



Lone Working Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BUGB Guideline Leaflet 10: Health and Safety p8 states:

As part of their routine risk assessment process churches need to consider the particular risks that arise for lone workers or volunteers. This will often be the Minister who will probably visit the church building quite frequently. As with any other risk churches need to identify the potential hazards and put appropriate controls in place to minimise those risks.. Lighting at the front door of the church and the Manse is often an important safety issue. It is also important to think about how a Minister or other volunteer working alone will be able to make a safe exit from their home or office, if a visitor becomes aggressive or violent.

People should not undertake repairs in a building if they are alone, or if nobody else knows that they are in the building. This is especially important if the task involves ladders or working at height. It is about planning carefully and making sure somebody knows what time you plan to finish – and making arrangements to ‘phone them when you get home safely. Mobile phones are useful but making a specific arrangement when undertaking specific visits for repairs is a vital safeguard – a person may not be able to use their phone if they are injured.

1.2 Alone in Safety (Controlling the risks of solitary work):

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73> tells us that: “Lone workers face the same hazards at work as anyone else, but there is a greater risk of these hazards causing harm as they may not have anyone to help or support them if things go wrong.”

A lone worker is:

‘Someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision’.

Is it legal to work alone and is it safe?

Employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers, and this applies to any contractors, volunteers or self-employed people. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to any other person, including to those people who work alone.

It will often be safe to work alone. However, the law requires us to think about and deal with any **health and safety risks** before people are allowed to do so.

2.0

POLICY STATEMENT

The Minister, Officers and Deacons as representatives of the Membership acknowledge that there will be occasions when lone working is desirable or unavoidable. We have developed the guidelines below in order to anticipate and reduce potential risks to safety.

These guidelines will be available on our website : www.eastwoodbaptist.org.uk

Any member of staff, volunteer or contracted worker will be directed to be aware of the guidance and supported to ensure that is followed.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Establishing a healthy and safe working environment for lone workers can be different from organising the health and safety of other workers. Some things to consider in ensuring lone workers are not put at risk include:

- assessing areas of risk including violence, manual handling, the medical suitability of the individual to work alone and whether the workplace itself presents a risk to them
- requirements for training, levels of experience and how best to monitor and supervise them
- having systems in place to keep in touch with them and respond to any incident.

Employees and some self-employed workers also have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

3.1 Section 16 of the Eastwood Baptist Church Health and Safety Policy states:

“Risk assessments will be undertaken and appropriate guidance given for the protection and safety of persons working alone in the church premises, travelling to and from the church premises, accepting persons into their home, handling cash and other valuables.”

There is no legal requirement to conduct a specific, separate risk assessment for lone workers. However there is a duty to include risks to lone workers in our general risk assessment and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary.

4.0

GUIDELINES

RATIONALE	ACTIONS
Involving workers when considering potential risks and measures to control them.	Consultation with those likely to be lone working and raising awareness of this policy
Taking steps to ensure risks are removed where possible, or putting in place control measures, for example by carefully selecting work equipment to ensure the worker can perform what is required safely.	Be aware of who is going to be lone working and what is being done so that a risk assessment can be undertaken and any controls put into place
Instruction, training and supervision	Ensure all lone workers are given appropriate instruction and training and supervision where required
Reviewing risk assessments periodically and updating them after any significant changes, such as new staff, processes or equipment	Risk assessments will be reviewed annually and after any changes
Risk assessment should enable decisions on the right level of supervision for lone workers	The church Safeguarding Policy and guidance must be followed when children under 16 years old are involved
Normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents should be taken in to account when lone working.	Lone workers should be aware of appropriate actions in the event of emergencies

Consideration has been taken into how to control the risks by thinking about who will be involved, where the work will happen and what triggers might be more of an impact for lone workers.

4.1 The lone worker and other people:

How experienced is the worker in their role and in working alone?	This will help determine if support required
Has the worker received relevant training?	If not this should be organised
Are there any reasons why the worker might be more vulnerable, for example are they young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee.	Consider if the vulnerability means they should be discouraged from lone working
Who will the lone worker be in contact with, for what reasons and how does this impact on the risk?	Visits should be prearranged and no lone working with anyone unknown

4.2 The environment the worker is in and the equipment they are using:

Does the workplace present a specific risk to the worker, such as operating equipment alone or lifting objects too large for one person?	No worker should take unnecessary risks. Lone working in this way must be avoided.
Is the work in a rural or isolated area?	A car should be used in these circumstances and someone else made aware of the planned visit.
Is the worker going into someone else's home or premises?	By arrangement and not alone to someone unknown. No 'cold calling'.
Is there a safe way in or out for one person working outside normal hours?	Consider lighting and ease of leaving a place safely.
Does the worker have adequate and reliable means of communication and a way to call for help?	A charged personal mobile phone should be taken on all lone working with someone aware of the activity being undertaken.
How could the work trigger an incident?	
Is the work a security role, for example having authority over people and enforcing rules?	Those undertaking visits or receiving visitors on behalf of the church should be courteous, sensitive and avoid conflict
Does the work involve handling cash, asking for payment or removing goods or property?	Treasurer and those from organisations who handle money need to take care as to where this is done and how cash is stored and banked.

5.0 Stress, mental health and wellbeing

Lone working can negatively impact on employees' work-related stress levels and their mental health. For example, the Stress Management Standards include factors such as relationships with, and support from, other workers and managers. If these are not managed properly, they can lead to work-related stress.

Being away from managers and colleagues could mean good support is more difficult to achieve. Putting procedures in place that allow direct contact between the lone worker and their manager can help. Managing work-related stress relies on understanding what is 'normal behaviour' for an employee and recognising abnormal behaviour or symptoms at an early point. (www.hse.gov.uk/stress/signs.htm).

If contact is poor, employees may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned, which can affect their performance and potentially their stress levels or mental health.

5.1 contact with lone workers:

- agree how to keep in touch with lone workers through regular meetings, or provide other opportunities to share concerns
- include lone workers in social events and work or team updates

- ensure lone workers are included in any consultation on changes – they may have unique implications for them
- make sure lone workers are included in any training that is required.

Lone Working can also aggravate pre-existing conditions, and problems at work can bring on symptoms or make their effects worse. Whether work is causing the health issue or aggravating it, we have a legal responsibility to help our employees.

5.2 Work-related mental health issues must be assessed to measure the levels of risk to staff. Where a risk is identified, you must take steps to remove it or reduce it as far as reasonably practicable.

If a lone worker has a pre-existing mental health condition reasonable adjustments may need to be made to their work or workplace and this may require additional interventions, including those required by the Equality Act 2010:

6.0 Work-related violence

Any form of violence against workers is unacceptable and may affect their psychological as well as their physical health. Lone working does not automatically imply a higher risk of violence but it does make workers more vulnerable. The lack of nearby support from a colleague means that lone workers may be less able to prevent an incident from occurring.

Some of the key violence risks in the workplace can include:

- working in locations where there is a known high risk of violence;
- late evening or early morning work when there are fewer workers around;
- when workers, such as security staff, hold positions of authority over customers or clients;
- alcohol and drug use by clients or members of the public lone workers have contact with;
- carrying money and/or valuable equipment.

7.0 Training in personal safety, which may include conflict resolution, can help a worker recognise situations where they may be at risk and to take appropriate steps to avoid or manage the risk.

Other measures to consider include modification or design of the work environment, if appropriate, to avoid workers being isolated and providing work equipment such as devices designed to raise the alarm in an emergency which can be operated manually or automatically, eg phones or radios.

Employers should have measures in place to support any worker who has been subject to an abusive or violent incident – workers should also play an important part in identifying and reporting incidents.

The consequences of violence to lone workers can impact on businesses in several ways including staff turnover, low productivity and damage to business reputation.

The impact of violence on a lone worker can lead to work-related stress, which may have serious and long-term effects on their psychological, physical and mental health.

8.0 Can someone work alone if they have a medical condition?

Medical advice should be sought if necessary. Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may put additional physical and mental burdens on an individual

9.0 What if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?

Assessment of the risks should identify foreseeable events.

Emergency procedures should be established, put in place and employees should be trained in them.

Regular and realistic practice should take place to allow quick and effective action to ease the situation and reduce the consequences.

Risk assessment may indicate that some lone workers should carry first aid equipment and/or may need first aid training (including how to administer first aid to themselves). They should also have access to adequate first aid facilities.

Emergency procedures should also include appropriate guidance on how and when lone workers can contact their employer.

10.0 What if a lone worker is working from home?

The same responsibility for the safety and health of employees who work from home is as for any other employees.

This means providing supervision, education and training, as well as implementing enough control measures to protect the homeworker. Liability for accident or injury of a homeworker is as for any other employee.

11.0 Training

Training is important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in uncertain situations. It may also be crucial in enabling people to cope in unexpected circumstances and with potential exposure to violence and aggression.

Lone workers are usually unable to ask more experienced colleagues for help, so extra training may be appropriate. They need to be sufficiently experienced and fully understand the risks and precautions involved in their work and the location that they work in. Training should be relevant to the work activity.

Limits should be set as to what can and cannot be done while working alone. Ensure workers are:

- competent to deal with the requirements of the job
- suitably trained in the use of any technical solutions provided
- able to recognise when to seek advice from elsewhere.

12.0 Supervision

The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues.

The level of supervision needed is a management decision, which should be based on the findings of a risk assessment – the higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required.

Lone workers may need to be accompanied at first where they are:

- new to a job;
- undergoing training;
- doing a job that presents specific risks;
- dealing with new situations.

13.0 Monitoring

Any monitoring system needs to be embedded into an organisation so it is well understood by workers. Clear procedures must be in place because effective means of communication are essential.

These may include:

- supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone;
- pre-agreed intervals of regular contact between the lone worker and employer, using phones, radios, email etc, bearing in mind the worker's understanding of English;
- other devices designed to raise the alarm in an emergency which can be operated manually or automatically;
- implementing a robust system to ensure a lone worker has returned to their base or home once their work is completed

14.0 Responsibilities of workers

Workers have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions at work. They must co-operate with employers and co-workers to help everyone meet their legal requirements.

If workers have specific queries or concerns relating to health and safety in their workplace, they should talk to their employer, manager/supervisor or a health and safety representative.

Some employers use dynamic risk assessments for lone working situations. This is where workers themselves make operational decisions based on risks which cannot necessarily be foreseen. This is not a substitute for a comprehensive risk assessment.

When a risk assessment identifies circumstances where a lone worker may have to undertake a dynamic risk assessment, they must:

- receive training on how to make that assessment;
- consider the range of possible control measures and what action to take;
- get support for their decisions.

If they're self-employed Health and Safety law may not apply to them but they will need to check at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/self-employed/what-the-law-says.htm>

As their employer (for example, if we have contracted them to work on our premises) we will still be responsible for their health and safety.

15.0 SUMMARY

The Trustees of Eastwood Baptist Church recognise that there will be many instances when lone working is undertaken. The advice above should be read and understood by those who are working alone in the regular course of their church duties.

Anyone who will be working alone should ensure that another responsible person [family member, colleague etc.] is aware of the activity and location and give an agreed time for reporting back that the visit/ task is finished and that they are leaving church premises or returned home safely.

No lone working should ever be undertaken if there is risk of harm. All lone workers should carry a mobile telephone to use to call for help.