

Lone Working Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. This Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of young people and staff in circumstances where it is necessary and/or appropriate for a single member of staff to look after one or more young people on their own, in or outside provision, for a specified period of time.

1.1.1. In addition, this Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of staff required to work alone in the provision building.

1.1.2. In addition, this Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of staff required to work on their own outside the provision. For example, this includes visiting young people and their parents/carers in their own home.

1.2. Natures Pathway, in keeping with our philosophical and ethical approach, believes that 'Lone Working' is not merely acceptable, but in many circumstances is the most appropriate approach. However, Lone Working does require some built in safeguards for the protection of staff and young people.

2. Risk Factors

2.1. In circumstances where Lone Working takes place (with young people) there are inevitably risk factors that are unavoidable. These can be minimised and mitigated against, but not eliminated altogether. They include an increased risk of/additional challenges in managing:

- A young person missing from the provision or a provision activity.
- A young person being involved in an accident.
- A member of staff being assaulted.
- A young person damaging property.
- A young person harming themselves.
- A young person being assaulted physically, emotionally, sexually.
- A young person making a false allegation of assault/abuse/inappropriate behaviour.
- A young person perpetrating a crime.
- Inappropriate boundaries/collusion between staff member and a young person.

2.2. These factors should therefore, be considered (along with other relevant factors) prior to Lone Working with a young person.

2.2.1. In some (though not all) circumstances it may be appropriate to complete a Risk Assessment relating to some or all of the factors listed above.

2.2.2. Such Risk Assessments, should build in specific additional safeguards e.g. time limited Lone Working, Lone Working limited to public spaces, specified members or staff etc.

2.3. In rare cases it may not be appropriate to work alone with a young person at all. If this is the case, this should also be detailed in the individual Risk Assessment. Further this should be regarded as a temporary situation, with staff working towards a situation where Lone Working can occur safely.

2.4. In Lone Working circumstance staff where required to be away from provision alone and/or visit a young person's home increased risk factors primarily relate to a greater chance of:

- Being taken ill or having an accident and being unable to inform colleagues
- Being subject to potential jeopardy or risk because of the behaviour of the young person's parents/carer or others

3. Specific Safeguards

3.1. Where there are additional risks, additional steps must be taken to minimise and mitigate against these.

3.2. For example, if a young person has a history of aggressive behaviour towards staff, making unsupportable allegations or going missing, a Risk Assessment must detail the circumstances in which it is appropriate to undertake Lone Working, along with strategies to maximise safety. This is not to say that the presence of some level of risk does not, in of itself, prevent Lone Working being appropriate. All young people, except in the most high risk circumstances, are entitled both to the potential benefits of a one-to-one relationship with an adult, and the avoidance of any stigma associated with being unable to left alone with a single member of staff.

3.3. The context, arrangements, the purpose, the nature of the relationship with specific members of staff, gender factors (see below), particular circumstances regarding the time and location all influence when where and if Lone Working' is appropriate.

3.4. Occasionally, a young person may develop an infatuation for one of their teachers. In an emotionally vulnerable stage of their development, such issues need to be managed with the greatest sensitivity. Among the issues to take into account in these circumstances is the appropriateness of Lone Working.

3.5. Very few risks are permanent. Young people and circumstances change overtime. Therefore, all relevant Risk Assessments should, as a matter of course, be reviewed on a regular basis.

4. Gender Issues

4.1. It is truism that the risk of Lone Working with girls, all things being equal, is reduced if undertaken by female staff. However, this does not, in of itself, remove all risk. Further, this convention does not necessarily need to apply in all cases. It is of

positive benefit if young people learn to relate equally to male and female teaching staff

5. Working Alone Away from the Provision Building

5.1. Staff are expected to work away from the provision on a regular basis, both with and without young people. This section details some of these increased risks, along with recommended action to mitigate them.

5.3. Increased risks and challenges associated with a sole member of staff undertaking activities with a young person away from the provision include:

- Staff being taken ill, injured or otherwise incapacitated.
- Road Safety.
- A young person running away and going missing.
- Managing emotionally dysregulated behaviour (including physical aggression).
- Difficulties in physically intervening on own (and potentially humiliating the young person in public).
- A young person harming themselves, putting themselves in danger, or being reckless with theirs or other safety.

5.3.1. Mitigating these risks require high-levels of planning, preparation, communication and good professional judgement.

5.4. Staff should not lone work two or more young people when engaged in a potentially risky activity when away from the provision building.

5.5. Staff working away from the provision building must also be cognisant of some areas of specific, increased risk.

5.5.1. Staff attending meetings with parents/carers at their home (especially with relatively unknown parents/carers) must take additional care in order to ensure their own safety and welfare. They should:

- Let colleagues know in advance the time, location, planned duration and the likely attendees.
- Ensure they have a mobile phone with adequate battery life.
- Inform colleagues after they have left the meeting.
- Have a clear idea where they are going and how to find the venue (including nearby parking).
- Leave the meeting immediately if their safety or welfare is in any way comprised.
- Take care walking from vehicle to venue, especially in unfamiliar areas after dark.

- If high levels of risk exist, do not attend meetings on own (or arrange meetings in a public place).

6.Training

Risk assessments will help to determine the level of training needed for each type of work. Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced. Establishments should, therefore, establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone, and, where appropriate, when to stop the work and seek advice.

7.Supervision

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on Natures Pathway to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision complements information, instruction and training and helps to ensure that staff and others understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work to identify and handle safety issues.

Whether or not to supervise an individual is a management decision; it is not up to individuals to decide when and where they require assistance.

8.Illness, Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established in provisions and the appropriate persons given clear and concise training and instructions on how to implement them. All lone workers should have access to the accident and defect reporting books and procedures and should report any accidents and near misses to their line manager as soon as practically possible.

9.Monitoring

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period (this may be via a reporting in system to colleagues, family or friends). In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

- Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers.
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone workers and a member of supervisory staff or another colleague is maintained using either a telephone or radio.
- The use of a nominated safety partner or “buddy” system.

10. Use of a Nominated Safety Partner or “Buddy” System

10.1 This is a fairly basic system to minimise the likelihood of an employee being left unaided should something untoward happen to them. Prior to anyone undertaking lone working, the following information should be made available to the nominated safety partner or buddy:

- Contact details e.g. mobile phone number.
- Agreed contact times or intervals and planned codes, if appropriate.
- Expected time of return, allowing for reasonably foreseeable delays such as traffic congestion, and the fact that meetings, more often than not, overrun rather than finish early.
- Information on the route to be taken when travelling.
- Colour, make and registration number of the vehicle being used.
- Details of emergency personal contacts. The lone worker should make contact with their safety partner at the agreed time or at agreed intervals to reassure them that they are OK. It is important that this includes arrangements for if the last “report in” is to be after normal office hours. Should the lone worker be delayed at any stage they should ensure that they contact their safety partner and revise their itinerary and expected return time.

Should the lone worker fail to make contact the safety partner will try to contact the lone worker using the itinerary and other details provided by the lone worker. If contact can still not be made after a reasonable agreed length of time and the lone worker still has not reported in, then the Police should be contacted for advice.

11. Risk Assessment

The risk assessment should identify all hazards, the risks associated and the control measures to be used when lone working is required. Those tasks, which are deemed unacceptable to be performed by a lone worker under any circumstances, must be documented in the written record of risk assessment kept by the company. Any risk assessment and its resulting control measures must be discussed with the individuals concerned. As with all risk assessments, the findings should be reviewed at reasonable intervals and in the light of experience. This requirement should be part of the company procedures generally.

12. Policy Review

This policy was last reviewed on: 31ST January 2026

Signed: N Butler

Renew Date 31ST January 2027 or as needed