

Thame Town Council

Lone Working Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the measures that Thame Town Council considers necessary to manage the risk present when employees are required to work alone.

2. Definition

Lone working includes both members of staff alone in a building and those whose duties involve working outside where there is no close, frequent or regular contact with other colleagues.

3. Policy

The Council will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that:

- employees required to work alone are protected from risks to their health, safety and welfare
- any risks are identified in discussion with the Line Manager and any actions required to mitigate high risks are taken before lone working is undertaken
- employees take responsibility for their own safety and understand that they must remove themselves immediately from any such situation. Such action and concerns must be reported immediately to the line manager.

4. Legal Responsibilities

Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees. In addition, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on the employer to consider all reasonably foreseeable hazards and to take the appropriate action to reduce the possible risk of injury to the lowest level that is practicable to achieve.

5. Who is at Risk

All employees who, as part of their contracted duties, are required to work alone and without direct supervision.

This policy does not set out to identify all the situations where employees may be at risk from working alone but concentrates on describing the arrangements that must be in place to eliminate or manage the associated risks. Lone working itself is not necessarily high risk but the activity that is performed may well be. It is important that these individuals are made aware of the outcome of the risk assessment and informed of all necessary control measures.

6. Assessing the Risk

Line managers are responsible for identifying and assessing the risks of lone working both in terms of the likelihood of causing harm and the severity of the injury. Consideration will be given to whether the activity is one that can be safely accomplished by one person or whether the presence of another member of staff would be advisable. If a risk cannot be

eliminated completely, action must be taken to reduce the risk to the lowest level practicably achievable.

7. Specific Guidance

Line managers should take account of the following factors when evaluating the risk:

- the degree of isolation
- the type of work activity
- the level of supervision and support
- contact or proximity with members of the public

Any person who is recruited for a job likely to involve lone working should be reasonably physically fit and must declare if they have any medical disability that may put them at risk whilst working alone, e.g., hearing impairment, diabetes. A first aid kit should be always readily available in order to render first aid for minor injuries should they be sustained.

All lone workers will have access to a mobile telephone or hand-held radio which must be switched on so that they may be contacted or to summon help should the need arise. For all high-risk activities, e.g., where activity is remote from other people, it is imperative that the employee gives clear guidance to the Line Manager as to their location(s) during the day.

Panic alarms will be offered to lone working staff, but any member of staff may have one if they wish. These can be used to summon assistance in the event of an attack and will disorientate potential attackers.

Lone workers must contact a nominated person in the office before they finish work for the day if they intend to go directly home. If planning to work out of standard hours this must be agreed in advance with the line manager.

8. Duties of the Line Manager

To fulfil its statutory responsibilities, the Council places specific duties on all managers to ensure:

- All lone working activities are formally identified, and appropriate risk assessments undertaken, which identify the risk to lone workers and the control measures necessary to minimise those risks, as far as reasonably practicable.
- Arrangements for lone working are communicated effectively and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone is explicit.
- The lone worker is made aware of the hazards and understands all the necessary control measures that need to be put in place.
- Reasonable enquiries are made to ensure that the lone worker is medically fit to undertake work alone.
- Adequate supervision, instruction and training are in place and that the lone worker is competent. The extent of the supervision is a management decision, which should be established through a risk assessment process.
- Monitoring of lone working practices is in place to ensure that control measures identified in the lone working risk assessment are being adhered to.

9. Employee Duties

All employees have a responsibility to take care of their own safety and to co-operate with Council procedures. Employees should not knowingly place themselves in situations which expose them to additional risk by working alone. If a person finds that they are placed in a situation, which may be considered to be that of a 'lone worker', then they should ensure that their line manager is made aware of the circumstances at the earliest opportunity and then

assist in the process of identifying the steps needed to either prevent the lone worker situation from arising, or, if this is not possible, assist in developing the precautions necessary to ensure their own safety.

Lone workers have a responsibility to inform their line manager if they have any concerns over the effectiveness and efficiency of the agreed arrangements and if there are any reasons why they would not be able to work alone or to continue to work alone in safety.

10. Risk Assessment

The risk assessment process will be undertaken as a collaborative exercise by both the lone worker and their line manager and that the agreed safe working procedures are recorded and communicated to all persons who may be required to work alone and any other employees who have a role in ensuring their safety.

The following outlines the steps that must be taken for a lone working risk assessment:

1. **Identify the hazards** to which the person may be exposed. The hazards are likely to be the same for a particular activity whether lone working or not. The assessment of the risks to which a lone worker may be exposed must consider normal and foreseeable scenarios.

The hazards may be such that the risk cannot be controlled sufficiently and therefore lone working is prohibited. Examples of high-risk activities where at least one other person will need to be present include:

- working on or near water
- power tools and machinery
- working at height
- chemicals which are corrosive, toxic, explosive, flammable or asphyxiant products or reactions.

2. **Identify all persons** who may be required to work alone. Consideration must be given to an individual's ability to carry out their activities safely on their own. Some individuals may be at greater risk than others for example, new and expectant mothers and young persons or those who are new to a role. It may be necessary to make reasonable enquiries to ensure that lone workers are medically fit to undertake the work alone.
3. **Assess whether current controls are adequate**, and if not, consider what additional/alternative control measure(s) can be put in place. Examples of control measures include the provision of suitable training and communication strategies.
4. **Record the findings**. Record the risk assessment findings for any significant risks identified. Ensure that the lone worker is made aware of the findings of the risk assessment.

11. Monitoring and Review

Arrangements which are implemented to ensure the safety of lone workers need to be subject to a monitoring regime which is commensurate with the risk, by their line manager. Risk assessments are to be reviewed if any significant changes take place, following an accident / incident or following any concerns being raised. Any review should make sure existing control measures are adequate and check if any additional controls are needed.