacting the police to report the details of the incident. Any incidents involving the clerk should be reported to the council Chair.

9. Support for staff

Employees working for the council should know that their safety comes first. Staff should be aware of how to deal with situations where they feel they are at risk or unsafe. Staff should also be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response. The clerk will ensure that all lone workers' training needs are assessed and that they receive appropriate training.

10. Immediate support following an incident

In the event of a violent incident involving a lone worker, the clerk will immediately ensure that the employee receives any necessary medical treatment and/or advice. Any incidents involving the clerk should be reported to the Chair.

The clerk will also consider whether the employee needs specific information or assistance relating to legal or insurance aspects. The clerk will also ensure appropriate written and verbal reporting of any violent incident.

11. Good practice for lone workers

- During working hours, all staff leaving the workplace should leave details with the office including where they are going and their estimated time of arrival back.
- If in the course of a trip away from the workplace, plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to the office.
- If the visit is assessed to have a sufficient risk, arrangements should be made with a colleague or councillors to check that a lone worker has returned to their base, on completion of the visit. If possible, delay the visit until staff can be accompanied.
- Telephone contact between the lone worker and a colleague/councillor may also be advisable. Staff should avoid being left on their own with a resident in their workplace and should not leave another colleague/councillor in this situation.
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities. The office should be informed if minor injuries are treated from one of the first aid kits.
- Staff should never be put in a position where they are left alone with a child or a vulnerable adult.
- No-one should have a planned meeting with residents alone at the workplace or elsewhere. There should be two people present from the council.
- Consideration must however be given to the fact that when the parish office is open, parishioners are able to call in unannounced. With a lone member of staff on duty, they may want to consider keeping the external door locked and only opening this to visitors if comfortable to do so.

- Working from home should be approved in advance (unless in an emergency situation), by the clerk or in the case of the clerk, by the Chair/Employment Committee as appropriate.
- Meetings should take place at a public meeting space. If home visits are required, the lone worker must have full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which they may be exposed and apply control measures to eliminate or reduce the potential risks.
- Having collected all the relevant information, you will then need to plan your contact:
 - Trust your intuition and always think of your personal safety.
 - Consider the best time of day to visit. Assess the situation. Are you familiar with the location you are visiting? Consider the weather/visibility. Will you be driving in the dark?
 - Where is the most appropriate place to meet?
 - Do you need to take a colleague/councillor with you?
 - Ensure someone else knows where you are and do not make any last-minute change of plans.
 - Ensure your mobile is charged.
 - Make sure you know your route to avoid having to stop and ask strangers for directions.
 - Park near street lighting or lit areas where possible.
 - Reverse into parking spaces to ensure a quick getaway.
 - Keep all doors locked whilst driving and keep valuables out of sight.
 - If you do not intend to return to the office after your visit, let someone know.