



Working Alone Policy

August 2012

Version Control:

Version	Date	Author	Sent to	Reason
1	April 2009	Health and Safety Manager – Steve Dean	Initial version – sent to Lone Working Group and various H&S Groups.	First Draft – for discussion
2	September 2009	ditto	Directorate H&S Lead Officer	Proof reading
3	November 2009	ditto	H&S Groups	Draft for consultation
4	March 2010	ditto	Governance Services Manager	For review
5	April 2010	Governance Services Manager – Catherine Halford	H&S Manager	For review
6	June 2010	Governance Services Manager – Catherine Halford	Corporate Health & Safety Group / Schools Health and Safety Group	First stage approval
7	August 2010	Health and Safety Manager – Steve Dean	Operation Leadership Team	Approval of Policy
7.1	August 2012	Head of Governance Services	Health and Safety Manager	Policy Refresh

Solihull MBC Working Alone Policy and Procedure

CONTENTS

Page

Section One SMBC Policy

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Scope of Policy	1
1.3	Legislation and Standards	2
1.4	Working Alone Policy Statement	2

Section Two Organisation

2.1	Roles and Responsibilities	2 - 4
2.1.1	The Employer	
2.1.2	Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Head Teachers / Line Managers	
2.1.3	Corporate Health and Safety Support Team	
2.1.4	Directorate and Schools Health and Safety Groups	
2.1.5	Employees	

Section Three Arrangements and Guidance for Working Alone

3.1	Local Management	5 - 6
3.2	Supporting Policy and Guidance	6
3.3	Communication	6
3.4	Date of Application	6
3.5	Equalities	6
3.6	Planned Date of Review	6
	Checklist for Working Alone Risk Assessment (GUIDANCE ONLY)	7- 10

SECTION ONE – WORKING ALONE POLICY

1.1 Introduction

The Council recognises that there are many situations where employees may be required to undertake work on their own and in some cases, this may constitute all, or a significant part, of their working week. This might include employees who work:

- separately from others in the same building e.g. in a reception area, in basements or storage areas, remote work areas in schools and other buildings
- away from their fixed base without colleagues, e.g. drivers, visiting other premises or people in their homes
- at home
- outside “normal” hours e.g. caretakers, cleaners, teachers and others who may work early or late to meet workload demands

The Council recognises that working alone may put people in a more vulnerable position. For example, it may be more difficult for them to summon help if things go wrong or if their health and safety is at risk.

The Working Alone Policy forms part of the Council’s overall Health and Safety Policy. It provides a comprehensive picture of how Solihull MBC complies with its legal obligations and takes responsibility for managing the health and safety risks associated with working alone to ensure, as far as reasonable practicable that lone workers are not be put at more risk than any other employees.

For the purposes of this Policy, lone working is defined as "***work in any situation in which the ability to summon assistance may be impaired***".

The Policy is set out in three parts:

Section One contains the **Policy Statement** which sets out the Council’s commitment to managing health and safety as it relates to employees working alone.

Section Two describes the **organisation** and states who is responsible for what.

Section Three describes the day to day **arrangements** in place to achieve the aims set out in the Policy Statement.

1.2 Scope of Policy

Anyone might find themselves working alone, therefore this policy applies to all employees, whether permanent, agency or temporary staff.

The Working Alone Policy has been developed in consultation with recognised Teacher Associations/ Trade Unions to provide a fair, consistent and supportive framework for the effective management of lone working.

1.3 Legislation and Standards

Working alone is not prohibited, although, sometimes the law requires at least two people to undertake certain work e.g. work in confined spaces, work on live electrical equipment and work that involves using unsecured ladders more than two metres above the ground.

The relevant applicable legislation and standards include:

The **Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974** sets out a duty of care for employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work. This includes lone workers.

The **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**: requires employers to undertake suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks to the health and safety of employees whilst they are at work. This includes the additional risks associated with lone working.

Employers are also under a duty to provide:

- facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations;
- suitable equipment and training in their use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations.

1.4 Working Alone Policy Statement

In relation to lone working, the Employer (whether this is the Council or the School Governing Body) will:

- **identify** and **assess** the significant risks associated with working alone;
- **involve** and **consult** staff or their representatives when undertaking the required risk assessment process;
- provide appropriate **training** and **information** to raise general awareness and equip both managers and employees with the necessary tools to effectively identify and reduce risks associated with working alone;
- take steps to **check** control measures are in place (examples of control measures include instruction, training, supervision and issuing protective equipment);
- **review** risk assessments annually or, as few workplaces stay the same, when there has been a significant change in working practice;
- undertake **monitoring** of working alone activities / operations.

SECTION TWO – ORGANISATION

2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Personal safety is a responsibility shared by the Employer, managers and individual employees. The following describes roles and responsibilities in relation to working alone operations / activities.

More detailed responsibilities for managing health and safety arrangements generally, can be found in the Council or School's Health and Safety Policy.

2.1.1 The Employer

Overall responsibility for health and safety rests with the employer. This varies as follows:

- a) for core council staff, the employer is the Council;
- b) for staff in community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units the employer is the Council (also referred to as the Local Education Authority);
- c) for foundation schools, foundation special schools and voluntary aided schools, the employer is usually the Governing Body.

The Council and/or Governing Body delegate the work required to meet their health and safety responsibilities to the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Head Teachers and Line Managers (as appropriate), with advice and support from the Corporate Health and Safety Support Team. However, the employer retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the Working Alone Policy is implemented.

2.1.2 The Chief Executive / Corporate Directors / Head Teachers / Line Managers

The Chief Executive / Corporate Directors / Head Teachers / Line Managers will ensure that:

1. The risks associated with working alone are identified, properly assessed and shared with individual employees.
2. Effective management action is taken to minimise the potential risks of working alone, including:
 - Making sure lone workers have no medical conditions which make them unsuitable for working alone.
 - Providing adequate information, instruction, training and supervision for lone workers to ensure that individuals understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions.
 - Undertaking occasional site visits, particularly if there are high-risk activities.
 - Making regular contact by telephone or radio and making arrangements for individuals to contact a supervisor if they need additional guidance.
 - Implementing appropriate arrangements to ensure that a lone worker returns to their base or home at the completion of a task away from the normal workplace.
 - Implementing appropriate arrangements for dealing with any emergency, particularly out of hours incidents.
 - Providing appropriate first aid facilities.

- Making staff aware of the Council's corporate Warning Marker system for employees who undertake home visits to check addresses and be aware of any potential risks.
3. Employees adhere to safe systems of work and any injuries or incidents relating to working alone activities are reported and investigated with remedial action taken where necessary.
 4. Arrangements for working alone are regularly monitored and reviewed

2.1.3 Corporate Health and Safety Support Team

The Corporate Health and Safety Support Team will:

1. Develop, maintain and review the Working Alone Policy and Procedure.
2. Ensure appropriate implementation of the Working Alone Policy and Procedure through health and safety audits and inspections.
3. Ensure appropriate health and safety awareness and training is available to staff.
4. Provide assistance (as appropriate) to complete local risk assessments.

2.1.4 Directorate / Schools Health and Safety Groups

The Directorate/Schools Health and Safety Groups will:

1. Provide support and advice to relevant Head Teachers / Line Managers on the identification, assessment and management of risks associated with Working Alone activities / operations.
2. Review surveys, data, trends, priorities and other information relating to lone working, as required, and make recommendations on ways to further reduce the likelihood or impact of identified health and safety risks.

2.1.5 Employees

Employees have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and must:

1. Take an active part in the development of any working alone risk assessment.
2. Report to management (in confidence) any personal conditions which may be detrimentally affected by any working alone operation / activity
3. Accept opportunities to attend training and receive additional support if appropriate.
4. Comply with any information, instruction and training that is provided in relation to lone working.
5. Ensure their own health and safety is not put at risk by taking appropriate safety precautions when working alone, including for example:
 - Not working at heights on a ladder or steps.
 - Not going into lofts or any other spaces in which they might become trapped
 - Not doing any tasks involving hazardous tools or materials.
 - Locking the doors and closing the windows, where possible, to prevent intruders.
 - Making themselves aware of the nearest fire exit and first aid kit.
 - Making sure someone knows where they are and their estimated time of arrival home.

SECTION THREE – ARRANGEMENTS

The following section explains the day-to-day arrangements that are in place for the management of working alone operations / activities across the Council and in Schools. These arrangements apply to all employees.

3.1 Local Management

Establishing safe working for those working alone is no different from organising the safety of other employees. Head Teachers and Line Managers already have a responsibility (as set out in the Council or individual School's Health and Safety Policy) to provide a safe working environment and to ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for work activities they control.

However, for lone working, the working arrangements and related risk assessment must take account of any additional risk factors including (but not necessarily limited to) the following:

- the possibility of accidents or sudden illnesses when there is no-one to summon help or provide first aid;
- the threat of violence;
- the possibility of a fire;
- the possibility that individuals working alone may attempt tasks which cannot safely be done by one person e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment;
- the danger of being accidentally locked in a room or building.

To help managers identify the full range of potential risks, the Corporate Health and Safety Team has developed a [checklist of typical hazards](#) faced by lone workers.

Deciding what measures to put in place to manage the hazards associated with working alone activities / operations should be based on the level of risk that employees may be exposed to. In this respect, the following categories of risk have been assessed in relation to lone workers:

- Low risk – those employees who occasionally work alone; may include working at home or travelling between sites on SMBC business, once or twice a week. This will not involve work in remote areas, or places with which contact may be difficult or where the need to maintain contact with the office will be minimal.
- Medium risk – those employees who regularly work alone as part of their role; may include one or two visits during the day to carry out their associated work activity / operations, possibly in locations where contact may be limited.
- High risk – employees who work alone for the majority of their day; may include those who work outside of standard office hours or in remote areas with minimal contact. Could include areas of poor communication for mobile phones or lack of public telephones in rural areas or where problems have previously been encountered, such as violence or vandalism or potentially hostile/sensitive situations.

Local risk assessments will determine the extent of the arrangements that need to be in place to manage the risk of lone working in each service area and it is part of a manager's role to ensure that their employees are provided with suitable and sufficient training and information on these procedures.

To assist managers decide what arrangements they should have in place to manage the risks of working alone, the Corporate Health and Safety Support team has developed a **checklist of the typical control measures** depending on whether employees are assessed as being at low, medium or high risk from working alone.

3.2 Supporting Policies & Guidance

The Council has a range of supporting policies and guidance documents in place, to assist in the managing of Employees Working Alone and any associated risks. These are available on the Health and Safety Intranet pages and include:

- **Corporate Health and Safety Policy**
- **Risk Assessment Policy**
- **Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy**
- **Violence at Work**
- **Managing Stress at Work Policy**
- **Driving at Work Policy**

3.3 Communication

Internally, the Working Alone Policy (and any future revisions) will be launched through Core Brief to ensure that all staff are aware of its existence and their responsibilities. It is also available on the Health and Safety Intranet pages.

HSE leaflets and guidance booklets will be used to inform staff of good practise.

Please contact the Corporate Health and Safety Support Team on 0121 704 6328, for further information.

3.4 Date of Application

Since May 2010, with a Policy refresh in August 2012.

3.5 Equalities

As part of the refresh of this Policy, two specific questions about any potential equalities implications have been considered:

- firstly, whether anything in the policy impacts on a person's ability to access Services; and
- secondly whether it is possible that people could be disadvantaged by an employee not using the policy properly.

It has been concluded that there are no direct equality implications associated with this particular Policy.

3.6 Planned Date of Review

This Policy will be reviewed in 2015.

GUIDANCE BELOW

Checklist of Typical Hazards for a Lone Working Risk Assessment

The following table contains some key questions for Head Teachers/ Line Managers to consider when identifying the specific hazards of lone working. Any that apply, should be referred to in the relevant risk assessment.

Question	Consideration
Does the workplace present a special risk to a lone worker?	<p>The environment, location, contents, unfamiliarity etc. Consider access requirements, transport and parking arrangements, etc.</p> <p>Consider security issues – lighting at entrances and exits, can windows and doors be secured to prevent unauthorised access?</p> <p><u>Remember</u>: lone workers working at another employer’s workplace are still the responsibility of his/her own employer.</p>
Does the activity present a special risk to a lone worker?	<p>Consider the equipment, process, substances, location, time, members of public, handling cash etc.</p> <p>Are there any hazards specific to the work process, which may create particular risks for lone workers e.g. electrical systems, confined spaces etc?</p>
Is there a safe way in and out for one person?	<p>Consider both in the course of normal work and in the event of an emergency etc.</p> <p>Lone workers are particularly at risk if a fire occurs because they are less likely to be aware of a fire until they themselves see or smell it. Lone workers should always be aware of the appropriate access routes out of the building from their place of work.</p>
Can the equipment be adequately controlled and handled by one person?	<p>Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.</p>
Can one person safely handle all goods, substances and materials?	<p>Consider whether there are any flammables, toxins, pathogens etc.</p>
Is the working environment appropriate?	<p>Consider heating, lighting, ventilation etc.</p>
Are the welfare facilities adequate and accessible?	<p>Consider access to toilets, washing facilities, drinking water etc.</p>

Question	Consideration
Does the lone worker have first aid facilities or access to them?	Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.
Does the lone worker have access to a reliable and suitable means of communication or other means of summoning assistance if required?	Consider telephone, mobile, radio, inactivity alarm etc.
Is there a risk of violence associated with the work activity or location?	<p>Consider any previous history of verbal threats, violence, interaction with public, etc.</p> <p>Properties/clients to be visited should be checked on the corporate Warning Marker System prior to visiting.</p>
Is the lone worker more at risk due to their gender or inexperience?	<p>Consider maturity, familiarity with procedures, knowledge and experience, particularly young and new workers.</p> <p>Where women travel alone, ensure they have been trained in the precautions to take when using public transport and car parks. In some cases, the fitting of a car telephone or emergency device may be necessary.</p>
Has the employee received sufficient information, instruction and training to enable the work to be undertaken safely whilst alone?	<p>Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision and lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced to fully understand the risks and precautions required. Consider for example, emergency procedures, out-of-hours procedures, personal safety training, etc.</p> <p>Lone workers should be competent to deal with unusual or new circumstances beyond their training, and know when to stop and seek advice.</p>
Is the worker medically fit to undertake the work alone?	Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual. Medical advice should be sought if necessary.

Question	Consideration
<p>What arrangements are in place to provide adequate supervision?</p>	<p>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 higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should not be left to individuals to decide whether they require supervision.</p> <p>Employees new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. Supervision might include periodic visits, use of local security staff, signing in/out, periodic contact arrangements, open diaries, CCTV, inactivity alarms, 'permits to work'</p>
<p>Are there contingency plans in place should an alert or alarm be raised by a lone worker?</p>	<p>Are these plans well known and rehearsed? Would colleagues know what to do, who to contact?</p>
<p>Are lone workers visiting individuals in their own homes?</p>	<p>Prior to visits of new clients, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous history • Behaviour patterns • Problems with relatives • Use of medication/drugs/alcohol • Obtain information from other colleagues and agencies regarding the client <p>For existing clients, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred location for the meeting – clinic/health centre/home • Preferred time of day for visit considering daylight/evening • Previous attitude of relatives <p>Properties/clients to be visited should be checked on the corporate Warning Marker System prior to visiting.</p>

Checklist of Typical Control Measures for a Lone Working Risk Assessment

The following table contains some typical control measures action for Head Teachers/ Line Managers to consider when managing the specific hazards of lone working. Any that apply, should be referred to in the relevant risk assessment.

Low Risk Controls	Medium Risk Controls	High Risk Controls
Individuals are aware that they must inform their Line Manager of any health issues that may affect them working alone.	In addition, Line manager prompts discussion as part of regular 1:1 meetings.	In addition, pre-employment checks are undertaken for new employees to check existing medical issues or referral to Occupational Health.
Regular 1:1 supervision meetings provide the opportunity to discuss lone working arrangements.	In addition, lone working arrangements are periodically reviewed including site visits where appropriate to observe arrangements in operation.	In addition, there is regular contact with the lone worker whilst they are working alone.
Individuals have reliable, easy access to a telephone or other means of communication.	In addition, individuals have a mobile phone to call the office or family when away from the office or working late.	In addition, individuals have access to an electronic or automatic warning device that operates if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker.
<p>A “buddy system” operates and individuals report their safe return to work or home to the nominated contact. Someone in the office is nominated to make sure everyone has returned safely / is accounted for at the end of each working day. The following response is initiated if the individual does not make contact when expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to contact by phone • Call colleague at home • Contact line manager • Call police 	<p>In addition, a local system operates (e.g. a whiteboard or diary system) to monitor the whereabouts of individuals during the day as well as their expected return time.</p> <p>There is an agreed (and tested) alarm raising protocol in place for staff that may be unable to speak freely e.g. use of a predetermined script that colleagues recognise as a request for emergency assistance.</p>	<p>In addition, consideration is given to personal protective equipment, such as an attack alarm, as well as electronic or automatic warning devices that operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker. This may include tracking devices to ascertain the whereabouts of individuals who work alone in isolated situations.</p>
Individuals know how to access first aid facilities, particularly out on site.	In addition, mobile workers are provided with a personal first aid kit.	In addition, consideration is given to providing individuals with first aid training.
Individuals have received basic health and safety awareness training.	In addition, individuals attend personal safety/aggressive situations training.	In addition, individuals attend stress management training.