



Lone Workers Procedure

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Lead Executive:	Workforce Director		
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Procedure on a page

Summary & Aim	Key Requirements
The purpose of this procedure is to provide a clear, consistent and safe process for lone working, supporting the Once for Scotland Lone Working Policy.	Ensuring Managers and Employees are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding Lone Working within NHS Dumfries and Galloway
Target Audience	Previous Names
All staff	

Equality and Diversity Statement
NHS Dumfries and Galloway recognises that some communities within society are more likely than others to experience discrimination, prejudice and inequalities. The Equality Act 2010 specifically recognises the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. The Fairer Scotland Duty also requires NHS Dumfries and Galloway to actively consider how socio-economic disadvantage can be reduced when making strategic decisions. The New Armed Forces Covenant Statutory Duty places an expectation on NHS Dumfries and Galloway to consciously consider the Armed Forces Covenant when developing, delivering and reviewing policies and decisions which may impact the Armed Forces community and help improve their access to public services. Consideration of all protected characteristics, the Fairer Scotland Duty, and the Armed Forces Covenant is included in the Equality Impact Assessment process and documentation, which must be completed as part of the Policy Development Process. NHS Dumfries and Galloway is committed to promoting and advancing equality, removing and reducing discrimination and harassment and fostering good relations between people that hold a protected characteristic and those who do not. This applies both in the provision of services and as our role as a major employer. NHS Dumfries and Galloway believe that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and is committed to the elimination of unfair and unlawful discrimination practice.

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1. PURPOSE

This procedure sets out the requirements for the safe management of employees who work alone or without direct supervision as part of their duties within NHS Dumfries and Galloway.

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of lone workers.
- Ensure risks associated with lone working are identified and controlled.
- Provide clear guidance for staff and managers.
- Establish arrangements for communication, monitoring and emergency responses.

This is in support of the Once for Scotland Lone Working Policy.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all NHS Dumfries and Galloway employees, temporary staff, contractors, students and volunteers who undertake lone working activities in:

- Clinical settings
- Community settings (including Home Teams)
- Patients' homes
- Remote locations
- Administrative offices
- Estates and facilities services
- Out-of-Hours (OOH) services
- On-call duties
- Transport/ICES services
- Boiler Houses
- Mortuary
- Labs
- Kitchens/Canteens
- Staff's homes used for Home Working

3. DEFINITIONS

A lone worker is:

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

Examples include:

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- Community nurses, HCSW, OTs or Physios visiting patients at their home setting
- Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) conducting home visits.
- Healthcare Support Workers (HCSW) working independently.
- Staff working in offices out-with normal working hours or within their own home setting.
- Facilities, maintenance and estates staff working alone.
- Staff/driving roles travelling between locations.
- Occupational Health and Safety staff working alone/away from base

4. ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers – if an employee is identified as a lone worker:

Managers must, where appropriate:

- Ensure *suitable and sufficient* lone working risk assessments are completed.
- Identify high-risk activities and locations
- Implement appropriate control measures.
- Ensure staff receive suitable training and information
- Maintain records of risk assessments.
- Review reported incidents and near misses.
- Ensure communication arrangements are in place.

Employees

Employees must:

- Follow this lone working procedure.
- Complete any required safety training.
- Act on information shared.
- Participate in risk assessments.
- Report incidents, concerns and near misses via InPhase.
- Maintain communication with designated contacts.
- Conduct dynamic risk assessments where appropriate to stay safe.
- Stop work if they believe there is an immediate risk to their safety.

5. Risk Assessment

Step 1 Risk Assessment

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment must be completed before lone working activities commence.

The assessment should consider:

Environmental Risks

- Isolated/remote locations
- Poor lighting.
- Poor road network
- Weather conditions/forecast.
- Access or egress arrangements.
- Remote rural areas.

Clinical Risks

- Patients with known aggression history.
- Mental health concerns.
- Substance/alcohol misuse.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Unpredictable behaviours

Personal Risks

- Experience and competence.
- Medical conditions.
- Pregnancy.
- Fatigue.
- Stress.
- Animals in the vicinity

Work Activity Risks

- Handling medication.
- Moving and handling tasks.
- Exposure to violence and aggression.
- Use of equipment (e.g needlesticks)

Risk Assessment review:

The risk assessments must be reviewed:

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- Annually
- Following significant incidents.
- Following service/procedural/equipment changes.
- When new risk information becomes available.

Step 2 Visit Planning

Before undertaking a lone working activity, staff must:

- Review available risk information.
- Confirm visit details.
- Ensure managers or colleagues know:
 - Destination.
 - Appointment time.
 - Expected duration.
 - Expected completion time.
- Carry NHS identification.
- Ensure communication devices are charged and operational.
- Consider weather, travel conditions and accessibility.

Step 3 Dynamic Risk Assessment

Staff must continuously assess risk *in real time* during lone working activities.

Factors requiring reassessment include:

- Aggressive, threatening or unusual behaviour.
- Evidence of alcohol or drug misuse.
- Presence of weapons.
- Dangerous animals.
- Unsafe property conditions.
- Unexpected persons/animals present.
- Deterioration of environmental conditions.
- Sudden changes to weather conditions

If concerns arise:

- Do not enter or remain within the environment.
- Leave immediately where and when safe to do so.
- Inform line management when safe to do so
- Reassess whether the visit should proceed or be re-arranged

Step 4 – Check-In Procedure

Managers must establish a local check-in system.

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The following minimum requirements apply:

Before Visit

Staff must:

- Log destination and estimated return time (e.g. use on-line calendar, office whiteboard etc)
- Inform designated contact person/colleague of plans

During Visit

Where identified through risk assessment:

- Telephone check-ins may be required.
- Real-time location systems may be utilised where available.

After Visit

Staff must:

- Confirm safe completion of the visit.
- Inform designated contact/colleague if plans change.

Step 5 – Missed Contact Escalation

If a staff member fails to make an agreed contact:

Stage 1 – Initial Contact

The designated contact will:

- Attempt telephone contact.
- Send a text message.
- Check diary and scheduling systems.

Stage 2 – Escalation

If no response within approx. 30 minutes (sooner if concerned):

- Notify line manager.
- Review known visit information.
- Attempt alternative emergency contacts where appropriate.

Stage 3 – Emergency Action

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If concerns remain regarding staff welfare:

- Contact Police Scotland on 101 or 999 as appropriate.
- Provide:
 - Staff name.
 - Vehicle details.
 - Last known location.
 - Contact information.
 - Hazard/Risk information.

All actions must be documented/recorded. An office diary is helpful for this action.

6. Home Visiting

When attending home visits staff should:

On Arrival

- Park where an exit can be made easily and quickly.
- Observe surroundings before entry.
- Identify potential exits.
- Keep personal belongings secure.
- Maintain situational awareness.

During Visit

- Keep access to an exit available.
- Sit nearest the door where practical.
- Avoid entering rooms where escape routes are limited.
- Remain alert to changes in behaviour.
- Assess/scan environment for potential safety issues

Leaving the Property

Leave immediately if:

- You feel or are threatened.
- Violence or aggression occurs.
- The environment feels or becomes unsafe.
- Risk increases beyond assessed levels.

Staff should prioritise personal safety over completion of the visit.

7. Lone Working Within NHS Premises

Where staff work alone within NHS premises:

Managers must ensure:

- Access controls are operational.
- Emergency procedures are known.
- Adequate lighting is provided.
- Staff have communication facilities.

Employees must:

- Secure work areas (lock doors/windows)
 - Keep entrances controlled where appropriate.
 - Report suspicious activity immediately.
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8. Violence and Aggression

NHS Dumfries and Galloway operate a low-tolerance approach to violence, aggression, abuse or threatening behaviour towards staff.

Where there is known risk:

- Risk information must be shared appropriately.
- Joint visits should be considered.
- Security measures should be implemented.
- Alternative venues should be considered (e.g. patient comes to NHS premises for treatment/consultation)
- Visits should be postponed where risks cannot be controlled to acceptable levels.

No employee is expected to place themselves at unnecessary risk at any time.

9. Vehicles and Travel Safety

Staff travelling alone must:

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- Ensure vehicles are roadworthy and safe to use before setting off
- Carry a charged mobile phone (and in-car charger if possible)
- Inform colleagues of longer-distance journeys and destination.
- Avoid unnecessary travel during severe weather (check forecast)
- Follow NHS driving policies.

In remote areas, staff should consider:

- Availability of mobile signal.
 - Travel duration.
 - Alternative communication methods.
 - Emergency arrangements.
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10. Emergency Situations

Medical Emergency

Staff should:

- Call 999 immediately.
- Notify line management when able to do so.
- Follow local emergency procedures.

Personal Safety Emergency

Staff should:

- Leave the location immediately.
- Move to a place of safety.
- Contact Police Scotland where necessary.
- Notify line management when appropriate

Welfare Concern

Where staff cannot be contacted:

- Escalation procedures within Section 5 must be followed.
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11. Incident Reporting

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The following must be reported:

- Accidents.
- Near misses.
- Threats
- Verbal abuse
- Racial abuse
- Homophobic abuse
- Physical assaults.
- Security incidents.
- Other relevant abuse (physical or verbal)

Reports must be submitted via the NHS Dumfries and Galloway incident reporting system (e.g. InPhase) as soon as is reasonably practicable.

12. Post-Incident Support

Following a lone working incident, managers must:

- Conduct a debrief with staff involved
 - Review risk assessments.
 - Consider an occupational health referral.
 - Consider psychological support where appropriate.
 - Identify lessons learned.
 - Implement corrective actions.
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13. Monitoring and Review

Compliance with this procedure will be monitored through:

- Incident reporting on InPhase
- Audit of risk assessments.
- Staff/Union Reps feedback.
- Health and Safety audits/inspections.

Findings will be reported through relevant governance structures within NHS Dumfries and Galloway. e.g Corporate/Tactical Health and Safety/APF committees.

14. Equality and Diversity

The Board is committed to meeting the following duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the nine protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation) to: -

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity by removing or minimising disadvantage and taking positive steps to meet the needs of those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

There may be situations in which an employee's protected characteristics require that specific provisions or procedures outlined in this procedure be altered to meet the employee's needs. This will be examined on a case-by-case basis, and where a reasonable adjustment is required based on an employee's protected characteristic(s), this will be considered appropriately.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway has a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees to enable them to carry out their job roles and avoid being placed at a disadvantage compared with other employees.

15. Document Control Sheet

10.1 Document Amendment History

Version	Section(s)	Reason for update
1.0		Initial procedure
2.0		4 yearly update/review
3.0		New Procedure Document replacing the previous Lone Workers Procedure as support to the new Once for Scotland Policy.

10.2 Distribution

Name	Responsibility	Version number
APF Committee – Aug 2026	Mairi Johnstone – HR for approval	v3.0

Appendix 1 – Lone Worker Daily Checklist

Before commencing lone working duties or tasks, staff should confirm and/or consider:

- ☐ Risk assessment completed and reviewed regularly
- ☐ Use PET acronym: **P**erson – **E**nvironment – **T**ask to assess lone working risk
- ☐ NHS ID badge carried
- ☐ Mobile phone adequately charged
- ☐ Visit schedule recorded or colleagues advised
- ☐ Emergency contacts available/known
- ☐ Vehicle safety checks completed (if applicable)
- ☐ Expected time of return communicated

Personal safety is a key priority. If at any stage you feel unsafe, leave immediately and report concerns to your line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Appendix 2 - Lone Worker Risk Assessment

<https://workforce.nhs.scot/supporting-documents/risk-assessment/combined-risk-assessment/>