



Sarratt Parish Council

Policies and Procedures: Lone Workers

1. Purpose of this policy and procedure

Sarratt Parish Council recognises that some of our staff work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working
- Identifies the need to assess the potential risks to an individual working alone
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers, and,
- Encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve lone working arrangements for the future.

2. The scope of this policy

It applies to all staff, whether full time, part time or temporary workers. It does not apply to Councillors.

3. Policy

We will protect staff from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the Council has a responsibility to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone.

4. Definition

'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- Office workers who work alone in the premises
- A caretaker who opens and closes a hall either early in the morning or late at night
- A groundsman tending to green space
- Homeworkers.

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

5. Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

Managers

- Try to avoid the need for lone working as far as is reasonably practicable
- Ensure that the worker is competent to work alone
- Ensure that all lone working activities must be formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures
- Arrangements for lone working must be made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone explained
- Lone workers must be informed of the hazards and understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place, and have the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment
- Raise the alarm if staff cannot be contacted or do not return as anticipated
- Ensure that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working.

Lone workers

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work
- Follow any instruction given by management or the Council
- Raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working
- Not to work alone where there is inadequate information to undertake a risk assessment.
- Inform their manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone

Other Staff

- Be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine and unanticipated periods where there is no communication.

6. Risk Assessments

Managers must complete (or ensure the completion of) a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to lone working activity and updated as appropriate. The Risk Assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and communicated to all relevant staff and/or Councillors.

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles/tasks. However, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:

- Sudden illness
- Faulty equipment
- Travelling alone
- Remote locations
- Abuse from members of the public
- Animal attacks

7. Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the Council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of the particular circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the Risk Assessment e.g. the plan for a groundsman lone working with machinery will be more detailed than an administrator working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff and where appropriate, Councillors.

Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined):

- Signing-in and Out book
- Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up to date with meeting/visit/lone working details
- Agreed times and method of contact
- Buddy scheme

8. Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure the personal safety of a lone worker, it is important that they share details of any aspects of their health that could lead to increased risk with their manager or specific

Councillors. This includes pregnancy. This can then enable the lone worker and their manager to jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by the lone worker's circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with confidentiality of the utmost importance.

9. Reporting incidents

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved,
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence, and,
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances the lone worker think might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support a review of the lone worker risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If lone workers feel unsafe, unwell, or become injured they should call the emergency services if immediate assistance is needed, and if possible, call their manager, buddy, a Councillor, or colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do so on their behalf).

Lone workers should call their manager if their plans change because they feel unwell or if they have a domestic emergency when working alone.

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

10. Notes

The Health and Safety Executive have extensive advice and guidance on homeworking and lone working, including guidance on the risks of lone working.

Homeworking: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

Lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

Risks of lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

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