

LONE WORKING

1. Introduction

Vector24 recognises the risk of lone working and has developed this policy to ensure the safety of all staff, workers and volunteers when working alone.

The aim of this policy is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Vector24 and its staff, workers and volunteers, in order to fulfil its legal obligations and to take action to minimise the risks of lone working. The policy also aims to increase staff awareness of safety issues related to lone working and to ensure that all lone working is assessed in a systematic and consistent manner.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all members of staff and volunteers who drive vehicles and work from home and should be read in conjunction with Vector24 Health and Safety Policy. Any reference to 'lone workers', 'member of staff' or 'employees' hereafter includes staff and volunteers.

3. Definition of Lone Workers

For the purpose of this policy Lone Workers are defined as anyone who works alone, whether they are at home or driving to collect a client or returning home.

4. Policy Statement

Vector24 recognises that some members of staff are required to work by themselves without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or during out of normal hours. The organisation acknowledges that these workers and volunteers are potentially at risk and that these risks must be minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

Vector24 has a duty of care to advise and assess the risk for all workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. As such standard procedures have been developed and set out within this policy, and these should be followed and adhered to at all times, prior to or when working alone.

It is important that all staff are aware of the definition of a Lone Worker (see Section 3 above) as they may find themselves, or those under their direct supervision, falling within the definition of a Lone Worker irregularly or infrequently and need to be able to recognise this situation and act appropriately to mitigate the risks.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Trustees

The Trustees have overall responsibility for Health and Safety for all employees and volunteers and for ensuring mechanisms are in place for the overall implementation, monitoring and revision of the policy.

The Trustees also have a responsibility to ensure that all employees are able to implement the aims and objectives of the policy and that certain arrangements exist for the provision of safety systems and procedures.

The Trustees are also responsible for reviewing and updating the policy and procedures following recommendations from the CEO and Operations Manager and for approval of the updated Lone Worker Policy.

5.2 Operations Manager

It is the responsibility of Operations Manager to ensure:

The Lone Worker Policy is brought to the attention of all new members of staff in their inductions and reiterated to staff under their supervision through team meetings and 1:1s;

That their staff attend training events on health and safety, lone working and risk management as appropriate;

That staff are aware of their own responsibilities with regards to lone working;

A risk assessment is undertaken by each employee before they collect clients and systems are put in place to ensure staff who work alone are safe;

All lone work activities are identified and recorded;

All assessment and safety measures identified are recorded;

All incidents relating to lone working are reported and recorded in line with the Vector24 Incident Reporting Procedures;

An investigation is carried out regarding any incident involving a lone worker and recommendations made to prevent a reoccurrence; and if a risk cannot be made safe two workers must carry out the task, or if not practical to do so the service should be withdrawn.

5.3 Individuals' Responsibilities:

All lone workers have a responsibility to:

Read and comply with the Lone Worker Policy and follow safe working procedures as set out in the policy;

Attend any relevant training at the request of the Operation's Manager or Engagement Support Officer;

Follow procedures introduced for Lone Workers including notifications to the Engagement Support Officer or 'Buddy';

Ensure they inform their line manager of each off-site visit and record full address and postcode details of the location of these, together with a client's or contact's telephone number or other local arrangement where applicable;

Undertake telephone or site-based risk assessments prior to making any off-site visits and be involved in the process of identifying safety measures;

Avoid situations with significant risk, as far as is possible and take care of their own and other people's safety;

Report any incidents as soon as possible in line with the Vector24 incident reporting procedures which includes the submission of an incident/accident reporting form via the staff or volunteer website portals within 24 hours; and

Ensure the Engagement Support Officer or Operation's Manager approves any hours worked outside of their standard working hours or the core business hours of the organisation before they are worked.

6. Lone Working Procedures

While many of the same health and safety risks affect both lone workers and other employees, there are other potential risks which are more likely to affect lone workers. These risks should be taken into consideration by all staff (employees and volunteers) prior to lone working taking place and the following procedures and guidelines have been developed to ensure that systems are put in place to assess and minimise any potential risks.

6.1 Risk Assessments

The crucial element in ensuring the safety of lone workers is the risk assessment.

The main aims of the risk assessment are to find out:

1. Whether the work can be done safely by a lone worker.
2. That the lone worker is not put at any greater risk than those who would do the job with another person.
3. If any jobs are too difficult or dangerous for a lone worker to carry out.

Risk assessments assist the Engagement Support Officer, Operation's Manager and lone workers to establish the right level of supervision and control measures required when lone working occurs. For example, some activities may be deemed high-risk and, if appropriate, may require at least two people present.

Procedure

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There are two stages to the risk assessment process:

Stage 1: Identifying risks

Stage 2: Assessing any risk/s identified

The risk assessment procedure involves firstly identifying any potential risks and this must be undertaken prior to any journey or home-based visit throughout all operational schemes, to ensure all associated risks have been identified as far as reasonably practicable.

These risk assessments must be undertaken prior to journeys or home-based visits throughout all operational schemes, including repeat visits, to ensure all associated risks have been considered and mitigated as far as reasonably practicable.

If a risk is identified, it must be immediately raised to the Engagement Support Officer to produce a risk assessment which should be attached to Salesforce. For the journey or visit to proceed, the risk must be formally signed off using the following guidelines. Green Risks can be approved by the Engagement Support Officer, Amber Risks can be approved by the Operations Manager and Red Risks can only be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

For employees and volunteers, it is the individual's responsibility to ensure that the Risk Assessment has been undertaken. The Engagement Support Officer and Operation's Manager who is responsible for volunteers should ensure that a Risk Assessment is completed before their volunteers undertake journeys or home-based visits. Employees/volunteers are also encouraged to use dynamic risk assessments when and where required.

The Risk Assessment will take into account potential scenarios and hazards and is a review of the current situation. Here are some of the questions that will need to be asked:

- Who is the client –name, agency and contact information?
- Does the individual have any issues highlighted as part of referral process e.g. a known mental health problem or a history of violent or aggressive behaviour or known addiction?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is there known substance or alcohol use both historical and current?
- Full address details of the location and contact details
- Useful information regarding the locality
- Will the individual be alone or will anyone else be present, and if so, whom?
- Does anyone else live or have use of the property and if so, whom?
- Details of animals / pets in the house (normally and during the visit itself)
- Smoker / Non-Smoker

The assessment form also prompts the employee to document the date and time.

6.2 When a risk is identified

Where a risk is identified, the individual should report this directly to the Engagement Support Officer or Operation's Manager and the following control measures should be discussed and

implemented if deemed necessary. It is important to be clear about the basic ideas underpinning the notion of risk.

Risk relates to a negative event (i.e. violence, self-harm/suicide or self-neglect) and covers a number of aspects:

- What exactly is the risk – or risks – to be prevented?
- How severe will the outcome be if it does occur?
- How likely is it that the event will occur?

When a risk or multiple risks are identified it is important to get as much information as possible about the risk/s so a more detailed risk assessment can be carried out. Collecting more information from the referrer, service users and/or carer/s about the risks identified should be the first step. If this provides additional and relevant information, it should then be discussed directly with the Engagement Support Officer or Operations Manager or Vector24 contact to review and agree on next steps with the following control measures to be discussed and implemented if deemed necessary:

- Risk assessment information shared with all persons who may also be at risk
- Visit postponed until further risks are assessed
- Risk Assessments should be carried out wherever possible over the phone.

However, in cases where the risk/s identified are unpredictable, variable or unclear such as when a service user has a mental health problem which may produce violent or aggressive behaviours, a telephone risk assessment may not be appropriate and it may be necessary to carry out a home visit to obtain a more detailed assessment of the risk/s identified and how any control measures can be effectively applied. In these cases, the risk assessment process involves working with the service user to help characterise and estimate each aspect of the risk/s highlighted. Information about the service user's history of violence, self-harm or self-neglect, their relationships and any recent losses or problems, employment and any recent difficulties, housing issues, their family and the support that's available and more general social contacts could all be relevant. It is also relevant to assess how a service user is feeling, thinking and perceiving others not just how they are behaving. Efforts should be made to ascertain the service user's own views about their trigger factors, early warning signs of disturbed/violent behaviour and other vulnerabilities, and the management of these.

Any risk assessment that requires a home visit must be authorised by the Operations Manager or Chief Executive Officer and where necessary involve at least one other individual to be present at all times during the visit. Employees are encouraged to undertake dynamic assessments where appropriate. The outcome of the risk assessment must be discussed with the Operations Manager or the Chief Executive Officer before any service is put in place.

Any referrer should be made aware that any referrals received where a risk/s is identified would be subject to the Vector24 risk assessment process and any provision of service would be subject to satisfactory completion of this process.

Internally Vector24's CRM system Salesforce (subsequently referred to as 'the databases') must be updated to reflect that a risk assessment has been highlighted. Currently the databases are the main control points for highlighting risks to others. Details should be added onto the database associated with each client and should include information relating to the date, the member of staff's name and

details of the risks highlighted. If there is insufficient space, staff should make reference to the location of an uploaded electronic copy of the actual risk assessment (or paper copy if no electronic copy is available).

Risk assessment information on the databases should be reviewed prior to journeys or home-based visits throughout all operational schemes. This is also necessary for repeat visits to ensure that any additional information that has been added since the member of staff last visited is reviewed.

It is imperative that the employee documents the date and time of the visit and updates their public folder or equivalent to ensure that they are easily contactable, and the Engagement Support Officer or Operations Manager knows where they are (see 6.3 below re monitoring staff movements).

If at any point a member of staff or volunteer feels uncomfortable about undertaking a visit or if any potential risks are identified individuals should discuss this with the Engagement Support Officer, Operations Manager or Vector24 contact.

6.3 Monitoring staff movements

To ensure that the organisation is always aware of staff, workers and volunteer's whereabouts, local reporting systems should be put in place for each individual attending appointments. All employees are required to update the Engagement Support Officer where applicable with all appointments ensuring the records also state the location and date/time of any visits or events they will be attending.

For employees and volunteers who work out of office hours, either in the evenings or weekends, there must be an agreed local protocol in place for informing either the Engagement Support Officer or Operations Manager of their whereabouts which is specific to the Vector24 contact.

6.4 Buddying

Where possible, employees should be teamed with a nominated person (or 'buddy') for them to contact before and after the lone working visit. This will ensure, for example, if an employee is attending a visit, they are able to advise their buddy of the appointment/visit/event they are attending and what time they would expect to return to their home. The employee would then let their buddy know when they have returned safely. Notification could take the form of a brief phone call or mobile phone text to confirm that they have returned from their visit.

If no contact has been made after a few hours of the end of the visit and contact cannot be made with the individual, the buddy would be responsible for raising the alarm. Within office hours (Monday to Friday 09:00-17:00) the alarm can be raised to the Engagement Support Officer, Operations Manager or Chief Executive Officer. Outside of office hours the alarm should be raised to the local police by calling 999.

In some circumstances such as where the lone worker is returning home, a family member or friend may be nominated as their buddy under this policy.

For out of hours work, employees and volunteers should leave details of their route and journey in an envelope in their home, ensuring no personal details are provided in line with GDPR.

For example: “I am traveling from my home address (EH7 4HQ) to pick up a service user at (G3 6AX) and take them to a one hour appointment at Combat Stress in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. My job number is J-23456 and I will be travelling the route as per my Sat Nav along the M8 motorway and back.”

6.5 Volunteer interviews

As with staff interviews and meetings with external agencies, initial volunteer interviews should take place in a neutral and public location rather than the volunteers’ home. Further visits to the same volunteer (if required) can take place in the volunteer’s home if necessary, providing the appropriate risk assessment has been completed. An alternative would be to ask a colleague to also be in attendance at the interview.

7. Home Based Lone Working

Staff working from home can also work alone from time to time and should therefore also be aware of lone worker procedures. It should be encouraged, where possible, to standardise working hours and patterns.

8. Incident Reporting

All incidents in relation to lone working should be reported through the Vector24 Incident Reporting procedure (which is the completion of an Incident/Accident Reporting Form found on the staff and volunteer sections of the website) and also to the Engagement Support Officer, Operations Manager or Vector24 contact. Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or unsafe are reported through this system and management should advise all volunteers of this procedure as part of their induction.

9. Training

Vector24 has various training courses available for employees and volunteers including a mandatory health and safety training day for all new employees. During inductions and 1:1s staff training needs should be identified with their line manager and appropriate action taken.

10. Guidance for Lone Workers

The following constitutes general guidance to familiarise yourself with in the event that you are lone working.

- Ensure you have read the lone working policy and procedure;

- Keep to your schedule of work, if you are delayed for any reason let the Engagement Support Officer or Operations Manager know;
 - Make sure you have all of the emergency phone numbers you need on your phone preferably on 'speed dial';
 - Make sure you attend any training sessions the organisation provides to keep you safe when working alone;
 - Driving to an appointment;
 - Avoid parking in a deserted place or where there is poor lighting;
 - Secure the vehicle when you leave it and ensure that you do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle;
 - Remember to charge and take your mobile phone with you, if you have one; and
 - Ensure you fill your car up with fuel before your journey, if you are running low;
 - Keep all valuables in your car out of sight;
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- During a lone working visit:
 - Ensure that you have the correct address for the person/organisation that you intend to visit;
 - Report into your buddy after the visit;
 - Ensure that your telephone or communication equipment is within easy reach;
 - If you reach the site/location and feel at risk or uncertain then **do not enter the premises**. Tell the client that you have received a phone call or text message requesting that you return to the office immediately and that you will call to reschedule the appointment as soon as possible. Apologise for any inconvenience and leave;
 - Always follow the person you are visiting into the house/building rather than leading the way yourself;
 - Be aware of all exit routes in case you need to leave in a hurry; and
 - If there is an animal/pet at the site request that it is put into another room or secured for the duration of the visit.