



Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy Lone Working Policy and Procedures

Policy Adopted 7 September 2026

Next Review 7 September 2027

Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy has a duty to look after the health, safety and welfare of its employees this includes a duty of care to reduce, as far as reasonably practicable the risks associated with lone working within the workplace and when working online from home or an alternative environment. An alternative environment can mean:

- Walk and talk therapy
- Working outside in the fields, paddocks and forest areas
- Working from home with a client online
- Working at a client's home
- Working within a school setting

What is a lone worker?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Anybody who works alone is classed as a lone worker.

The aim of this policy is to safeguard both staff and clients at Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy. All staff working with students must ensure that they are fully aware of the procedures in place to protect themselves and the students they are working with.

One-to-one work

Counselling and play therapy takes place in a private, confidential space. My work with clients is one-to one and I carefully consider the welfare needs of clients when with them in a one to one situation. Clients are provided with age/developmentally appropriate advice about managing distressing feelings. Given the nature of the work, there may be a need for comfort and in these moments an appropriate and professional response will be made and in these instances, members of staff at Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy will use their professional judgement based on the child's needs, developmental stage and history.

Please refer to our Safe Touch Policy September 2026

Work at Wick Yard – in room and in the environment around the Yard

Where there are no other members of staff around, I will have access to a phone and help can be quickly summoned if needed. Telephone numbers can be found on the emergency board in the office and feed room at Wick Yard.

Sometimes activities are planned in areas where there are fewer adults around. Ie in the woodland or on map guided dog walks. These are an important part of our sessions and when this happens others on site at Wick Yard may be informed that this is a planned activity.

Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy responsibilities to lone workers

I will carry out a health and safety risk assessment. This highlights areas where further action may be needed to remove or minimise the chance of incidents occurring.

Lone workers may be affected by many of the same health and safety risks as other workers. However, there are potential risks which are more likely to affect lone workers.

Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy will:

- Ensure lone workers have no medical conditions which may make them unsuitable for the lone-working role they have been assigned.
- Be aware that some tasks may be too difficult or dangerous to be carried out by an unaccompanied worker.
- Provide a level of supervision - such as regular visits - for lone workers.
- Put contact procedures in place for emergencies so that the alarm can be raised and
- prompt medical attention provided if there is an accident.
- Make provision for lone workers who may be faced with a risk of violence..

Alison Smith Counselling and Play Therapy staff who work alone, have a responsibility to:

- ■ Take reasonable care to look after their own health and safety.
- ■ Always have a mobile phone on their person and charged appropriately.
- ■ Safeguard the health and safety of other people affected by their work.

- ■ Co-operate with their employer's health and safety procedures.
- Use tools and other equipment properly, in accordance with relevant safety instructions and
- any training they have been given.
- Not misuse equipment provided for their health and safety.
- Immediately contact their commissioner or MASH directly if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Lone Worker Responsibilities When Working Remotely – Online Client Sessions

I will always ensure that I :

- Work from a confidential setting, which other people in your home / space / environment do not enter, and where your own contributions and client cannot be overheard.
- Have an uninterrupted space (no one can walk in and interrupt).
- Check in with my client to ensure that they have a private and confidential space where they feel comfortable and will not be interrupted or can be overheard
- Will bear in mind that there can, on some occasions, be a 'disinhibition effect' while working online and that I client may share deep material quite quickly. Conversely, working online can also be difficult for some clients and I will check in regularly with them to find out how they are experiencing sessions
- Ensure that clients are kept safe and within their window of tolerance, mindful that noticing regulation levels can be difficult online
- Make good time for ending sessions appropriately, giving the client time to ground and return to the here and now
- Video recording is not permitted under any circumstances
- Always leave your video camera on during your session.
- Orientate my face towards my screen, towards the camera and more specifically that the client feels appropriate eye contact.
- I have spoken about alternative options with your clients, should your internet drop out, possibilities include keeping Zoom on without sound and using your mobile phone whilst your internet is unstable. Ensure that this is contracted prior to or during your first session.
- Respect time boundaries as you would in the room with a client, ensuring that you begin and end on time.
- Best practice would be to ensure that you have your waiting room enabled, so that your client joins at the time contracted and nobody else can enter the online platform without an invitation.

Working from a client's home

My work generally happens from Wick Yard or from home if working online, however, in rare instances, I may agree to visit a client's home. I will carefully assess the reasons for a client requesting that I work from their home and may agree to do so if there is no possibility of them getting to me. I will talk to the referrer about this and how my session rate will need to reflect travel time and costs too.

In the event that I agree to work from a client's home I will carry out an initial assessment over the telephone and discussion with the client and their family to ensure that we will have a private, confidential space where the client feels comfortable and we will not be disturbed. In some instances, working from a client's home is an interim solution or part of a pre-therapy, relationship-building phase.

When working from a client's home, I will make my session time known to a colleague and partner to ensure my safety and wellbeing.

I will also have an emergency contact for the client and have my mobile phone with me at all times.