



# EmpowerEd

## Lone Working Policy

Reviewed: 10 August 2023

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## Safeguarding Statement

At EmpowerEd we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every student should be able to participate in all Centre activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access our services and promote the welfare of all our students by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

## Introduction

EmpowerEd has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff while they are at work. There are sometimes a number of staff who are working alone, whether as a substantial part of their working life or on an occasional basis. The company has 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.

## Purpose

The aim of this policy is to outline 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.

## 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 of 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, inexperience or your works 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 company 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?

## **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 understand 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 or session 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 may be appropriate. The Line Manager should assess what level of supervision is required.

### **Checking System**

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

Lone working staff should also utilise the EmpowerEd tracking system which can be accessed through our communal work space, this enables lone workers to regularly check in with colleagues.

## **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 him/her of their whereabouts and the expected duration of the visit so that if the staff member has not reported in, calls can be made to ensure the worker 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 virtual 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 company should also consider staff who meet with visitors on a one to one basis on the 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 company 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 centre 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.

## **Medical Conditions**

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

## **Task 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 until another colleague arrives to assist.

## **Intruder**

Staff should not enter the premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to 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.

## **Pupils Lone Working**

The tutor or manager in charge of the lone worker should ensure that the pupil understands the risks associated with lone working and the relevant safety precautions. The tutor should ensure that they check on the lone worker at least every hour and more frequently if necessary. Students should be informed that if the fire alarm sounds they should leave the building by the nearest fire exit and not return to the tutor.

## **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. 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.