FALKIRK COUNCIL

LONE WORKING POLICY

DECEMBER 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of their employees whilst at work. In addition, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to carry out risk assessments to identify potential risks and take necessary measures to remove or reduce and control risk.

Falkirk Council employees deliver a wide range of services in a variety of working environments and situations. For some employees there is a requirement to work alone or to work sufficiently remote from other employees to constitute being regarded as working alone. Working alone may pose an additional risk to the safety of employees. This may be outside normal office hours and may also involve accompanying a service user in public places or working within client homes. On occasion, employees may also work from their own home. Other examples of Lone Workers are listed below:

- One person working alone in an office;
- Mobile workers working away from their base such as Personal Carers, Estates Officers, Building Maintenance employees, Grounds Maintenance employees and Cleaners;
- Persons on call such as key holders or employees on call-out/stand-by.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Falkirk Council aims to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all employees and service users and will take all reasonable steps to protect them including ensuring that best practices are employed to minimise risks. Falkirk Council will ensure that Services risk assess all activities that involve lone working and that adequate management systems are applied to control risks associated with lone working. The Council will ensure that these management systems are regularly monitored and reviewed. All practical steps will be taken to identify any additional risks associated with lone working and these will either be removed or reduced to as low a level as possible.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees of Falkirk Council and complements other relevant policies such as the Corporate Health, Safety & Care Policy, Risk Management by Risk Assessment Policy, Accident/Incident Reporting Policy, Policy & Procedure for the Management of Violence & Unacceptable Actions and Policy & Procedure for the Management of Stress and Mental Wellbeing.

4. DEFINITION

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of a Lone Worker is:
"Those who are required to work by themselves, or out of close contact with colleagues, without close or direct supervision".

5. MANAGING THE RISKS

Risk Assessment

Some service users may be aggressive, vulnerable and/or under the influence of drugs or alcohol when an employee deals with them; consequently communication with such service users can be challenging. This means the risks to Council employees require to be managed at a level appropriate to the increased risk presented in these environments. Further information on these issues can be obtained from the Council's Policy & Procedure for the Management of Violence and Unacceptable Actions at Work.

In accordance with the Policy & Procedures for Risk Management by Risk Assessment, Line Managers must ensure Risk Assessments are undertaken on all lone working activities and, where necessary, for individual lone workers. These will include identification of the actions to be taken which will minimise any risks. Any situation that could result in what could be considered to be an emergency should be identified and covered by both risk assessment and emergency procedures. All areas of work should be considered in the support provided to employees who work alone, and must be appropriate to the risk to employees.

Examples of Generic Risk Assessment on Lone Working can be found on the Council's intranet site, the "Underground" at the Employee Area/ Health, Safety & Care/ Policies, Strategies & Guidance/ Risk Assessment/ Generic Risk Assessment Examples/ Lone Working.

Sharing Information

Prior to undertaking visits/dealing with service users, employees should have access to any available relevant information about the service user which may have an impact on the employee's safety or the nature of the service being delivered. This should include information about any previous violent and/or unacceptable behaviour in order that a reasoned judgement of any potential risk they may be exposed to can be made. Services should therefore have an information sharing protocol in place with relevant partner agencies and other Services that is controlled by managers to ensure that employees are not placed at risk, particularly those who work alone.

Emergency Procedures/Control Mechanisms

Services must have an Emergency Procedure to protect employees who are lone workers. These procedures, to be used in the event of an emergency, will ensure that all employees know how and who to contact to request urgent assistance if required. The procedure should include actions for a line manager to take if an employee has not returned back to their workplace by an agreed time, and also to cover situations involving out of hour's work. As part of the procedures, where, as a result of Risk Assessment, it is identified that an employee is at risk as a result of lone working, the Manager must identify control measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the service, which reduce the risk to the employee to an acceptable level. Typical controls may include the following:

- Provision of specialised training e.g. coping with violence and aggression;
- Use of destination boards/tracking systems, including procedures to manage employees who do not report back to base;
- Use of Mobile phones/GPS mobile phones/two way radio systems;
- Two person visits/buddy systems;

- Office based interviews for clients who may present a threat to employees, including development of suitable risk assessments to control hazards should an interview escalate;
- Implementation of a Red Flag procedure to identify Service user's who may present a threat to employees (refer to the Council's Policy & Procedure for the Management of Violence & Unacceptable Actions);
- Issue of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if appropriate, e.g. panic alarms, affray alarm/GPS Phone and enforcing the use of the equipment issued;
- Review of travel arrangements for employees when adverse weather is forecast and consideration of suspension of lone working in the event of a change in weather warning;
- Suspension of the lone working where risks are deemed unacceptable and/or rescheduling activities where necessary;
- Procedures to keep in contact with employees working from home.

Regular test exercises and training must be carried out to ensure procedures are effective.

6. SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES

Incident Debriefing & Reporting

Employees should be encouraged to report all incidents where they feel insulted, abused, uncomfortable or threatened. It should be stressed to all employees that the reporting of incidents will not be taken to imply a failure by the employee concerned, other employees or any other person responsible for the management of the premises concerned. Threats and verbal/written abuse should be given the same priority as physical violence as this often is the end result following a pattern of escalating behavior.

In the event of an incident occurring involving violence or unacceptable behaviour towards an employee who has been lone working, the employee should report the incident to their line manager in accordance with the Service's procedure. The line manager must then de-brief the employee within 24 - 48 hours, or as soon as is possible, and complete an Accident/Incident Reporting Form HR14.

The purpose of debriefing is to provide an employee with immediate support and to obtain an initial assessment of the situation. The line manager will require to:

- Provide assistance with accessing any medical treatment if required;
- Involve appropriate emergency services, if necessary e.g. ambulance or police;
- Defuse the situation; employees will need to talk through their experience. It is important to create a supportive and positive atmosphere where acknowledgement of the situation is encouraged;
- Establish if the employee was properly briefed/prepared for undertaking their duties prior to the incident occurring and followed proper procedures;
- Develop an action plan to prevent future incidents occurring in liaison with the employee which should include a review of duties/working practices if required.

The line manager must fully investigate all violent incidents, making recommendations and taking action to reduce/remove any risk. Violent incidents are also subject to the

reporting requirements of the Health and Safety Executive, as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2015 (RIDDOR).

Further information on RIDDOR and related matters is contained within the Accident/Incident Reporting Policy and also within the Council's policy for the Management of Violence & Unacceptable Actions. Advice is also available from the Service HR Adviser and/or from the Corporate Health, Safety & Care Team.

Employees will be afforded time off with pay to attend any appointments in relation to support following incidents of violence, e.g. doctors/occupational health appointments.

Training

The Council offers a training course on coping with violence and aggression which is delivered in liaison with Forth Valley NHS and covers aspects of lone working. This course can be run for individual Services and tailored to meet the specific working environment of the Service. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Organisational Development Team.

A guidance note on Personal Safety has been developed for employees and is attached as Appendix 1. Further information and advice on personal safety and lone working systems can be obtained from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust via the internet at: www.Suzylamplugh.org.

7. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible for the effective operation of the Policy across the Council as a whole and for ensuring the development of effective management procedures to implement the Policy within Services. The Chief Executive is also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are available to implement appropriate procedures, train key personnel and ensure appropriate protective measures are taken as identified in the Policy.

Director Responsible for Health, Safety & Care

The Director responsible for health, safety & care is responsible for supporting the Chief Executive in the implementation of the duties required by this policy and guidance, which includes ensuring the provision of support in the development and implementation of risk management strategies in all Services to reduce and/or control risk associated with lone working.

Service Directors, Heads of Service, Head Teachers and Service Unit Managers

Service Directors, Heads of Service, Head Teachers and Service Unit Managers are responsible for, so far as is reasonably practicable, assisting the Chief Executive in the execution of her duties in regard to risk management by risk assessment by ensuring the requirements of the policy and guidance are adhered to. Service Directors, Heads of Service, Head Teachers and Service Unit Managers must:

- Ensure Lone Working Risk assessments are developed and effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed within their service area

- Ensure time is made available to employees responsible for undertaking risk assessments to fulfill these tasks and that all employees where relevant are made aware of and understand these Lone Working risk assessments;
- Ensure relevant training is provided to all employees to enable them to carry out their Lone Working duties in a competent manner;
- Where the risk assessment identifies an unacceptable level of risk, alternatives to lone working must be identified and implemented;
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available within their Services;
- Determine the management arrangements, within their Service, through which these Lone Working risk assessments will be implemented and communicated;

First Line Managers, Team Leaders, Supervisors
All first line managers/supervisors have responsibility for implementing, monitoring & reviewing Lone Working risk assessments to achieve the aims of this policy and guidance and other relevant Corporate and Service based Health & Safety Policies. So far as is reasonably practicable, these individuals will lead by example within their work environment and are responsible for:

- Identifying Lone Working activities to be risk assessed and completing relevant risk assessment, ensuring employees are involved in the process;
- Communicating the outcomes of Lone Working risk assessment to employees;
- Ensuring that employees adhere to these Lone Working risk assessments and adhere to relevant prescribed standards and legislation, are aware of legislation, both current and impending and providing basic advice to employees on this;
- Ensuring that all new employees undergo appropriate induction training which includes risk management by risk assessment for lone working if relevant to the employee's post;
- Liaising with Service Unit Managers and Human Resources to identify training requirements or on any issues of concern relevant to lone working;
- Provision of support to employees during the debrief process;
- Carry out an investigation of Lone Working incidents to ensure best practice is incorporated in future activities.
- Monitor adverse weather reports for their team, assessing impact on lone workers and ensure that the weather conditions are part of the planning/emergency procedures.

Premises Managers
Those employees designated as Premises Managers are also responsible for ensuring that the general safety of employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors is maintained by ensuring that premises risk assessments relating to lone working are undertaken in line with guidance in the Premises Managers' Handbook.

Employees
It is vital that all employees of Falkirk Council contribute positively to the successful implementation of lone working risk management strategies. Employees who have a concern about health, safety & care matters have responsibility for alerting their line manager to any situation or concern which requires to be resolved. Employees will be expected to:

- Safeguard their health and safety, and that of others by operating to risk assessments safe systems of work in accordance with Falkirk Council Corporate and Service based Lone Working, risk assessment strategies and policies;
- Prior to visits, check details of location and persons to meet in order to determine if there were any previous incidents/risk;
- Alert line managers to unsafe practices, conditions or incidents of concern about lone working, including unsafe travelling conditions ;
- Seek advice and clarification from Line Managers when unsure of any health and safety requirement relevant to their working environment;
- Attend/take part in relevant consultations and training on lone working as instructed by their manager;
- Use any P.P.E. issued to them as instructed by their line manager.

Human Resources & Business Transformation

Human Resources, specifically the Health, Safety & Care Team, have a responsibility for providing advice and administering the Council's Health, Safety & Care procedures and for supporting Services in implementing these.

8.   MONITORING & REVIEW

The Head of Human Resources & Business Transformation will review this policy as per the agreed Human Resources Policy Review timetable in conjunction with Service Directors/ Chief Officers and Trade Unions taking into consideration legislative amendments and best practice advice.

Personal Safety – issues to be aware of:

If you are a lone worker there are a number of things you can do to reduce the risk of getting into a difficult situation. The Council has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety of employees but employees also have a duty of care to themselves.

The advice provided below is to help you recognise potential dangers and enable you to take positive steps to reduce your exposure to risk.

Be aware of the environment
- ☐ Know what safety measures are in place in your workplace e.g. alarm systems and fire evacuation procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of first aid supplies;
- ☐ Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported and dealt with;
- ☐ If your work is to take you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for crime rates, check in with an appropriate person/ manager prior to the visit, or work with a colleague;
- ☐ If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of possible escape routes and of what might be used as a weapon against you. If you believe the situation is escalating then terminate the meeting as soon as you can and make alternative arrangements.
  - ☐ Be aware of travelling conditions, and highlight concerns to your manager immediately.

Be aware of yourself
- ☐ Think about your body language. What messages are you giving out?
- ☐ Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid saying anything which could be taken 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 and don't rise to the bait.

Be aware of 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,
- ☐ Be aware of the context of your meeting - is the person already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- ☐ Listen to the person and demonstrate that you are actively listening to them. Try and agree between you what you can/will do for them. Don't make promises which can't be kept.