NHS Dumfries & Galloway

Lone Worker Policy and Procedures

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Policy Group	Health & Safety		
Author	Andy Howat	**Version no.**	4
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DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY NHS

LONE WORKER POLICY AND PROCEDURES

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY NHS
LONE WORKER POLICY

1. Purpose and Scope

The Board is responsible for the Health and Safety of a wide range of staff. Some of these staff work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community or in isolated work areas.
This policy document has been developed to allow managers to: -

− Identify lone workers and the hazards for which they have responsibility;

− Undertake a risk assessment using NHS Dumfries & Galloway standardised risk assessment on the unique health and safety hazards to which lone workers are exposed;

Develop control measures or safe systems of work using risk assessments where necessary.

2. Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

− increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working;

− make sure that the risk of working alone 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;

− make sure that appropriate training is available to staff in all areas, that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone;

− make sure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone;

− encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working; and

− reduce the number of incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working.

3. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

As stated previously, lone working environments present a unique health and safety problem. Although there is no specific legal guidance on working alone, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, we must organise and control the health and safety of lone workers.

The Chief Executive is responsible for:

- making sure that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working;
- providing resources for putting the policy into practice; and
- Making sure that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the Board regularly reviews the effectiveness of the policy.

Senior and **line managers** are responsible for:

- making sure that all staff are aware of the policy;
- making sure 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;
- making sure that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary;
- making sure that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident; and
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

All **staff** are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their actions;
- co-operating by following rules and procedures designed for safe working;
- 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; and
- Reporting any dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

4. MONITORING

Lone worker risk assessments and implementation of safe systems should be reviewed regularly (an annual basis is suggested) and in any case wherever there is any evidence to suspect that there has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates. Issues to consider when reviewing assessments include: -

- Has anyone ever discussed any concerns about the safety of the work activity;
- Are there adequate and documented risk assessments which identify procedures and actions to be taken;

- Have employees had sufficient information, instruction and training;

- Are employees assessed on their individual abilities, skills, experience and their capability to cope with a situation;

- Do employees actively consider the importance of their own personal health, safety and well being;

- Do employees know they must formally report areas of uncertainty or concern to managers, including the reporting of incidents/accidents via the Datix Accident reporting system?

Assessments may require to be reviewed when there is: -

- A significant change in the work;

- A significant change in the health status of the patient/client;

- Environmental change or modification;

- Change in the process or methods of work

We will monitor and review this policy in partnership to make sure that we are achieving the aims of the policy. We will do this with Trade Unions/Professional Organisations and safety representatives. collecting and monitoring all reported incidents by our Health and Safety Adviser.

5. Equality and Diversity

NHS Dumfries and Galloway is committed to equality and diversity in respect of the six equality groups defined by age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. A rapid equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy

6. DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

1. Document Status

Title	Lone Worker Policy
Author	Andy Howat
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2. Document Amendment History

Version	Section(s)	Reason for update
1.1		

3. Distribution

Name	Responsibility	Version number
Intranet	A Howat	
Control Book	A Howat	
Corporate policy register	Jennifer Wilson	

4. Associated documents

The Health & Safety Policy Statement makes reference to Lone Working.

5. Action Plan for Implementation

Action	Lead Officer	Timeframe
To communicate to all managers the new policy	A Howat	April/May 2011

7. Lone Worker Procedures

The assessment of risk to lone workers will compliment existing risk assessments activities and introduce new and practical approaches to managing the health, safety and welfare of staff. The Board already has access to specialist advice on the management of Health and Safety. The issue of personal safety has also been included in the preparation of this document.

7.1 Definitions

Lone workers are those employees whose work involves tasks which have to be carried out without any kind of close or direct supervision.
Personal safety involves taking personal responsibility for the safety and welfare of yourself and others. It includes adopting safe practice and procedures as a matter of daily routine.
Risk is the likelihood that the harm from one or more particular hazards is realised (the extent of the risk covers the population and the consequences for them)
Hazard is the potential of something to cause harm

7.2 Legislative Background

Lone working environments present a unique health and safety problem. Although there is no general legal restriction on working alone, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, NHS Dumfries & Galloway must identify the dangers associated with lone working, assess the risks involved and put in place measures to remove or control the risks. Both the employer and the employee should be actively involved in this risk assessment process.
Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of their employees and the health and safety of those affected by the work, e.g. visitors, such as contractors and self-employed people who employers may engage. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is the employer's duty to assess risk, assess lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.
Employers must

- Work in partnership with their representative in developing and putting in place local strategies and policies to reduce the risks associated with lone working

- Identify work hazards;

- Assess and inform lone workers on the risks associated with their work;

- Give guidance on areas of uncertainty i.e. when to stop and seek advice;

- Set limits of what can be done while working alone.

The employee must:-

- Seek guidance in areas of uncertainty;

- Report incidents that may affect the health of themselves or others;

- Comply with policy and procedures on safe practice.

7.3   Identification of Lone Workers

The following categorisation has been identified as the main staff groups who may be at risk within the Board. Annex 1 contains examples of occupations for each heading.

- Mobile workers working alone from a fixed base;

- Staff working in isolation from fixed premises

- Staff working outside normal hours;

- Tasks that are undertaken in premises out with the work base or department without close or direct supervision.

7.4   Assessment of Risk

Lone workers should not face any more risks than other staff within the organisation. Setting up safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different to organising the safety of other staff, so we must all follow the general principles of risk assessment. If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, other arrangements must be put in place. Risk assessment should take account of both normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, illness and accidents. The risk assessment process is summarised below, separated into five distinct stages and action points to support effective assessment of the risks involved in lone working

	Process	Action point
1	Identifying lone workers	Establish and identify lone workers for each work area using (Annex 1) as appropriate.
2	Identifying associated hazards	Identify and Isolate the range of dangers associated with whole work areas of work and/or work processes. (Annex 3A) Review a generic risk assessment to make sure you have included these issues.
3	Assessing the degree of risk for generic or individual situations	Review the generic risk assessments and complete individual risk assessments if necessary. Then evaluate and prioritise the level of associated risk using the trust risk matrix and risk assessment form (Annex 2).
4	Putting control measures in place, and developing safe systems of work	Assess how effective the existing control measures are and update them if appropriate. Develop local procedures or action plans if necessary using prompt sheet in (Annex 3B).
5	Evaluating and review	Evaluate and record how effective the control measures are. Review when the assessments or controls are no longer required.

Following hazard identification managers must assess the level of risk for their own work area/location. The generic risk assessments (Annex 2) should be used for recording of this.

When calculating whether a hazard has a high, medium or low risk consideration must be given to the probability (likelihood of occurrence) severity (extent of potential injury) and any contributing factors involved (inexperienced staff etc) the matrix will assist in the risk evaluation process.

For individual assessments managers may wish to undertake a detailed risk assessment of specific work activities. These can be documented on an individual or group basis using the form provided in (annex 2). It is recommended that these are completed jointly between employee and supervision. This activity may also involve external agencies where appropriate. The prompt sheet and tables in Annex 3 will assist in the process

Risk assessments must be carried out in all areas of work where working alone poses an actual or potential risk to staff and the risk to which lone workers are exposed should be reduced to a level that is reasonably practicable. Adopting a safe system of work is largely dependent upon local circumstances. It should identify who will be affected and how, and the control measures which are needed to remove or reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practical. Risk assessment should be carried out by competent people and should be recorded and shared with relevant others. Issues to consider include: -

– Existing security arrangements;

– The geographical work area or location;

- Type of work to be undertaken;

- Available staffing levels;

- Training and level of experience of staff;

- Available resources;

- Assessed degree of risk.

7.5   Managing the Risk

The risk to which lone workers are exposed should be reduced to a level that is reasonably practicable. Adopting a safe system of work is largely dependent upon local circumstances. Issues to consider include: -

- Existing security arrangements;

- The geographical work area or location;

- Type of work to be undertaken;

- Available staffing levels;

- Training and level of experience of staff;

- Available resources;

- Assessed degree of risk.

Annex 2 provides generic risk assessments and Annex 3 a prompt sheet with tables to help identify, control and manage these general risks. However, each type of lone-working situation will need to be assessed and, where necessary, take account of local circumstances. Arrangements for managing risk should include:

- guidance for lone workers on assessing risk;

- details of when to stop and get advice; and

- the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident or emergency. All staff must be familiar with these local protocols and procedures.

There may also need to be detailed guidance to tackle specific areas of risk such as:

- lone workers travelling alone on work-related business;

- domiciliary and home visits;

- working outwith normal office hours;

- fumigation work and working with dangerous substances; and

- electrical work near live conductors.

7.6   Staff Training

NHS Dumfries & Galloway will provide training where required to allow lone working. The training will be based on the needs identified through local risk assessment. Advice and guidance on training is available from the Training and Development Department.

7.7   Reporting and Recording

Staff should report all incidents (including near misses) to their line manager at the earliest opportunity. These should be reported via Datix Accident Incident Reporting system and the line manager should investigate all reports. In order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and associated local protocols, local statistics and incident reports should be reviewed regularly.

ANNEX 1

Identification of Lone Worker

Please note that this list is not exhaustive:

Staff Group/Activity	Example Occupations
Mobile workers working alone from a fixed base	Community Psychiatric Nurses Outreach Workers Health Visitors District Nurses Chiropodists/Podiatrists Speech and Language Therapists
Working in Isolation from fixed premises	Reception staff Boilerhouse staff Facilities staff
Working outside normal hours	Domestic staff Transport staff Managers Laundry staff Nurses Doctors
Tasks that are undertaken in premises outwith the work base or department without close or direct supervision	Finance staff Maintenance staff Staff travelling distances Staff training/orientation visits outwith Board premises
Other*	

- managers may wish to add to this list as appropriate

Annex 2 Risk Assessment Form

Severity x Likelihood = Risk Criteria e.g. Moderate x Possible = Medium Risk	Likelihood of Occurrence Chance of event occurring within the next year				
Severity of Consequence Most predictable consequence if the event in question was to occur	**Rare** (little chance of occurrence)	**Unlikely** (Probably won't occur)	**Possible** (may occur)	**Likely** (Probably will occur)	**Almost Certain**
Negligible, e.g. ♦ Minor injury, not requiring first aid ♦ Unsatisfactory patient experience not directly related to patient care and readily resolvable ♦ Partial loss of service ♦ Financial impact less than £5K	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**Medium**	**Medium**
Minor, e.g. ♦ Minor temporary injury or illness, first aid treatment required ♦ Unsatisfactory patient experience directly related to patient care – rapidly resolvable ♦ Individual service objectives only partially achievable ♦ Financial impact £5K - £50K	**Low**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**High**
Moderate, e.g. ♦ Significant injury or ill health requiring medical intervention – temporary incapacity ♦ Patient outcome or experience below reasonable expectations in a number of areas ♦ Unable to achieve service objectives without substantial additional costs or delays ♦ Financial impact £50K - £500K	**Low**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**High**	**High**
Major, e.g. ♦ Single avoidable death or long term incapacity or disability ♦ Significant impact on ability to deliver service objectives, service may have to be discontinued ♦ Major financial loss £500K - £2.5M	**Medium**	**Medium**	**High**	**High**	**Very High**
Extreme, e.g. ♦ Multiple or repeated avoidable fatalities or major permanent incapacity/disability ♦ Sustained loss of service with serious impact on delivery of patient care, major contingency plans invoked. ♦ Corporate obligations not met. ♦ Severe financial loss £2.5M +	**Medium**	**High**	**High**	**Very High**	**Very High**
Low	**Low:** No additional risk controls required. The person responsible shall document assurance that existing controls or contingency plans remain effective and ensure any weaknesses are addressed				
Medium	**Medium:** Further action shall be taken to reduce the risk but the cost of control should be proportionate. The person responsible shall ensure additional risk control measures are introduced within a defined timescale. Assurance that risk controls or contingency plans are effective shall be documented and evaluated by the relevant Head of Service and any weaknesses addressed				
High	**High:** Further action, possibly urgent and requiring considerable resources, shall be taken to reduce the risk. Responsibility for introducing risk control measures within a set timescale shall be explicitly defined by the appropriate Director or General Manager and followed up through the performance review process. Assurance that risk controls or contingency plans are effective shall be documented and evaluated by the relevant Director or General Manager				
Very High	**Very High:** If confirmed to be unacceptable, the risk should be escalated immediately to Director level. An immediate action plan should be drawn up with Executive level leadership. If appropriate, suspension of the activity until the risk has been reduced should be considered. The risk and the action taken to reduce it to an acceptable level should be taken to the next available Board				

Annex 2 - Lone Working Risk Assessment Form   Ref No

Location		Department		Manager	

Operation/Activity	*Complete the relevant details of the activity being assessed*
	E.g.. Is it potential violence when carrying out community or home visits ,or when working alone in buildings.

Hazards	*All hazards associated with the activity should be entered here. e.g. Do staff :-*
	meet with clients or patients in isolated locations?
	visit high-risk or unpredictable clients or relatives?
	visit high-risk or isolated rural areas or work outwith normal office hours?
	work in confined spaces?
	handle dangerous substances or carry drugs?

Individuals or groups exposed		*Highlight the people or groups of staff, potentially at risk.*

Current control measures	*List current control measures, including physical controls and other controls including:-*
	Availability of entrance security systems/ screen/ digilocks/ CCTV/ panic buttons/ security lighting, etc?
	safe working procedures, including use of known risk factors in referral documents/care plans and sharing risk information with other agencies and professionals?
	systems for monitoring staff whereabouts, including use of check- in systems/ mobile phones?
	issue of personal attack alarms?
	information, instruction and training (including PAMOVA)?

Risk Rating Using information above, and the guidance from the **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment** section, **taking into account the control measures** in position, decide the applicable Severity and Likelihood, and **estimate**	**Severity** 1 Negligible injury, illness, loss 2 Minor injury, illness, loss 3 Moderate injury, illness, loss 4 Major Injury, illness or loss 5 Extreme loss, fatality, disaster	**Likelihood** 1 Rarely happens 2 Unlikely to occur 3 Possibly can occur 4 Likely to occur 5 Almost certain	**Rating** R= S x L
Calculate Rating =Severity x Likelihood			

Further control measures required	*Include any additional controls or modifications identified to eliminate or reduce the risk further, e.g. provide joint working in confined spaces or when using dangerous substances;- or state whether the risks are already as low as reasonably practicable.*

Date					
Initial					

Use a new box each time this assessment is reviewed

Title: Lone Worker Policy (H&S04)
Date: April 2011
Author: Andy Howat
Version: 4.0

Annex 3 Lone Worker Prompt Sheet

Hazards / Issues / area of concern:	✓		✓
No access to First Aid		Confined spaces	
Inadequate security provision		Hazardous substances	
Problems with access/egress		Risk of verbal/physical abuse	
Width of reception desk		New/unfamiliar client	
Unstable/unpredictable client		Long journey/motorway driving	
Delays/waiting times		Previous problems	
Inadequate lighting		Unreliable vehicles	
Night work/unsociable hours		Isolated parking/secluded route	
High risk location		No other people nearby	
New/unfamiliar staff		Poor mobile phone reception	
Isolated rural area		Carrying valuables	
High risk equipment/activity		Poor weather conditions	