



LONE WORKER POLICY



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lowestoft Town Council will take every practicable step to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees and Councillors whenever they are required by the nature of their duties to work alone and without direct support and supervision.
- 1.2 Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require employees to work alone, both the individual staff member and their Line Manager have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.
- 1.3 This policy is designed to alert employees to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give employees a framework for managing potentially risky situations.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all staff, and Councillors as appropriate, who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below. .

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 Some employees work outside office hours and/or alone due to flexible working patterns and/or to undertake their job role. Lowestoft Town Council's principles for supporting lone workers include:
 - a commitment to supporting employees and managers both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices
 - recognising and reducing risk
 - a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for employees
 - a clear understanding of responsibilities
 - the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property
 - a commitment to providing appropriate training for employees

3. DEFINITION

- 3.1 Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where employees in the course of their duties work alone or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

4. BUILDING PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:-
 - All appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible
 - Alarm systems are tested regularly
 - If applicable, key codes for access should be changed from time to time and when a member of staff or sub-contractor that knows the code leaves and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected
 - When working alone they are familiar with exits and alarms.
 - There is access to a telephone and first aid kit
 - If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they call for assistance before entering



- External doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone

5. PERSONAL SAFETY

- Employees must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
- Employees should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.
- Employees must ensure their Line Manager is aware of any vulnerabilities or difficulties they may have in working alone, so the implementation of special measures can be considered.
- The Line Manager will ensure special consideration is given to any employee under the age of 18 working alone.
- Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Line Manager
- Where required, employees must ensure that they sign in and out of building registers.
- Employees must inform their Line Manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following an external commitment rather than returning to their base.
- If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate using emergency contact information if necessary. If an employee is unable to make it to work, they are contractually obliged to contact the office by 10:00.
- Where employees work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.
- Employees should give particular consideration to where they are parking their vehicles if working alone, and should use the office car park after hours.

6. ASSESSMENT OF RISK

6.1 In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access.
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations.
- Channels of communication in case of emergency
- Any other special circumstances.
- All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.



7. INCIDENT REPORTING

7.1 An incident can be defined as an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health or damage. All incidents must be reported to the designated point of contact – the Town Clerk. Employees should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or unsafe are reported. This includes incidents of verbal abuse.

8. SELF HELP

8.1 There are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. The Town Council has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves. The following points may be helpful in recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk:

- Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.
- Employees should give particular consideration to where they are parking their vehicles if working alone, and should use the office car park after hours.
- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.

8.2 With regards to other people:

- Take note of their non-verbal signals.
- Be aware of their triggers.
- Don't crowd people – allow them space.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.
- Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- Listen to them, and show them you are listening.

8.3 The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for:

- Providing equality, fairness and respect for all in delivering our services and in our governance and employment practices
- Not unlawfully discriminating in delivering our services and in our governance and employment practices, in relation to the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation
- Opposing and avoiding all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in delivery of our services to the public, in our governance, employment conditions, recruitment practices and in training or other developmental opportunities.



8.4 The Council commits to:

- Encourage equality and diversity in the delivery of our service and within our governance and employment practices as this is good and proper practice and helps us to make the most of skills and deliver our services well
- Create a service-delivery and working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued. This commitment includes training staff and councillors about their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination
- All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff and councillors, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation
- Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and to update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy. Monitoring will also include assessing how this policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues

8.5 Acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, in relevant circumstances and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice in the case of staff. The Council reserves the right to take steps to protect staff in cases of inappropriate behaviour to them, including by councillors and members of the public. In the case of councillor misconduct in this respect, complaints may be made to the District Council Monitoring Officer, under the Council's Code of Conduct.

8.6 Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights/Code of Conduct and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

8.7 The Council has a corporate Complaints Procedure.



Use of the organisation’s grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee’s right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

9. AGREEMENT TO THE ADOPTION OF THE LONE WORKING POLICY DOCUMENT

9.1 To be completed by all employees/volunteers

I confirm that I have read and fully understand the Lone Working Policy Document and have retained a copy.
I have discussed the content with my Line Manager.
I will raise any concerns and/or suggestions for improved safety with the Line Manager.

Signature of Line Manager

.....
Signature of employee/volunteer

.....

Date: