Norfolk County Council

Hillside Primary School

Lone Working
Policy



Lone working compliance code P617

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1. Introduction

Lone working activities are a normal part of service delivery including:

Working in premises where:

- only one person works
- people work separately in isolated areas of a site
- people work outside normal hours, e.g., maintenance staff

Mobile or peripatetic workers operating away from their base:

- on construction, maintenance or inspection activities or unfamiliar sites
- 'service' workers, for example, caretakers, social workers, tutors, enforcement officers

Lone working may be part of a role, for example, opening and locking an office base or driving to different premises to undertake work.

Safe working practices shall be in place to ensure lone workers are not at greater risk than other employees. In the main, these will be determined by undertaking work activity and lone working risk assessments.

When your work activity risk assessment identifies that lone working risks occur, this compliance code shall be followed. A separate lone working risk assessment shall be completed to support the overall activity risk assessment.

For example, when completing a home visit work activity risk assessment, you may identify hazards that include: infection control, animals, manual handling and poor lighting. In addition, the work activity is undertaken by a lone worker and this either creates additional risks or increases existing risks. Lone working should be shown in the hazard column of the work activity risk assessment and in the controls column it should reference that a separate lone working risk assessment has been completed.

A Model lone working risk assessment - home visits F617a is available.

Where the risk of lone working cannot be reduced to a reasonable level, alternative arrangements must be put in place.

2. Carrying out a lone working risk assessment

This section provides further information to assist with assessing lone working risk. Your risk assessment must consider the specific factors and the hazards involved.

Lone worker risks fall into three categories:

- **P**eople risk
- **E**nvironment risk
- **T**ask based risk

This system of analysis is often referred to by the acronym PET and is a useful tool when identifying risk and control measures required. For example:

People - do the people the lone worker comes into contact with increase the risk, do they have a history of aggression? Is the lone worker at greater risk because they are inexperienced?

Environment - does the environment the lone worker is working in increase the risk, for example, there is no phone signal in the area, is it a private residence?

Task - does the task increase the risk, for example, is the lone worker carrying out enforcement action or communicating unwelcome news?

The PET system will assist managers when carrying out a lone working risk assessment and the lone worker themselves when they carry out a dynamic risk assessment.

The tables in the following sections detail specific issues to be considered as part of your lone working risk assessment and should be used alongside other relevant information on myNet/InfoSpace, including the Managing abusive and violent behaviour compliance code P630, Lone working and personal safety - guidance on suitable control measures G617a and Lone worker monitoring and raising the alarm G617b.

2.1. Identify the hazard

Activities need to be identified and assessed to determine the level of risk they present. This involves considering factors such as:

- the potential for violence and aggression – e.g., mental health assessments/social care/enforcement (People)
- the environment and other activities taking place in the same area. Examples of this could include evening/night shifts, adverse weather and working in a site such as a hospital or a domestic dwelling (Environment)
- any work equipment that may be required to be used (Task)

You should also take account of foreseeable emergencies which may arise, such as equipment failure, illness, involuntary behaviour, reactions to the planned activity and incidents.

2.2. Potential for violence and aggression

The hazards presented vary in level of risk. The following table identifies key areas for consideration and should be used as a starting point:

PET	Hazard	Issues to be considered
People	The client	Individual characteristics can have the potential to contribute towards violence and aggression, e.g., previous history or the person is unknown and there is no information available to use to inform the risk assessment.
	Other people	Consider other people who may be at the premises being visited.
	The employee who is lone working	Factors which may increase or decrease the chances of violence and aggression occurring, e.g., their competence (level of training, experience, cultural awareness etc.), role (e.g., representing authority in enforcement work) and the things they might do (e.g., arriving late for a home visit, body language etc.)
Environment	The work environment	<u>Away from NCC Sites</u> For example, a home visit to another person's property, visiting rural areas without lighting, court visits, hospital visits etc. There is further information about the work environment in the sections below. <u>On NCC Sites</u> Lone working employees need to be able to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency. Where there is the potential for violence and aggression involving a client, both employees and visitors need to be able to move to a place of safety if a difficult situation arises, for example, safely exit the meeting room that they are working in by ensuring they are positioned to maintain a clear and quick exit route.
Task	Interaction	The interaction which takes place between the employee and the client, for example, enforcing rules, carrying out inspections, asking questions about family backgrounds, carrying valuable items, transporting people who use the service.

2.3. Physical hazards

The working environment and activities may present particular hazards and should be considered as part of the lone working risk assessment, for example:

PET	Hazard	Issues to be considered
Environment	Work environment	The level of risk varies from one working environment to another. Higher risk environments can include construction sites, urban locations, rural locations, farms, private residences, semi-independent living / supported living accommodation and working on or near to water (including the coastline). Lower risk lone working environments can include working at secure offices and driving alone on short duration journeys in built up areas. There should be a safe means of arriving and leaving the workplace - this must be considered in the assessment. It can be difficult to achieve when working at premises which are not known or not under the control of NCC, such as a home visit. Also consider use of third party owned equipment (e.g., during home visits) and poor lighting.
Environment	Communication	Means of communication vary depending on the work activity and location. There are areas in Norfolk where there is no mobile phone signal. Alternative means of communication will need to be considered.
Task	Activity being undertaken	The level of risk varies by activity. Examples of higher risk activities include: working at height, enforcement activities, working with clients who have complex needs, bridge inspections, animal handling on farms, working on highways and using potentially hazardous machinery. Lower risk lone working activities include attending meetings at another office base belonging to NCC and home working.
Task	Plant, equipment, substances	Consider the equipment used to carry out the work activity. Some equipment may not be easily and safely handled by one person, e.g., temporary access equipment such as ladders or trestles. Other manual handling activities may also not be suitable for one person, e.g., support to a client who has fallen/bariatric care/support. Establish whether equipment can be used and controlled safely by a lone worker, for example, lifting hoists, handling aids, machinery etc. Consider what would happen in an emergency. Specific warnings may be provided by the manufacturer, or identified through the way in which the work is being done, that indicate a need to avoid

		lone working, for example, when using certain chemicals or hazardous substances and plant/equipment that may require two-person control or usage.

2.4. Who is at risk (and when)

Consider who might be harmed due to the work activities, for example, employees, visitors and/or contractors. The following table provides details of some specific aspects for consideration when assessing the suitability of lone working:

Hazard (People)	**Issues to be considered**
New and expectant mothers	The ability to carry out physically strenuous work. Later stages of pregnancy may increase the risk of falls due to changes in mobility. Risk of early labour or miscarriage through physical assault.
Young people	Lack of experience, understanding, risk perception and level of maturity.
Disability	Impact on ability to make unassisted evacuation. Response to situations and the effect on the individual. Ability to identify that evacuation is required.
New employees, trainees, including inexperienced volunteers	Lack of work experience and/or increased training needs. Additional supervision required.
Specific medical conditions	Some individuals may have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. These may include conditions such as uncontrolled epilepsy or diabetes. The consideration of medical conditions should include routine activities and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional demands on the individual.
Contractors	Unfamiliarity with site layout, emergency procedures, adjacent activities and site hazards.
Non-employees – someone who uses the service attending an NCC site for a one to one meeting.	Unfamiliarity with exit route(s) from meeting room, may become agitated and need to leave the room to prevent the escalation of a situation.

2.5. Controlling the risk

It should be ensured that lone workers are competent in adapting their approach to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations, with little or no contact with their supervisor, for example, a potentially violent/distressing situation. In such circumstances the lone worker should carry out a dynamic risk assessment using the PET acronym approach.

2.5.1 Withdrawing from lone working activity

Managers must ensure that the lone worker is supported if they decide that they need to terminate the work they are carrying out to protect their own safety or that of others. For example, when visiting or interacting with a person who becomes verbally aggressive and threatening, or working at height and wind speeds increase during the course of the work. This should also lead to a review of the risk assessment and arrangements for similar future work.

2.5.2 Unsafe lone working

In circumstances with all control measures in place, if the assessment identifies that it isn't possible for the task to be carried out safely, then lone working must not proceed.

2.6. Lone worker monitoring and supervision

The manager must ensure that lone worker monitoring takes place proportionately to the level of risk. Monitoring can include:

- supervisor site visits
- having regular arranged contact with the lone worker

Please refer to the guidance documents Lone working and personal safety - guidance on suitable control measures G617a and Lone worker monitoring and raising the alarm G617b for information on the potential available options and to establish their suitability for your identified lone working needs.

2.7. Mandatory control measures - violent and aggressive situations

Where there is foreseeable potential for violence and aggression, the following three risk categories and mandatory control measures apply. Some employees may fall into more than one category of lone working. Therefore all control measures against each individual category shall apply in relation to the specific activity.

The Managing abusive and violent behaviour compliance code P630 should also be referenced.

2.7.1 Risk category 1

Risk Category	Control Measures
Category 1 Staff working in offices or other secure locations outside of normal working hours or who routinely work in these locations on their own. Work of a low risk office type. Examples include: teachers and office-based staff travelling to meetings.	**Mandatory** • staff must be briefed on the measures required to ensure their workplace is secure if they are lone working and on local emergency procedures • all staff must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their manager/colleagues. Details made available should include work location, car make, model, registration number and mobile phone number • staff to complete Personal safety Level 1 elearning on myOracle Learn (NCC) or via Norfolk Services for Schools **Low risk offices (outside County Hall site)** The following information must be provided to staff as it applies to their personal safety: Car parking, locking and opening up, prohibited activities, equipment, security arrangements to prevent unauthorised access.

2.7.2 Risk category 2

Risk Category	Control Measures
Category 2 Staff working in locations where security is minimal or shared premises that would allow unauthorised access to their working area. Staff working in unfamiliar locations but not meeting members of the public. Staff visiting established clients who have been assessed as presenting minimal risk to staff. Staff responding to intruder alarm calls out of hours. Examples include: - school caretakers - other staff whose duties include responding to out of hours intruder alarm calls - NCC staff working in shared offices with minimal security arrangements - some home care staff - Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service staff fitting smoke detectors in residents' properties by appointment or similar activities	**Mandatory** • for out of hours alarm call-outs, each team must have clear instructions for staff • staff who are expected to respond to alarm call-outs must have access to a personally issued work mobile with appropriate reception, or have indicated that they are willing to use their personal mobile in such circumstances (and that it has appropriate network coverage for the area in question) • lone working when responding to an alarm should be avoided by the use of contracted key holder arrangements, where possible. Where this is not possible, a buddy or automated buddy arrangement must be put in place. • clear information must be given to lone workers on what work can and cannot be done alone; when to withdraw or stop work; communication and check-in procedures; identification of the signs of escalating violence and aggression and related emergency procedures • where the risk relates to unauthorised access to work areas the security of the site should be reviewed (if necessary, with the other occupiers or landlord) and appropriate measures introduced • daily work tracking arrangements must be in place, considering the level of risk involved. For example, an SOS mobile device and/or lone worker mobile phone application can provide effective tracking and the ability to request emergency assistance, if required • consider the use of a personal safety alarm and how this is activated and responded to • provide other relevant assessment information, for example, where assistance alarms are located in private meeting rooms • NCC staff to complete Personal safety Level 1 elearning on myOracle Learn • consider if additional personal safety training is required – Personal safety Level 2 training

2.7.3 Risk category 3 **Risk Category**	**Control Measures**
Category 3 Staff who visit unknown clients or clients who are known to present challenging or aggressive behaviour in their own homes to provide a service. Staff who work alone routinely in remote locations. Examples include: - Norfolk Youth Offending team - assessment and family support workers - mental health teams - EDT out of hours team - mobile library staff	**Mandatory** • staff dealing with clients must receive training on dealing with confrontational situations such as NCC Personal safety Level 2. This training should be repeated every 3 years or more frequently if identified by the lone working risk assessment. • information given must include what work can and cannot be done alone; when to withdraw or stop work; communication arrangements and emergency procedures • a form of staff tracking system must be introduced and its use enforced. It is recommended that you use an automated system such as an SOS fob and/or lone worker phone application, that allows staff to raise alerts, contact an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) and request emergency assistance, if required. (Where an automated system is used managers should ensure that user details and escalation contacts are kept up to date). Alternatively, an effectively implemented buddy system can be used. • staff must be briefed on the procedures for lone working before they start such work for the first time and at least six monthly thereafter. Records of these briefings should be maintained. • where a client presents a known risk of violence, the visit should be arranged at a venue where appropriate levels of security or assistance are available. If there are reasons for the visit to take place at the client's home then at least two people should attend, ensuring that means of escape/alarm raising are maintained. • consider issuing a personal safety alarm and the method of activation/response

2.8. Personal safety - guidance on lone working control measures

Lone working and personal safety - guidance on suitable control measures G617a should be used to inform and complete the control measures in both the activity risk assessment (using form F625) and lone working risk assessment (using form F617), and these should be shared with employees.

2.9. Recording the location of lone workers

All lone workers must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their manager/relevant colleagues for general business operation purposes as well as for use in the event of an emergency. The minimum amount of information

should include the location being visited, who the meeting is with or the activity being undertaken, expected arrival and departure times and relevant contact numbers. Additional information required may also be identified as part of the lone working risk assessment. When noting this information in an electronic diary, the appointment must be set as private so that sensitive information cannot be viewed by all employees.

2.10. Emergency arrangements

Lone workers should be capable of responding to foreseeable emergencies through the development of planned arrangements, for example, fire, potentially violent situations and first aid needs. Some lone workers are reliant on the dynamic risk assessment process in addition to planned controls, for example, mental health assessment teams. Staff should be suitably competent via training and experience to manage potentially dynamic environments by using the PET acronym system approach to carry out dynamic risk assessments.

Wherever possible, a lone worker should withdraw from circumstances of escalating violence and aggression.

Where a lone worker monitoring system is used it must include a safe means to raise the alarm in the event of (a) failure to contact a lone worker and (b) an emergency request for assistance. Lone worker monitoring and raising the alarm guidance G617b provides further information.

3. Risk assessment recording

Lone working risks should be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. This should be determined when undertaking a work activity risk assessment. Where there are additional risks due to lone working the work activity should identify lone working as a hazard and a separate lone working risk assessment should be completed and referenced in the control section. This should be recorded using the general work activity risk assessment template F625 and the Lone working risk assessment form F617. A lone working risk assessment model example (F617a) can be adapted to suit the specific scenario.

4. Risk assessment review

Lone working risk assessments must be regularly reviewed with employees. All incidents and/or previously unforeseeable risks must be reported by the lone worker as soon as possible, reviewed by the manager, and flagged on any systems which will warn other relevant employees of the risk. If no changes have occurred within a twelve-month period, lone working risk assessments should be reviewed at that point.

Managers must ensure that there are adequate reporting and feedback mechanisms in place which allow for new information to be gathered about any changes that impact on the risk assessment. Changes to working practice must be accessible and communicated to all relevant staff.

5. Accidents and Incidents

Accidents and incidents which caused or might have caused harm, including injury or ill health and abusive and/or violent behaviour, must be reported so that the causes can be investigated to check if the existing control measures are adequate or if additional controls are required.

Guidance on accident and incident reporting is available on myNet (for NCC) and Infospace (for schools).

6. Additional supporting/related documents

- Lone working and personal safety - guidance on suitable control measures G617a
- Lone worker monitoring and raising the alarm G617b
- Home visits personal safety prompt card G617g
- Lone working risk assessment form F617
- Lone working risk assessment model example for home visits F617a
- Managing abusive and violent behaviour compliance code P630

7. Changes since last revision

Date	Details of change	Approved by	Version number
18 July 2022	Remove out of date information. Update links and references to other documents Clarify lone working in section 1. Clarify who is at risk in section 2.3. Clarify risk category and control measures in section 2.6. Update lone worker risk assessment recording in section 3. Add incident reporting in section 5. Add supporting/related documents to section 6	Health & Safety Manager	93
8 December 2023	Inclusion of more detail regarding the use of SOS fobs and lone worker phone apps in the category of user table in section 2.7; and clarification of additional personal safety training considerations for category 2 lone workers.	Health & Safety Manager	94

Designated Governor: Sue Stinton

Name/Signature of Headteacher: Simon Minter

Date: Nov 24

Review date: Nov 27