Policies and Procedures

Lone Working Policy

Version 2.0

11th August 2022

Policy Revisions Record

Version	Date	Review due			
1	April 2015	April 2020			
2	11th August 2022	August 2024			
3					
4					

Introduction

Employees are required to work alone or unsupervised as part of their normal day-to-day work. While this is generally accepted as appropriate, working alone can put people in a vulnerable position, therefore it is essential that systems are put in place to reduce any increased risk due to lone working. It should be emphasised however, that although Lone Workers may face higher risks, it is important that these risks are not over-exaggerated, as this can have a detrimental effect, by engendering an unnecessary perception of fear amongst staff that is disproportionate to the reality.

Definition of Lone Working

A Lone Worker is defined as:

"Any person who works by themselves without close or direct supervision".

In effect this describes a wide variety of staff who work either regularly or only occasionally, on their own, and without access to immediate support from managers or other colleagues. To be classed as working alone does not mean that the person has to be working in complete isolation all of the time, ie a cleaner may be working in one part of a building whilst other members of staff may be in a different part of the building.

Most people at sometime during their normal work role will be engaged in a solo activity which is out of sight or sound of others, such as being the last to leave an office. Although due caution is required in such situations, more steps are needed for increasing the safety of staff such as all staff who by necessity work alone to carry out their duties.

Policy Aim and Principles

Volunteering in Health will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that:

- Employees who are required to work alone or unsupervised are protected from risks to their health and safety.
- The risk to employee's health and safety are identified by suitable and a sufficient risk assessment and where appropriate by the introduction of control measures/procedures to eliminate the risk or reduce the risk to an acceptable level or within statutory requirements.
- Employees who believe themselves to be in serious or imminent danger and for reasons of their own or other persons safety, immediately remove themselves to a place of safety, will be supported by Volunteering in Health.
- Employees should be suitably trained before being expected to work alone.

Therefore, the aim of this policy is to reduce the risks towards Volunteering in Health staff when working alone. This policy is designed to be as comprehensive as possible, but inevitably it cannot cater for every situation that may occur within a working environment. With this in mind, it should be used as a template from which procedures and systems to protect Lone Workers should be developed, revised, or enhanced but reflects the needs of staff and environments within which they have to work.

For this to happen, there are three guiding principles within this policy:

1. The Lone Worker has the full knowledge of the hazards to which he/she is being exposed.
2. The Lone Worker knows what to do if something untoward happens.

3. Someone else knows the whereabouts of the Lone Worker and what he/she is doing, and there will be support or follow-up if needed.

For these three principles to be sustained, the manager needs to formally assess the safety needs of their staff and put in place a control strategy commensurate with the risk (action plan). Support for the strategy needs to include having established 'reporting in' systems, having a way to determine if a person has not finished work safely, and a well established follow-up procedure if it is necessary.

This policy applies to all staff working for Volunteering in Health including those on temporary or honorary contracts.

Senior Management of Volunteering in Health is responsible for ensuring that specific procedures for lone working are developed where appropriate, that the necessary training is available and attended, and that required safety measures are resourced. When this cannot occur, measures such as 'doubling up' of staff, or delaying visits or tasks, will need to be considered.

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- Suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out to consider the potential hazards and risks to which the Lone Worker may be exposed. This assessment will include the task involved, the working conditions, the environment, equipment, any substances being used, the time and any members of the public that the employee may encounter or is visiting.
- Assessing the physical capability of the staff member to carry out lone working in respect of experience, training, physical state (eg being pregnant or suffering from any medical condition that could place themselves or others at risk).
- The person concerned has received sufficient information and training and is provided with all the necessary tools and protective equipment and clothing, eg disposable gloves.
- Emergency arrangements are in place and known to all relevant staff.

Employees who work alone need to:

- Carry a Mobile Phone
- Ensure that someone knows their location or itinerary including the vehicle being used, and their expected time of return ensuring they use the signing in/out arrangements at their place of work. At ViH we use a Lone Working Whats App group to let colleagues know of lone worker itinerary
- Inform appropriately of unexpected changes of plans.
- Not put yourself at risk physically, eg climb or work at height, or lift heavy objects
- Use common sense in making decisions on the tasks you are undertaking
- Comply with signing in/out arrangements at all sites visited.
- Always report any incidents or potential hazards. Report any breakages or damage to protective equipment.
- Comply with safe working practices/procedures developed, giving input to updating risk assessments especially if changes are made which increase the risk.

Partnership Working

Staff working in partnership organisation premises must have the full back-up and protection of their lone working procedures to a sufficient standard for there to be emergency contact if the employee requests or requires it, or goes missing.

Additional Precautions and Procedure Development

The precautions will reflect the degree of risk identified in the assessment. Where the risk is significant such measures are to form a safe working procedure. Different or additional control measures may exist to protect employees working alone during normal working hours to those working outside of these hours – eg evenings or weekends.

A basic log out/in procedure is to be observed to ensure that all Lone Workers are identified as being away from their base location. Additionally, further rules and instructions may be developed to cover:-

- Selection of, and skills required by, Lone Workers
- Work equipment and personal protective equipment
- Communication systems
- First aid and emergency and accident procedures
- Regular and appropriate training and information
- Supervision and monitoring
- Volunteering in Health service contingency plans (see Appendix 3)

Summary

It is intended that this overview of the risks associated with Lone Working has been as comprehensive as possible. However, it is used as a template from which procedures and systems to protect Lone Workers should be developed, revised or enhanced. Therefore a more specific guidance will be developed to cater for the wide range and more diverse risks that staff working in Volunteering in Health face.

The importance of robust risk assessment can never be demeaned, together with the appropriate training that supports procedures and systems arising from the risk assessments. Technology can play a part in helping to protect Lone Workers, it is also clear that technology can only be effective if it works alongside those other measures referred to.

The review of policies, procedures and systems has been emphasised and finally the protection of Lone Workers is reliant upon managers, staff, colleagues and Lone Workers knowing, understanding and complying with the policies, procedures and systems.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.
In case of any queries or questions in relation to this policy please contact Centre Manager or Board of Trustees

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees by

Name:

Manuela Grossmann
Date: 07/11/2022

APPENDIX 1 – POSSIBLE HAZARDS
(NOT EXHAUSTIVE)

Animal attack
Drowning
Electrocution
Fire/explosions
Getting lost
Hazardous substances
Hypothermia
Infection
Manual handling (MSD)
Noise
Physical attack
Poisoning
Restricted access/egress
Slips, trips and falls
Sudden illness
Tools and machinery
Vehicle operation (including accidents/breakdowns)
Verbal abuse
Weather

APPENDIX 2 – CHECKLIST TO ASSIST WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF RISK

When making the assessment the following questions should be addressed:

- Does the workplace present a significant risk to the Lone Worker?
- Are there satisfactory procedures for dealing with illness, accidents and emergencies involving the Lone Worker?
  NOTE: Lone Workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained to implement them.
- Is there safe access and exit for one person?
- Can all goods involved in the work place be safely handled by one person? Does the work involve lifting objects too heavy/large for one person, etc? (Reference should be made to relevant manual handling assessments).
- Can the safe system of work be managed by one person?
- Is there a risk of aggression or violence?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
  NOTE: Checks should be made to ensure that lone workers have no medical condition which makes them unsuitable for working alone, either routinely or in a foreseeable emergency situation.
- Has the lone worker received sufficient information, instruction and training to enable them to understand the risks involved in the work, the precautions necessary and when to seek help and advice?
- What arrangements exist for supervising the Lone Worker?
  NOTE: Whilst constant supervision is not practical there should be appropriate control of the work. The extent of the supervision will depend on the risks involved and the competency and experience of the individual employee to identify and handle safety issues. Employees new to the job, undergoing training or dealing with special risks or new situations may need to be accompanied at first. It must not be left to the individual.

APPENDIX 3 – VOLUNTEERING IN HEALTH CONTINGENCY PLANS

Contingency plans, depending upon the potential risk, can include arrangements for:

- The notification to the Manager (or deputy in the absence of the Manager)
- Obtaining from records the itinerary, details of the employee's vehicle and any temporary changes in vehicle
- Making enquiries at last known location
- Visit/s to last known location/s if necessary
- Checks at home address
- A search system
- Notification to the Police
- Notification to the Manager in the capacity of Health and Safety Officer