Preston & Wingham Primary Schools Federation

Learning together, we grow kind hearts and healthy minds.
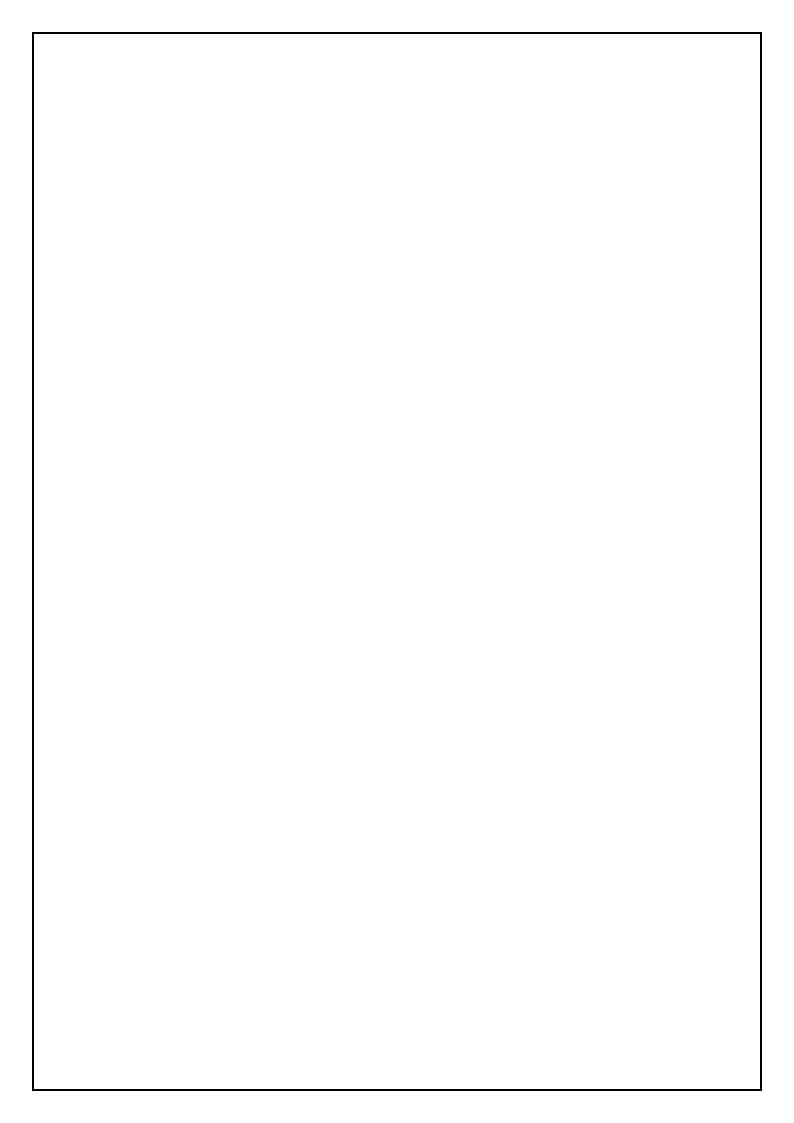
LONE WORKING AND PERSONAL SAFETY POLICY

APPROVAL & ADOPTION

This policy was formally agreed and adopted by the Governing Body on:

20th January 2025

Chair of Governors

Signed:

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 sets out a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst at work. Further legislation states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the 'foreseeable' risks that employees might face in the course of their duties.

This document provides guidance on the health and safety arrangements to be considered to eliminate/reduce the risk of harm to individuals in the workplace, undertaking work activities or lone working.

KCC recognises the public service environment is often seen as a target due to our role, function and activities, and a 5-year security strategy has been implemented to improve protective security. Premises that present the greatest risk will be prioritised and assessed, to improve the way it provides safe and secure environments for all who work and visit its buildings and sites. For further information see the 'KCC Security Strategy' the organisation's baseline security guidance.

Lone working

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure systems are devised and implemented to support the commitment made by the council to protect employees who are required to work alone. It also provides an overview that sits alongside directorate practices and enables managers, in partnership with their staff, to be aware of their responsibilities to reduce and manage risks.

Common issues associated with lone working are:

- Increased vulnerability to violence and abuse can lead to physical injury and negatively impact on employees' work-related stress levels and their mental health.
- Accidents/incidents where the consequences are worse if there is no immediate assistance or rescue.
- Accidents/incidents that result from lone working e.g., lifting something or operating machinery.
- Long term health issues resulting from isolation, lack of supervision, knowledge or training.

Protecting home workers

When an employee is working from home, permanently or temporarily, managers should consider:

- How will you keep in touch with them? Regular contact is required to make sure employees are healthy and safe.
- What work activity will they be doing (and for how long)?

- Can it be done safely?
- Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

For information on correct ergonomic workstation set-up when working at home see the display screen equipment (DSE) guidance on Knet and KELSI.

Providing support on mental health

Work-related mental health issues must be assessed to measure the levels of risk to employees. Where a risk is identified managers must take steps to remove or reduce it as far as is reasonably practicable. If a lone worker has a pre-existing mental health condition, managers may need to consider making reasonable adjustments to their work or workplace and this may require additional interventions.

Responsibilities

Managers should be aware of the potential risks associated with lone working and carry out risk assessments to minimise those risks. In order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, the Council places specific duties on all managers.

Managers should:

- Assess and manage the risks to staff by ensuring that risk assessments are carried out.
- Review regularly and share with employees who are potentially at risk.
- Undertake individual risk assessments when working activities deviate from normal practice
- Attend relevant and appropriate training.
- Provide safe places where possible, implement procedures and safe systems of work designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone.
- Write specific guidance for their own team/circumstances, and ensure employees adhere to safe systems of work.
- Ensure staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training.
- Review and improve working conditions, practices and procedures.
- Ensure appropriate personal safety equipment is available and monitored to ensure it is in a state of good repair and working order e.g., mobile phones, panic alarms, torches and personal safety devices.
- Ensure appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.
- Put procedures in place that enable direct contact with the lone worker so the manager can recognise the signs of stress as early as possible.
- Report and investigate any accidents/incidents caused as a result of lone working using KCC's online reporting system (for guidance see 'accident/incident reporting, investigation, RIDDOR and frequently asked questions' on Knet).

- Manage the effectiveness of preventative measures through the analysis of accident/incident reporting and investigations.

Employees are required to:

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions.
- Familiarise themselves with the lone worker risk assessments in place for activities they are involved in.
- Take part in training designed to meet the lone working requirements.
- Follow all information, instruction and training provided, and apply the safe systems of work designed for safe working in their service/team.
- Report all accidents/incidents which may have occurred whilst lone working using KCC's online reporting system.
- Report all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and ask for guidance as appropriate.
- Maintain any personal safety equipment provided to ensure it is in a good working condition, and only use for the purpose for which it is intended.

Risk assessment

The process of conducting a risk assessment for lone working is no different to that followed when assessing any other activity; the important point is to carry out the assessment in the following way:

- Identify the hazards associated with the work and carrying it out unaccompanied.
- Determine who may be at risk, how and why.
- Assess the risk associated with the work and decide on safe working arrangements to control the risks.
- Record the findings of the assessment.
- Implement the safe working procedure.
- Monitor and review the safe working procedure.

Who is at risk?

Employees that are contracted to work alone as part of their duties are at risk. Working alone may be an everyday occurrence or it may arise occasionally. This guidance does not attempt to identify all the situations in which employees may be at risk of working alone, instead it concentrates on describing the arrangements that can be put in place to eliminate or manage the risk. Always involve workers when considering potential risks and measures to control them.

Considerations for managing the risk of lone working

People:

- Are there people at increased risk e.g., young, pregnant or disabled workers?
- Will the worker be visiting a service user or environment which may be volatile?
- Do workers have any medical conditions that make lone working unsuitable? (consider how both routine work and foreseeable emergencies may impose additional physical and mental stresses on the lone worker).
- If the lone worker's first language is not English, are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communication, especially in an emergency?
- Has sufficient training been undertaken to ensure the lone worker's safety? (getting this right will equip those at risk with the right knowledge and skills to ensure their safety and avoid high risk situations).
- Has the lone worker been provided with adequate information about the risks involved with the tasks and the precautions to be taken?
- Has the worker enough experience?
- Can suitable levels of supervision be provided?
- What happens if the lone worker becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency requiring first aid? How will they report health and safety incidents?
- Is there a clear way to raise the alarm and summon help if they are in trouble?
- Are there sufficient supervision/management arrangements in place?

Work environment:

There are numerous situations where people may be working on their own; the following are examples but there may be other circumstances that may apply:

Workers in offices/establishments where:

- One person is working in/on the premises e.g., in a library, office or first person in/last person out.
- During normal working hours at a remote location or within the normal workplace.
- People work separately from others e.g., caretakers, stewards, inspectors, community wardens, people working outside normal hours e.g., cleaners, residential/night/maintenance/out of hours or on-call employees or managers.

Examples:

- Lone workers include people who work early or late, at night or at weekends, or who lock up buildings on their own at the end of the day e.g., area offices, libraries or schools.

- Isolated from other staff within a building e.g., reception staff, professionals in interview rooms with client/service users, who may experience difficulties in obtaining

assistance dealing with incidents such as abusive or intimidating behaviour and violence.

- Working outside normal work hours, or staff working in the community and/or carrying out home visits, who may experience additional difficulties in obtaining assistance dealing with incidents e.g., aggressive, abusive or intimidating behaviour, or vehicle breakdowns.

Mobile workers working away from their fixed base:

- Visiting domestic premises e.g., social workers, care managers, service providers.
- Visiting other workplaces e.g., employees attending meetings, working on properties belonging to other agencies.
- Travelling in the course of business e.g., to other premises, escorting service users.

Workers working alone in hazardous environments**:**

- caretakers, handy persons, maintenance employees, technicians, waste management employees.

Identify the hazard and effect

The basic principle to be applied in relation to all risk assessments is to identify the hazards and to assess the associated risks by considering:

- the degree of isolation of the employee
- the type of work activity
- the working environment
- experience, age and capabilities (including health) of individual workers
- the supervision and support system that you have in place.

The workplace:

- Does the workplace present any special risks to a person working alone?
- Is there safe access and egress?
- Is the workplace in a known 'high risk' area?
- Is the workplace isolated?
- Are there adequate communication systems?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Is the site/workplace in a good state of repair?
- Are there any additional hazards associated with the time or with the day of the week?

In an emergency:

- Can help be accessed by the employee?
- Are adequate first aid facilities available?
- Is there a need to train the lone worker in first aid?

Consider the task:

- Are there any special risks to a person working alone?
- Is travelling a requirement of the task?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Can any manual handling be done safely by the lone worker?
- Can all plant and equipment be safely handled and used by the lone worker?
- Does the task involve the handling of money or valuables?
- Are there any hazardous substances associated with the task?
- Does the task involve breaking bad news?
- Does the task involve changing/withdrawing a service?
- Does the task involve working with electrical appliances?
- Are there any lifting and carrying risks?
- Can one person handle any necessary temporary access equipment e.g., portable ladders?
- Can one person handle all the necessary machinery, goods or objects?
- Are there any machines or equipment that cannot be operated safely by one person?
- Are any chemicals or hazardous substances used that may pose a risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a risk of violence? (factors that increase the risk of work-related violence are people who handle money, deal with complaints, interact with the public, provide care, advice or information and work unsociable hours).
- Are personal security devices, panic alarms or communication devices needed; is there a procedure to use them and are they tested/maintained regularly?

Control measures

Where lone working has been identified as a potential risk to employees, control measures must be identified and implemented to ensure that the risk is managed.

When a situation or activity arises where control measures are considered to be insufficient, it is the duty of managers and supervisors to identify additional control measures which need to be applied for the completion of the task.

It will not always be possible to eliminate all risk; it is the responsibility of the manager or supervisor to determine whether the level of risk remaining is acceptable.

Ideally, employees should be encouraged to participate in any risk assessment and be satisfied that any control measures are adequate; outcomes must be shared with employees that are involved in carrying out or managing that specific activity.

To assist with your risk assessment and the consideration of possible control measures, a matrix has been produced to help you consider the level of risk with the possible controls

Type of environment	Type of Personal Safety
1. Fixed base, low risk, managed and recorded visitors	- accessible communication. - specifically designed interview rooms. - panic button available. - safe systems of work.
2. Fixed base, low risk but unknown visitors. Possible lone work scenario. Money handling on site	- accessible communication - sign in and sign out communication system - risk assessment of locality and job role to decide if needing personal security device with contact to call centre.
3. Work in the community. Visiting service users known to the service. Visiting locations for specific purposes	- risk assessment of task including of service users / others - reporting in / reporting back system - local emergency notification system in place with colleagues - risk assessment of locality and job role to decide if needing personal security device with contact to call centre.
4. Work in the community. Visiting service users not known to the service. Visiting locations for specific purposes but with limited intelligence of risks involved.	- risk assessment of task including of service users / others - reporting in / reporting back system - carry a personal safety device with immediate contact with call centre in case of incident.
5. Work in the community. Unknown risk levels but high possibility of incidents	- risk assessment of task including of service users / others - no lone working. - reporting in / reporting back system - carry a personal safety device with immediate contact with call centre in case of incident - consider enhanced personal safety such as open recording in touch with call centre or possibly camera recording.

that might be appropriate.

Personal Safety and Security Risk Matrix for Controls

Record the assessment

Where specific risk assessments are deemed necessary, they should be recorded using the KCC five steps to risk assessment template and refer to the team's health and safety risk register.

Implement safe working arrangements

The risk assessment will have identified the physical controls, systems of work, training and supervision necessary to ensure the safety of the lone worker. If all these arrangements are not already in place, they will need to be implemented in a structured way before lone working can be permitted to commence. An action plan with target dates for completion of outstanding work is often the most appropriate way of ensuring that the necessary arrangements are put in place effectively.

If a risk assessment has identified circumstances where a lone worker may have to undertake a dynamic risk assessment the employee should:

- Receive training on how to make the assessment.
- Consider the range of possible control measures and what action to take.
- Get support for their decisions.

Monitor and review safe working arrangements

Once safe working arrangements have been implemented, they need to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure they remain effective. Monitoring the way in which people are working is a routine day-to-day management function. Lone workers must be actively encouraged to report incidents which could affect their safety, to allow a proper review of the adequacy of the working arrangements.

All risk assessments should be reviewed at least once a year or whenever there is reason to believe that the existing assessment is no longer valid. A record should be made of every review carried out.

Monitoring and managing employee whereabouts

These guidelines set out the standards that should be applied for the monitoring of employee's whereabouts. It also provides examples of procedures that could be devised to ensure that the location of employees is known; and employees who fail to return to the office or log off duty can be identified. An agreed response must be in place for situations where employees cannot be accounted for.

The following sets out the key requirements that must be in place in business units where employees work alone:

- A register of individual employee's details must be maintained for individual business units.

- A procedure must be in place which collates details of employee's whereabouts and activities on a daily basis. This procedure must ensure that the information is disseminated to the relevant manager(s) and supervisor(s).
- In the event that a lone worker cannot be located or fails to book off duty within a set timeframe, a suitably robust and tested protocol must clearly outline the actions to be taken.

Personal safety

KCC gives full support to employees who are threatened or assaulted during the course of their working activities. There are times when employees are in contact with people who are unhappy or unable to control their behaviour. For further information see KCC's Dignity and respect at work policy, Prevention and management of violence guidance, Prevention and management of violence – social media, bullying and stalking guidance and the above information on lone working.

What is violence?

KCC uses the Health and Safety Executive's definition of work-related violence to identify those incidents that represent unacceptable behaviour by staff, service users or members of the public. The definition is 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.' This includes:

- physical assault
- harassment, verbal aggression or abuse; face-to-face or by telephone, email, text, or social media
- threats of violence to staff or their families
- attacks by animals incited by their owners or keepers.

General advice and guidance

Always trust your instincts, get away immediately if you feel threatened or uncomfortable. Before putting yourself in any situation carry out a dynamic risk assessment and ask yourself if there was a problem, who would know? would they know where to find you? how would you call for help? and how long would it take for help to arrive?

- Read and discuss, with your line manager, procedures and guidance concerning what should be done in the event of violence to ensure you feel safe in your work.
- People are more important than property, listening and talking are the crucial tools needed try to be calm, confident and objective, and always maintain respect for all people involved.

- Keep out of arguments, do not lose your temper and be aware of your own feelings and physical changes.
- Do not respond to verbal abuse or take it personally.
- If a client/customer or a member of the public threatens you with violence, or if you suspect there is a risk of violence, report this to your line manager as soon as possible.
- When violence is directed at you, try to withdraw from the situation and summon help; do not attempt to control a violent situation alone unless there is no alternative, consider whether you should call the police.
- Only use reasonable force to protect yourself and use physical restraint as a last resort.
- As soon as the incident or emergency is in hand contact your line manager and complete an accident/incident HS157 form via KCC's online reporting system.

If any or all your working day involves working alone

- Let other people know who you are meeting, when and where, so that someone is looking after your welfare.
- Keep calendars up to date with meeting details including address.
- Set up a "buddy" system where they contact someone everyday with an itinerary.
- Be careful not to tell anyone that you are alone in the workplace, this applies to people who telephone or e-mail you, as well as to visitors.

Further Sources of Information
Related KCC Policies and Guidance

Dignity and respect at work policy

Dignity and respect at work guidance

KCC Security Strategy

Travelling for work guidance

Safe use of mobile phones

Prevention and management of violence guidance

Prevention and management of violence - Social media, bullying and stalking guidance

HSE Guidance

Protecting lone workers: How to manage the risks of working alone

Violence at work - A guide for employers