



Woodland Pathways

Lone Working Policy

Date created or revised: 0925

Date of next review: 0926

1. Policy Statement

Woodland Pathways recognises that lone working is a necessary component of delivering flexible, high-quality alternative provision, particularly within 1:1, outdoor, and community-based learning environments.

We are committed to ensuring that all lone working arrangements are:

- **Risk assessed, proportionate, and regularly reviewed**
- **Safeguarding-led and compliant with statutory guidance**
- **Transparent and accountable to commissioning Local Authorities and schools**
- **Protective of both learners and practitioners**

This policy is written in line with expectations set by:

- Norfolk County Council Alternative Provision Guidance
- Suffolk County Council Inclusion & AP Standards
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Local safeguarding partnership procedures

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Woodland Pathways practitioners (employed, self-employed, and sessional)
- Provision Leads and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Volunteers or adults acting on behalf of the provision
- All delivery contexts (on-site, off-site, transport, and outdoor environments)

This policy must be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour & Relationships Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct

3. Definition of Lone Working

For the purpose of this policy, lone working is defined as:

Any situation in which a practitioner works without direct supervision or immediate support from another suitably trained adult.

This includes:

- 1:1 sessions with a learner
- Being the sole adult on site or within a defined area
- Delivery in off-site, community, or remote environments
- Transporting learners (where authorised)

Lone working does not remove the requirement for oversight, supervision, and accountability.

4. Key Principles

Woodland Pathways adheres to the following principles:

- Safeguarding is paramount and takes precedence over all operational decisions
- Lone working will be avoided where reasonably practicable
- Where unavoidable, it will be effectively planned, risk assessed, and monitored
- Systems will be in place to ensure timely communication and escalation
- Practitioners will be protected from avoidable risk and potential allegations
- Learners will be supported within safe, appropriate, and supervised environments

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Provision Lead

The DSL/Provision Lead is responsible for:

- Approving all lone working arrangements
- Ensuring robust written risk assessments are in place
- Maintaining oversight of practitioner locations and activity
- Ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed at all times
- Liaising with commissioning schools and Local Authorities
- Reviewing incidents, concerns, and near misses

- Taking action where lone working arrangements present risk

5.2 Practitioners

Practitioners must:

- Comply with this policy and all associated risk assessments
- Inform the DSL/Provision Lead of:
 - Location
 - Session timings
 - Nature of activity
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times
- Carry a charged and accessible mobile phone
- Follow agreed communication procedures
- Report concerns, incidents, or safeguarding issues without delay

5.3 Woodland Pathways

Woodland Pathways will:

- Ensure alignment with Norfolk & Suffolk LA expectations
- Provide appropriate training and guidance
- Maintain systems for monitoring, communication, and escalation
- Review practice following incidents or emerging risks

6. Risk Assessment

Lone working must not take place without a documented and approved risk assessment.

Risk assessments must consider:

6.1 Learner Risk

- Behavioural presentation and SEMH needs
- Known triggers or risk factors
- Safeguarding history
- EHCP requirements (where applicable)

6.2 Environmental Risk

- Location safety (public/private/remote)
- Visibility and accessibility

- Weather and environmental hazards
- Availability of communication signal

6.3 Activity Risk

- Nature of activity
- Level of supervision required
- Equipment and tools used

6.4 Operational Risk

- Duration of session
- Level of isolation
- Transport arrangements

Risk assessments must be:

- Reviewed regularly
- Updated following any incident, concern, or change in circumstances
- Shared with relevant staff and, where required, commissioning bodies

7. Lone Working Procedures

7.1 Pre-Session Requirements

Prior to lone working, practitioners must:

- Confirm session details with DSL/Provision Lead
- Ensure risk assessment is current and appropriate
- Confirm emergency contacts are available
- Ensure communication systems are operational

7.2 During Sessions

Practitioners must:

- Work in open, observable, or risk-assessed environments
- Avoid isolated or enclosed settings unless specifically approved
- Maintain clear professional boundaries
- Follow agreed session structure and safety plans
- Implement de-escalation strategies where required

7.3 Post-Session Requirements

Practitioners must:

- Complete check-out procedure (call/text/system confirmation)
- Confirm safe completion of session
- Record any concerns, incidents, or safeguarding issues

Failure to check out will result in escalation procedures being initiated.

8. Communication and Monitoring

Woodland Pathways operates a formal lone working communication system, including:

- Mandatory check-in / check-out procedures
- Agreed contact methods (phone, message, digital system)
- Escalation process for missed contact
- Increased monitoring for higher-risk sessions

This ensures that practitioners are never working without oversight.

9. Acceptable Lone Working Practice

Lone working is acceptable only when:

- Risk assessed and authorised
- Communication systems are active
- Safeguarding risks are mitigated
- Environment is appropriate
- Practitioner is confident and supported

10. Unacceptable Practice

Practitioners must not:

- Undertake lone working without approval
- Work in areas without communication access
- Deviate from agreed plans without informing leadership
- Transport learners without authorisation
- Place themselves or learners at unnecessary risk

11. Safeguarding Considerations (KCSIE-Aligned)

All lone working must comply with safeguarding requirements.

Practitioners must:

- Maintain professional curiosity and vigilance
- Avoid situations that could lead to allegations or misinterpretation
- Ensure transparency and accountability at all times

Any safeguarding concern must be:

- Reported to the DSL **immediately**
- Recorded in line with safeguarding procedures
- Shared with commissioners where required

12. Lone Working in Outdoor and Alternative Provision

Due to the nature of Woodland Pathways provision:

- Lone working may occur in woodland or outdoor environments
- Additional controls must include:
 - Defined boundaries
 - Environmental risk planning
 - Emergency procedures
 - Clear communication protocols

13. Transporting Learners

Transporting learners:

- Must be risk assessed and authorised in advance
- Must comply with safeguarding and insurance requirements
- Should be avoided unless essential

14. Accidents, Incidents and Emergencies

In the event of an incident:

- Follow emergency procedures
- Contact emergency services where necessary
- Inform DSL/Provision Lead immediately
- Complete incident reporting documentation

15. Incident Reporting and Review

All incidents, including:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Behaviour incidents
- Near misses

Must be:

- Recorded promptly
- Reviewed by leadership
- Used to update risk assessments and practice

16. Quality Assurance and Oversight

Woodland Pathways will:

- Monitor lone working practices
- Audit records and risk assessments
- Review trends and incidents
- Ensure continuous improvement

17. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following incidents or safeguarding concerns
- In response to changes in:
 - Norfolk/Suffolk LA guidance
 - National safeguarding legislation

Woodland Pathways ensures that all lone working arrangements are **safe, proportionate, and subject to robust safeguarding oversight**, meeting the expectations of commissioning Local Authorities and safeguarding partners.