



LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy Author & Job Title:	Miss Dee Smith Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
Reviewed:	Finance & General Purposes Committee – 16th March 2021
Approved:	Full Council – 23rd March 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Town Council seeks to protect those staff who occasionally need to work alone and undertakes to, as far as reasonably practicable, minimise the risks to the health and safety of its employees and those who may be affected by their activities.
- 1.2 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 the Town Council acknowledges its duty to make sufficient provision for the management of health and safety in the workplace and to fully implement the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, by providing facilities, procedures and resources for a suitable and sufficient management system.
- 1.3 There are many different situations staff find themselves in regarding lone working, and it would be impractical to address each situation individually. This policy sets out the commitments and arrangements of Billingham Town Council for minimising the risk of physical and non-physical assaults against staff, risk of injury and improving overall personal safety and arrangements for lone working.
- 1.4 The Town Council acknowledges that there may be an increased risk to health and safety of its employees, and others when working alone. Risk assessments should be undertaken to identify risk to a lone worker and measures introduced to minimise risks wherever reasonably practicable.
- 1.5 The Town Clerk/RFO will regularly review the policy and procedure to ensure its implementation and to ensure that it is relevant to working practice.

2. POLICY

- 2.1 To enable the Council to comply with its statutory duties with regards to lone working, the Council will, through procedures adopted at all levels, avoid the need for lone working wherever possible.
- 2.2 Where individuals have to undertake lone working, personal safety will be of paramount importance.
- 2.3 Lone working must not be viewed in isolation, other relevant policies already adopted will also apply, which will identify the protective and preventive measures necessary for employees to undertake lone working activities.
- 2.4 The Council will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that:
 - employees required to work alone are protected from risks to their health, safety and welfare;
 - any risks are identified in discussion with their Line Manager and any actions required to mitigate high risks are taken before lone working is undertaken;
 - employees take responsibility for their own safety and understand that they must remove themselves immediately from any such situation. Such actions and concerns must be reported immediately to their Line Manager.

3. DEFINITION - LONE WORKING

- 3.1 Lone working is intended to cover all work proposed to be undertaken alone where the risk to the individual lone worker may be increased either by work itself, or by the lack of on-hand support should something go wrong.

However it is important that these risks are not over-exaggerated, as this can have a detrimental effect, by engendering an unnecessary perception of fear amongst staff that is disproportionate to reality. Staff may find themselves undertaking lone working in a variety of settings, which include:

- Working alone in any given situation without direct access to other colleagues;
- Working during normal working hours alone in the office at the Town Council, an isolated location within the normal workplace or on site;
- Employee's own home;
- Working outside normal working hours i.e. meetings, events;
- Visiting another agency's premises or meeting venue;
- Making a home visit to an individual;
- Travel alone using own vehicle, public transport and/or to and from place of work.

3.2 Under these circumstances, the Town Council's guidance on lone working will apply.

3.3 **DEFINITION – PHYSICAL AND NON-PHYSICAL ASSAULT**

- Physical assaults - "The intentional application of force to the person of another, without legal justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort".
- Physical assaults include being shoved, pushed, punched, kicked, head-butted, but this is not an exhaustive list.
- Non-physical assault - "The use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment".

3.4 It is very difficult to provide a comprehensive description of all types of incidents that are covered under this definition; however, the following examples would be consistent:

- Offensive language, verbal abuse and swearing which prevents staff from doing their job or makes them feel unsafe;
- Negative, malicious or stereotypical comments;
- Invasion of personal space;
- Brandishing of objects or weapons;
- Near misses i.e. unsuccessful physical assaults;
- Threats or risk of serious injury to a member of staff, or visitors;
- Bullying*, victimisation or intimidation;
- Stalking;
- Spitting;
- Alcohol or drug-fuelled behaviour;
- Unreasonable behaviour and non-cooperation;
- Any of the above linked to destruction of or damage to property.

This is not an exhaustive list.

3.5 Staff-on-staff bullying does not fall within the context of this policy. Any such issues should be dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's Dignity at Work – Bullying and Harassment Policy.

4. ASSESSING THE RISK

- 4.1 Line Managers are responsible for identifying and assessing the risks of lone working both in terms of the likelihood of causing harm and also the severity of the injury. Consideration should be given to whether the activity is one that can be safely accomplished by one person or whether the presence of another member of staff would be advisable.

If a risk cannot be eliminated completely, action must be taken to reduce the risk to the lowest level practically achievable.

- 4.2 The following factors should be taken into account when evaluating risk:

- the environment - location, security, access;
- the context - nature of the task, any special circumstances, the individuals concerned;
- the level of supervision and support;
- history - any previous incidents or accidents;
- contact or proximity with members of the public; and
- any other special circumstances.

- 4.3 If an individual has a medical condition which would make them unsuitable for working alone, they have a duty to inform the Town Clerk/RFO. Where a medical condition is known, a risk assessment must be conducted to enable consideration to be given to routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional or specific risks. A first aid kit should be readily available at all times in order to render first aid for minor injuries should they be sustained.

- 4.4 All lone workers will have access to a mobile phone which must be charged and switched on so that they may be contacted or to summon help should the need arise. For all high risk activities, it is imperative that the employee gives clear guidance to their Line Manager as to their location(s) during the day.

- 4.5 Lone workers must contact the Town Council office before and after they finish work for the day if they intend to go directly home. If planning to work out of hours, this must be agreed in advance with their Line Manager.

- 4.6 Where there is 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.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Town Council has overall responsibility for managing all aspects of health and safety. The Council delegates responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the Town Clerk who will ensure mechanisms are in place:

- to ensure any risk to a person's safety is adequately controlled and reduced to the lowest level which is reasonably practicable;
- to ensure, where necessary, that appropriate risk assessments and safe systems of work are in place;
- to ensure that this policy is adhered to by staff and that resources are available to ensure effective implementation.

6. LINE MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Line Managers shall ensure lone working situations are identified, appropriate risk assessments undertaken, control measures introduced, and employees are provided with the necessary information, instruction and training.

7. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 All employees have a general duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions.
- 7.2 All employees must further ensure that they will:
- Follow guidance and procedures designated for safe working;
 - Cooperate with the Town Council to enable it to meet its obligations in respect of the prevention of physical and non-physical assaults and the reduction of risks related to lone working;
 - Report all accidents or incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and ask for guidance as appropriate from their Line Manager;
 - Attend health and safety related training;
 - Be vigilant and ensure that any known or identified risks are immediately reported to their Line Manager as a minimum requirement.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

- 8.1 The objective of the risk assessment is to ensure that satisfactory control measures are in place for such activities.
- 8.2 The risk assessment process will be undertaken as a collaborative exercise by both the lone worker and their Line Manager and that the agreed safe working procedures are recorded and communicated to all persons who may be required to work alone and any other employees who have a role in ensuring their safety. **(Please see appendices A & B).**

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 9.1 Arrangements which are implemented to ensure the safety of lone workers need to be subject to a monitoring regime which is commensurate with the risk, by their Line Manager. Risk assessments are to be reviewed if any significant changes take place, following an accident/incident or following any concerns being raised. Any review should make sure existing control measures are adequate and check if any additional controls are needed.

10. SUMMARY OF GUIDANCE

- 10.1 Working alone is not illegal but it can bring additional risks to a work activity. Billingham Town Council has developed policies and procedures to control risks and protect employees, and employees should follow them. Apart from employees being sure that they can do the job on their own, the three most important things to be certain of are that:
- i. The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he or she is being exposed;

- ii. A colleague or member knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and what he or she is doing;
 - iii. The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.
- 10.2 The activities within this guidance are not exhaustive, consequence risks should be effectively identified and managed by the Town Council.
- 10.3 The 'lone worker' is obligated to follow the outcomes of the risk assessment and consequently agreed procedures.
- 10.4 This guidance sets out law, the Town Council's and individual responsibility.

11. REPORTING AN INCIDENT

- 11.1 Staff must be aware that if, at any stage during a visit/while working in the office or café and community buildings, they feel unsafe, they should be reporting this to their Line Manager who should update the information as necessary.
- 11.2 It is important that staff report any incident that occurs, whether it is aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident to their Line Manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify an additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening to someone else.

APPENDIX A

BILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL Risk Assessment Form

Activity: Lone Working/Violence at Work			Assessment Date: 01.03.2021	Review Date: 01.03.2022		
Hazard and Risk	People at Risk	Optional Controls	Our Controls	Our Future Controls	Risk Level	Target Date & by Whom
Violence Injury/Death	Employee		High risk activities identified and individually assessed. Communications provided. 'No show' procedure in place. Staff advised on how to deal with potentially aggressive situations. Key holders instructed not to enter building if called for and alarm sounding and is sign of entry. Staff advised of what action to take if approached for valuables.		LOW	
Accident Injury/death	Employees/Public		Certain high risk activities prohibited if alone, e.g. working at height, excavations, electrical work etc. Staff trained in first aid Communications provided. First aid kits available. 'No show' procedures followed.		LOW	
Using equipment Injury/death	Employees/Public		Only trained operatives use equipment. Some equipment use prohibited when lone working, e.g. chainsaws, ladders etc. All equipment well maintained and recorded as such. Equipment inspected by operative prior to each use. 'No show' procedure in place. Communications available.		LOW	
Assessor's signature: Vicky Lloyd Date: 01.3.2021			Clerk's signature: Dee Smith Date 01.03.2021			

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF RISK CATEGORIES

Table 1 – Low Risk Activity

Risk Level	Activities	Control Measures
Low	<p>People engaged in tasks they would normally undertake in their fixed base and where the work does not involve use of dangerous machinery equipment or hazardous substances.</p> <p>Working outside normal working hours.</p>	<p>LONE WORKING IS PERMITTED. The Following guidance to be followed.</p> <p>Risk assessment of the work area completed in conjunction with Line Manager. Hazards identified, risk controlled and provisions for emergencies are in place e.g. building layout & alarms systems, escape routes open, fire -fighting equipment, first aid, locking up procedures, lonely exit routes, public access to office restricted.</p> <p>Where staff work alone, for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, Line Manager must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.</p> <p>This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.</p> <p>On induction staff receive training in health and safety policies and procedures. Information displayed in all premises managed by the Town Council.</p> <p>Staff not to complete 'out of hours' working wherever possible.</p> <p>Staff to notify people at home when intending to leave work and what time to be expected home.</p> <p>Staff to leave contact numbers at home so that the Town Council can be contacted if there are concerns for individual's safety.</p> <p>Staff are aware of the correct incident reporting procedures and are encouraged to report actual and near-miss incidents.</p>

Table 2 – Medium Risk Activities

Risk Level	Activities	Control Measures
Medium	Work with members of the public	<p>LONE WORKING IS PERMITTED. Follow low risk control measures and in addition consider:</p> <p>Ensuring that other people are around and can always see you.</p> <p>Staff trained to deal with potentially aggressive situations.</p>
Medium	Lone worker suffered from illness that might increase risks of the job.	<p>Public access to office restricted.</p> <p>Appropriate communications should be maintained with the lone worker. The lone worker equipped by means of a personal alarm and a system should be in place detailing what to do if an alarm is activated.</p>
Medium	Working away from fixed base	<p>LONE WORKING IS PERMITTED</p> <p>All staff should leave details of their movements and give an idea of how long they are going to be away from base and when to expect to be back. If plans change, the staff member must ring into the Town Council office.</p> <p>Details of venues being visited and a contact number should always be provided.</p> <p>Think about the location of the place you are going. Check out the venue and prepare for the visit beforehand.</p> <p>Meet unfamiliar people in public areas.</p>

Table 3 – High Risk Activities

Risk Level	Activities	Control Measures
High	<p>Moving heavy equipment or furniture.</p> <p>Working in the office before 7.00 am or after 8.00 pm.</p> <p>Working with substances hazardous to health – chemicals which are corrosive, toxic, explosive, flammable or asphyxiant products or reactions.</p> <p>Working on or near water.</p> <p>Power tools and machinery.</p> <p>Working at height.</p>	<p>LONE WORKING IS NOT PERMITTED</p>