

Lone Working Policy

Document Control

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Revision due	The service aims to review policies and procedures every two years to ensure documents are up to date		
Owning Service	Human Resources		

Approvals (if required)

Date Employment Committee gave authorisation for changes (where necessary)

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Changes made by
1.2	February 2024	Put onto new template. Amended to include stalking and home working, stress and mental health. Included links to training and other useful websites	MB
1.1	February 2021	Original policy	

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BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL'S

LONE WORKING POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

Bracknell Forest Council expects all its employees to work in accordance with its code of conduct, policies and procedures at all times. The Lone Working policy ensures that the Council complies with its legislative requirements to manage any health and safety risks before our employees work alone. This involves the Council ensuring a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment of an employee's working environment is carried out and managing any risks before an employee can work alone.

2 EQUALITY

At Bracknell Forest Council we are committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We want everyone that works for us to feel that their individuality is respected, and their unique contributions are valued.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Council - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

3 PURPOSE

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

- Defining lone working
- Outlining action that can be taken to ensure staff are safe and reduce the risk to employees engaging in lone working
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibility to use the Council systems that have been introduced to protect lone workers.

Where agile working arrangements apply, it should be recognised there may be occasions when employees are working from home alone and considered to be lone workers. Therefore, where reference is made to work time, this will include occasions where an employee is lone working from home.

4 PRINCIPLES

- The Bracknell Forest Council lone working policy reflects the guidance ACAS (Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance
- The Council has a duty of care to ensure all employees are safe at work, regardless of location or working style and will work with employees who engage in lone working to ensure risk assessments are carried out.

5 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of Bracknell Forest Council, with the exception of:

- School based staff (see separate School policy)

Detailed guidelines and working practices consistent with this framework may exist within departments particularly where lone working is common, and this policy should be read in conjunction with these where they exist. In addition, this policy should also be read in conjunction with guidance from the Health and Safety policy:

[Health and safety manual and policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

6 LONE WORKING IN THE WORKPLACE

6.1 Definition

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

- People who work 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, or site visits.
- People who work at home.

The definition can cover employees in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is therefore important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures.

Some employees may spend most of their working lives working with others, but find themselves working alone occasionally, for example, when working late, these are defined as occasional lone workers. Whilst others will work alone on a daily basis either at home or at different locations and are defined as frequent lone workers.

6.2 Potential hazards of Lone Working

The majority of people who work alone will, of course, face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, managers should consider all potential risks in accordance with an employee’s individual personal circumstances, which may include:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses occurring when there is no-one to summon help or first aid.

- Violence or the threat of violence or abuse (including discriminatory comments/behaviour, stalking and unwanted attention).
- Stress and impact on mental health or wellbeing.
- A person's medical suitability to work alone.
- Fire.
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g., heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment.
- Access/Exiting buildings (e.g., danger of being accidentally locked in).
- Site safety eg building site, icy roads, uneven surfaces
- The location of the workplace itself, eg, is it in a rural or isolated area?

Steps can be taken to reduce the risks of these events.

The perception of these hazards, or the actual risks, may be different for different people. For example, inexperienced workers 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 Manager must consider these factors when carrying out risk assessments. Where there are lone workers within a manager's team/area or responsibility the manager must take appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high-risk activities. When assessing the risk to the lone worker, managers 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 person working alone?
- 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 employee be alone in a dark or remote location?

6.3 Home Working

Under HSE guidance the Council has the same health and safety responsibilities for homeworkers and the same liability for accidents or injury as it does for all other workers. This means providing supervision, education, and training, and implementing sufficient control measures to protect the homeworker.

When an employee lone working is working at home, employees may experience different hazards in relation to their home environment or the impact of working at home on mental health. In these situations, managers should discuss home working with employees on a case-by-case basis to identify ways in which they can reduce the risk to the home worker.

More information on working at home safely is available on the intranet - [Safety when homeworking \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

6.4 Risk Assessments

All managers must ensure that employees have a complete risk assessment prior to lone working. A Risk Assessment template is available from the Health and Safety pages on the intranet [Health and safety manual and policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

Guidance on completing risk assessments is also available from the Health and Safety Team. Additionally, an e-learning package on Risk Assessments is available on the e-learning zone.

6.5 Employee responsibility

As outlined in the H&S policy, the employee also has a responsibility to raise any risks or concerns with their manager. It may be necessary to review the previous Risk Assessment due to any concerns raised.

7 MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF LONE WORKING

7.1 Supervision

Lone workers are, by definition, not under constant supervision. However, managers can ensure, through the initial induction process, that employees understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions which are applicable. Employees are encouraged to contact a manager if they need additional guidance. Managers should undertake site visits where there are high risk activities undertaken. In situations where an employee is new to the role or undergoing training they may need to be accompanied initially and regular contact by phone may be appropriate. The manager as part of the risk assessment should assess what level of supervision is required.

Managers should remember that lone working risks to consider include stress and other health factors. Lone working can cause work-related stress and as part of regular supervision managers should put measures in place that enables regular contact to ensure support can be given.

7.2 Maintaining staff safety

Managers should ensure that a system is in place to ensure that a lone worker returns to either their workplace or home at the completion of a task in the field. For high risk or frequent lone workers, the manager may stipulate that the employee must utilise the 24-hour lone worker monitoring service provided by Forestcare.

This service currently uses a device called a Pocket Pal. The device is the size of a key fob and works on sim card technology and must be charged on a regular basis, much like a mobile phone. It is the responsibility of the individual employee to ensure that the equipment is always kept charged. The Pocket Pal is simple to operate. It has a large button which is pressed to activate a call through to the Forestcare Control Centre. The call is answered by an operative who will take appropriate measures depending on the nature of the call. The device is also enabled with GPS technology. This means that in the event of an emergency call, if Forestcare are unable to speak to the individual, they will still be able to establish the location of the Pocket Pal.

Those staff members allocated with a device will be given an overview of the service and some brief training on how to use it.

Training on accessing and how to use the Pocket Pal portal can also be provided to managers if required – this is not compulsory as Forestcare will monitor all aspects of the service as standard.

All lone workers are responsible for charging the device and must make a test call at least, as a minimum once a month. It is the responsibility of the lone worker to carry out the above on a regular basis.

For further information, including how to sign up for the lone worker monitoring service, please contact Forestcare on 01344 786599 or email Forestcare.enquiries@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

For occasional lone workers or low risk lone workers, the use of the full Forestcare system may not be appropriate. In these cases, managers may wish to implement an alternative method of ensuring the lone worker returns safely from a lone visit away from the workplace. This may be as simple as telling a colleague where they are going and when they are expected back; arranging to ring the office at the conclusion of a visit or call; issuing a mobile phone to enable the office to contact the employee if the employee's return is overdue. The use of diary systems or noticeboards to indicate whereabouts will perhaps form part of this system. However, the system should ensure that the return of the worker or a call from them is actively expected and waited for, and that action is taken to contact them if they do not return, or the call is not made. All employees involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal processes for safe lone working.

Managers are required to consider members of staff who meet with members of the public on a one-to-one basis on council premises. Whilst they are not alone in the building, they may be alone with the member of the public in a place where they are not visible to other colleagues. Managers should consider putting systems in place to ensure that employees in these situations are safe at the end of such meetings and that systems are in place for raising an alarm if necessary (e.g. panic alarms).

Forestcare provide a lifeline alarm monitoring service. The lifeline alarm is a small box which is connected to the phone line. If the property does not have a phone line, then a GSM alarm can be offered. This works using a sim card as opposed to a phone line. The alarm is provided with a small pendant which can either be worn or placed out of sight under a desk etc. To activate a call through to the control centre, the user simply presses a button on the pendant. The operative answering the call will take appropriate action and raise the alarm if required. Further guidance on the service can be found here: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/forestcare>

Alternatively, either call 01344 786599 or email Forestcare.enquiries@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for an initial discussion of your requirements.

7.3 Accidents and emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding appropriately to emergencies. This should include being made aware of special arrangements for out-of-hours incidents. First aid may be available from building officers, 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 the employee working alone in a building or part of a building to let the facilities team know they are there, so they can be accounted for in case of fire.

The completed lone working risk assessment may indicate the need for the lone worker to undergo first aid training, managers should encourage and facilitate the employee to undertake first aid training in these circumstances.

7.4 Working alone with a medical condition

If there is uncertainty whether a medical condition makes it unsafe to work alone, a referral to occupational health should be made. Managers should include in the referral details of the work to be undertaken including both routine work and emergencies/risks which may put additional physical or mental pressure on the lone worker.

7.5 Tasks not suitable for lone working

A risk assessment will identify hazards associated with an employee's 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 worker or for the work to be completed when the worker is not alone. For example, a worker who arrives before other colleagues may be instructed not to attempt heavy manual lifting until other colleagues arrive to assist.

Where a risk assessment indicates working at home is not appropriate, the employee should discuss with their manager where would be a more appropriate place from which to work. Reference should be made to the Agile working policy.

7.6 Violence at work

A separate detailed policy on violence at work details ways to identify the risks of violence and suggests methods to reduce the risk. The Alert system provides a method of sharing information about properties where potentially dangerous situations have previously been recorded, so that appropriate measures can be taken. Employees who undertake home visits must use this system to check addresses they are due to visit so they can take advice on how to reduce the risk (e.g., not visiting alone, meeting the person at another location). Employees must ensure that violent incidents are reported to ensure that the risk can be communicated to employees in other areas of the Council who may visit the same address for an unconnected reason. Full details of the Alert system are available in the following link: [Bracknell Alert \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

The risk of violence may not be directly related to a particular property. It may be associated with environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents. Employees likely to be lone workers in such situations should be trained in dealing with difficult people, in ways to recognise a risk and in behaviours which may reduce the risk (up to and including terminating the visit.) See also the Council's policy on Violence/Abuse at Work <https://bfcouncil.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Violence-at-work.aspx>

Guidance from the Corporate Health and Safety Advisers is also available in the following link:

<https://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/violence-at-work.pdf>

7.7 Support and training

In conjunction with the risk assessments and regular management supervision, the following e-learning courses are available in the e-learning zone.

- Lone working (30 mins).
- Introduction to H&S (35 mins).

- Driving Safely.

It may be appropriate for a manager to discuss with the Organisation Development Team, whether there is a requirement to arrange alternative training as appropriate for the situation, for example through The Suzi Lamplugh Trust.

7.8 Other Useful Websites

[Lone workers: how employers should protect them - Overview - HSE](#)