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| **Lone working** |
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| Title: | Director |  |
| Company: | M2 Safety Consultants Ltd |  |
| Name: | Fraser Morrison |  |
| Signature: |  |  |
| Date: |  |  |

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# INTRODUCTION

1. has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees. Lone working does not automatically imply a higher risk, but it is generally understood that working alone does increase the vulnerability of workers. Lone workers can be found in a wide range of situations, covering both fixed establishments and mobile working, including those:

* Working alone in premises e.g. occupied/ non occupied premises
* Working separately from others in premises e.g. reception staff
* Working from home, except those carrying out low risk office type home working
* Working on their own outside of normal hours e.g. cleaners, security
* Working alone as mobile workers away from a fixed base e.g. facilities management – grass cutting
* Visiting domestic and commercial premises e.g. joiners

# **DEFINITIONS**

1. Buddy System - A cooperative arrangement whereby two individuals accept responsibility for one another’s safety by monitoring each other and instigate the emergency procedure if necessary
2. Lone worker - Someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision

# LEGAL REQUIREMENT

1. There is no specific legislation for lone working and working alone is not in itself against the law, but it is recognised that lone working can create additional risks.
2. Legislation which applies to employees who work alone includes the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. These require employers to appropriately assess and manage any health and safety risks for people working alone.

# PROHIBITED LONE WORKING SITUATIONS

1. Some high-risk activities are recognised as too difficult or dangerous to be carried out by an unaccompanied worker and require at least one other person to be present for all or part of the time. As such lone working is prohibited in the following activities:

* Electrical work on or near live equipment
* Entry into derelict or dilapidated buildings
* Moving and handling large items
* Working in an area/ house/ flat/ building with known persons who are unpredictable
* Working in a confined space

# RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Line managers must conduct a risk assessment of each lone working activity, specific to individual roles, using the risk assessment process. The Risk Assessment Procedure should be referred to for consideration of any lone working.
2. The process should involve consultation with the lone workers to consider any potential risks. As well as hazards from normal work, hazards that lone workers may be exposed to that need to be considered within the risk assessment include:

* accident and emergencies arising out of the work including sudden illness
* animal attacks
* availability of first aid equipment
* cash handling
* communication
* driving and vehicle breakdowns
* exposure to hazardous materials
* fire / explosion
* manual handling
* poor illumination
* provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities
* risk of violence and / or aggression from clients and other members of the public
* social isolation and stress
* specific risk from the workplace e.g. temporary access equipment, working on the highway, working on cliff tops, working near water
* theft and intruders

1. The appropriate application of this procedure will support managers to effectively assess and manage risk. Consideration must be given to activities to determine if lone working is fundamentally appropriate. They include:

* Emergency out of hours response activities, especially in adverse weather conditions
* Dealing with unpredictable client behaviour and situations
* Severe weather conditions
* Unknown workplace or area
* Use of tools and machinery

1. It is the manager’s responsibility to ensure that all identified control measures are in place and that the employees are confident in their application and use prior to commencing lone working.
2. When an appropriate risk assessment has been completed, a lone working system and procedure, should be implemented
3. It may be necessary for the lone worker to conduct an “on the job” dynamic risk assessment. It is in addition to, and not a substitute for, a comprehensive formal risk assessment.
4. In some cases, it is not always possible to identify all hazards relating to a role where the working environment is outside of the employer’s control as situations that have not been covered by the formal risk assessment may develop.

# CONTROL MEASURES

1. The following is not a comprehensive list but a guide to some of the additional precautions that may be taken to specifically reduce the risk to lone workers.
2. Access to communications - Immediate access is needed to communications to summon assistance whether by telephone, alarm system or radio. The risk assessment process should identify the type given the nature of the environment, telephone / radio coverage and distance from support.
3. Alarms e.g. fixed panic alarm - Managers must ensure staff understand where alarms are located, when and how to activate an alarm and the response required to assist a colleague who has activated the alarm. It is important that alarm system is maintained and periodically tested.
4. Automatic warning devices - Similar to alarms by summoning assistance, they take the form of a pendant or device carried by a person which triggers when all movement ceases for a period of time. It is sometimes referred to as a man down device.
5. Coded phrase - A code word or phrase used to warn managers and colleagues that a situation is escalating. This can be a signal for support to be provided without alerting the service user / member of the public. It is essential that the recipient of the call is fully aware of the arrangements for taking these calls.
6. Communication devices - Employees are responsible for ensuring that mobile telephones, radios, lone working devices and other forms of communication are fully charged, switched on and that any problems are reported promptly. It should not be assumed that where someone has been issued a communication device that everything is fine if no contact is made.
7. First aid equipment - The provision of first aid equipment with appropriate training may be necessary for anyone working away from immediate medical or first aid assistance.
8. Periodic supervisory checks - For people working alone, a periodic visit or telephone call can assist in providing support and reducing isolation.
9. Records of visits - It is imperative that people visiting clients or customers at their home address or anyone away from their main base have a procedure in place for recording times of visit and estimated time of return. The line manager must ensure that there is a procedure in place to locate the person if necessary.
10. Regular team meetings - Ensure regular contact and meetings to discuss general health and safety issues or other issues that may arise as a result of working alone or at home.
11. Safe systems of work - Line managers will ensure that safe systems of work are identified through the risk assessment process, devised and implemented as require to take into account lone working.
12. Security staff - In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to obtain the services of security personnel to provide support and assistance to employees.
13. Training - Risk assessments and safe systems of work will require suitable training to be carried out to ensure that employees are competent in the use of equipment and technology. It is the line manager’s responsibility to ensure that all staff are provided with and attend suitable training, for example dealing with violence and aggression and conflict management if required.
14. Up to date information - Maintain up to date accurate records for items such as clients / service users’ details, Cautionary Contact List, location information, emergency contact numbers, maps for outdoor areas and meeting points. Employees must be aware of the location of these records.
15. Visit planning - Time must always be made available for sensible planning. It is the duty of all staff to check whether they might be at risk by checking records such as the client history, case notes and Cautionary Contact List before visiting any clients / service users. Where appropriate, to avoid putting staff at risk alternative arrangements must be organised such as carrying out visits in a controlled environment e.g. Council premises.

# SPECIAL SITUATIONS

1. Some groups of staff may be more at risk when lone working. They can include those newly appointed, new to the area or inexperienced. Young people, i.e. those under 18 years of age, and those who have a medical condition or disability may also be at more risk. Others may be more vulnerable at certain times e.g. when recovering from an illness or injury, when pregnant or when under stress arising from family or other difficulties.
2. Line managers are responsible for identifying staff in such circumstances and working with them to ensure that they receive any special help or facilities that they may need. Where extra assistance is required, employees are to ensure that their line manager is aware
3. Staff based or working in offices provided by other organisations e.g. hospital trusts are responsible for knowing about any special arrangements which apply e.g. health and safety rules, risk assessments and their control measures, use of interview rooms, alarm systems, restrictions on access, out of hours working arrangements, etc. It must be clear as to which set of procedures staff are to follow in these cases.

# HOME WORKING

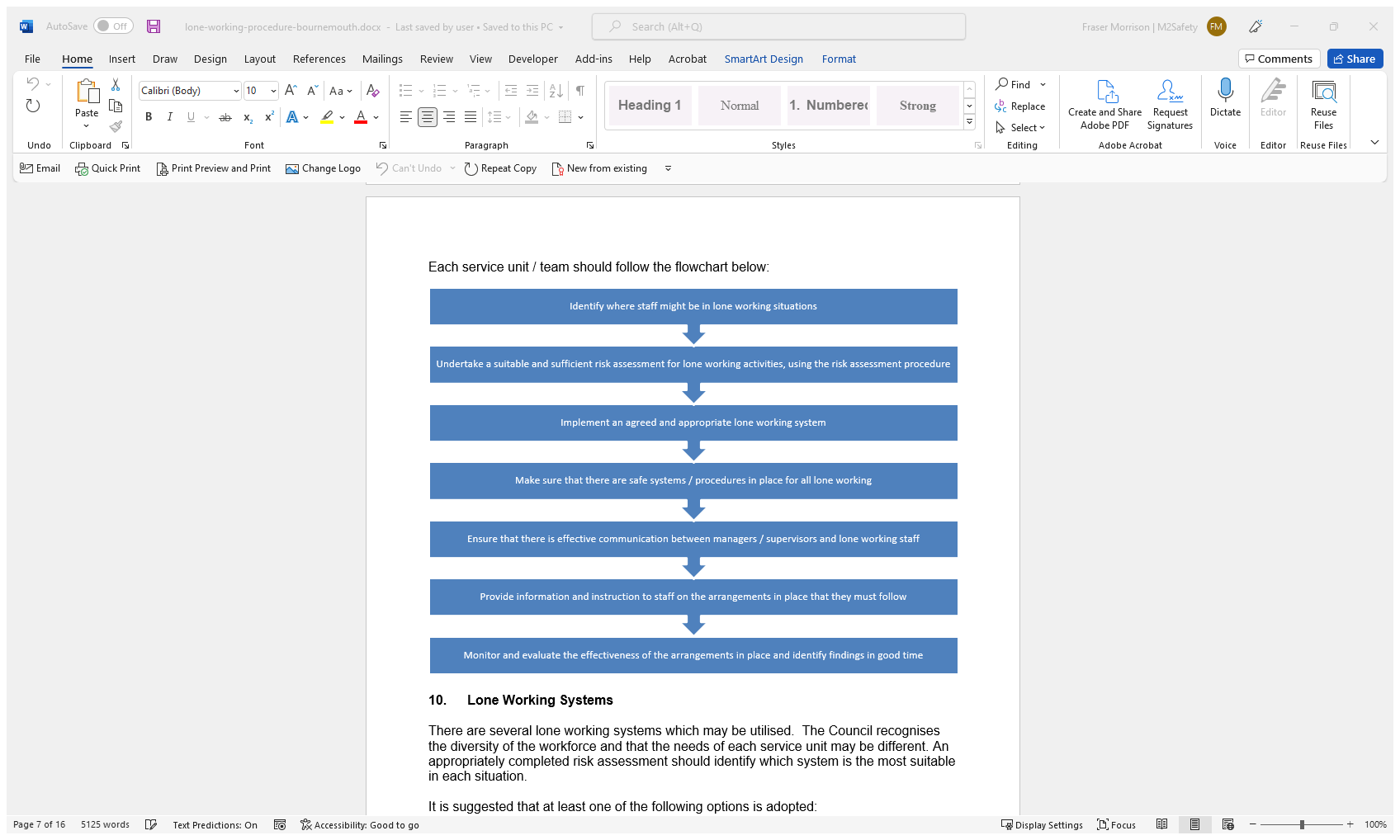
1. Although working from home for employees is usually assessed as low risk, still has a duty of care to these employees. Employees working from home should have an agreed method of contact to notify a nominated person at the beginning and end of every working day. Employees working from home, other than as part of low risk office functions, will need an appropriately completed risk assessment and management agreement.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Within each team/ company, it is essential that:

* Lone working risk assessments are undertaken by appropriately skilled persons
* Role specific lone working risk assessments are undertaken
* Employee responsibilities are clearly defined, agreed and understood
* Lone workers have appropriate knowledge of the hazards and risks they are being exposed to and the risk control measures being used
* The lone workers know what to do if they believe they are, or will imminently be, at high risk of harm
* Where the risk assessment identifies the need, a nominated person is aware of a lone worker’s location and activity
* The lone working policy and procedure is applied at all locations, including those not perceived to pose a risk, as risk likelihood and severity cannot be effectively established without an assessment
* Appropriate training is provided regarding policy, procedure and any relevant systems for all lone workers and those with responsibility for lone workers
* Consideration is given within the procedure for employees when visiting in pairs as well as when lone working, as in some circumstances e.g. service users’ homes there can still be significant risks
* The effectiveness of the lone working arrangements, including the use of any lone working devices, is monitored appropriately and action taken where necessary

1. Each service team should follow the flowchart below:



# LONE WORKING SYSTEMS

1. There are several lone working systems which may be utilised. recognises the diversity of the workforce and that the needs of each service unit may be different. An appropriately completed risk assessment should identify which system is the most suitable in each situation.
2. It is suggested that at least one of the following options is adopted:

• Option 1 - Calendar System / Whiteboard

• Option 2 - Buddy System

• Option 3 – Radio Network

1. The adoption of any such system is to be used only within the parameters of this procedure and the associated risk assessment procedure and should not be used as a tracking device for any other purpose other than lone worker safety.

## Option 1 - Calendar System / Whiteboard

1. Calendar systems and whiteboards by themselves must not be relied upon for those lone working. They will only be effective if kept up to date and monitored so it is recommended that they are used alongside the Buddy System as a minimum. Where provided, it is the responsibility of all employees to provide up to date information on their whereabouts.
2. The electronic calendar should show the:

* Estimated arrival time in the office if making a visit direct from home
* Nature of visit e.g. site visit, team meeting
* Timings of meeting or visit
* Name of the person being visited or if a service user or customer their surname and reference number
* Venue, however if it is a home address then the address should be listed as for example “client’s home address”

1. The whiteboard should show the:

* Estimated arrival time in the office if making a visit direct from home
* If you are in or out of the office
* Time expected back into the office
* How you can be contacted in an emergency e.g. mobile phone you are using
* Whereabouts of staff e.g. annual leave, training, sick
* Name of nominated buddy

## Option 2 - Buddy System

1. The operation of a buddy system relies on one person monitoring the whereabouts of another person. The buddy, who will be decided upon in advance, agrees to receive and make monitoring calls throughout the working shift to the lone worker and in the event of an incident will be able access and share the lone worker’s contact information to escalate the incident. The buddy must be able to react if a team member does not respond at a prearranged time.
2. Lone workers and those working away from their normal place of work must record where and when they will be visiting and their expected time of return. The buddy will monitor this record and where there is concern will escalate it to the next level.
3. The lone worker must contact their buddy as they progress through their visit programme and whenever there are changes to the programme.
4. Where a lone worker starts and / or finishes from home, they must contact their buddy before starting and on completion of the visit.If the buddy system is used out of hours, an allocated person e.g. line manager must be responsible for the provision of monitoring the lone worker; including the response calls and escalation procedure. It is recommended that this involves the use of Option 3 - Lone Worker Service – Mobile Phone Based.
5. Suggested Escalation Process

Diagram

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## Option 3 – Radio Network

1. In some areas use of a radio network may be appropriate. Radio is perfect to broadcast short announcements to colleagues over an open channel. Different channels can be used for different groups of people. Radio generally uses push to talk technology meaning that a button must be pressed on the radio to transmit and released to receive communication.
2. Two-way radios allow staff to contact colleagues to confirm their safety, convey information and to alert others to an emergency situation. Regular checks must be made to lone workers throughout the working shift to ensure that they are safe as they may have no need otherwise to use the radio.
3. In the case of an emergency there must be an established robust procedure to ensure that help is quickly despatched. The procedure must ensure that the alarm is raised to someone who can directly help the lone worker as colleagues may not be able to respond immediately.
4. Strict guidelines are required to be established and implemented. These include keeping radio transmissions clear and as short as possible and not using personal names. Unless earpieces are used, transmissions can be overheard by other people and any information heard may be misused.

# RECORDING INCIDENTS

1. Anyone experiencing a lone working incident must report it to their nominated person e.g. line manager as soon as practicable. Consideration must be given as to whether to contact the police.
2. Accident and Near Miss Reporting System must be used to record all incidents, regardless of the circumstances.
3. Where appropriate, e.g. for incidents of a violence nature and / or involving threatening behaviour, the information should also be considered for inclusion on the Cautionary Contact List to safeguard others.

# EMPLOYEE PRECAUTIONS

1. There are many things that employees can do to assist themselves to reduce risks. Some are role specific but there are general rules that employees should follow when working alone if possible which include:

* Plan ahead, making sure that you know where you are going and how to get there
* Ensure someone always knows where you are, how you are getting there and what you are doing
* Keep any allocated lone working devices and a mobile telephone on you at all times when working alone, ensuring that they are fully charged
* Park vehicles in well-lit areas and where possible park them in the direction of travel on leaving
* For staff leaving buildings late, it may be necessary to move their car nearer the building during the afternoon
* When walking stick to busy well-lit streets whenever possible avoiding danger spots like quiet / badly lit alleyways, subways or isolated car parks
* Stay alert, keeping your mind on your surroundings especially if you are wearing headphones or using a mobile telephone
* Avoid keeping all valuables in one places
* Keep the door between yourself and the person that you are visiting or meeting
* Be aware of the nearest exit and how to open doors
* Always assess the situation around you, be alert and trust your instincts – if you feel uncomfortable, get out immediately
* Be aware of what to do in an emergency
* Never assume that it will not happen to you

1. Where an employee is responsible for opening or closing a workplace the following should be applied where possible:

* Be alert for unfamiliar people when approaching the building – If unsure go to a place of safety until another staff member arrives
* If there are signs of a broken window or forced entry assume that someone may be on the premises – Go to a safe place, telephone the police and inform your line manager
* Be aware if anyone is lurking around outside – If someone is seen acting suspiciously outside, stay inside and telephone the police
* If you are being collected by car, wait inside until it arrives
* If travelling by public transport, try to avoid leaving the workplace too early so as to avoid waiting too long

# TRAINING

1. It is essential that employees receive sufficient training which must include any lone working systems and procedures, along with the emergency and escalation process.
2. Risk assessments and safe systems of work may require training to be carried out to ensure that employees are competent in the use of equipment and technology. Training must be provided in the chosen lone working system and include when to use it, how to use it, charging and emergency situations.

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