



# HEADCORN PARISH COUNCIL

## Lone Working Policy

### PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Headcorn Parish (The Council) recognises that some of its employees work alone, and it is, therefore, necessary to ensure the health and safety of such employees in compliance with its legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

All employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers. They also have responsibility for the health and safety of any contractors or self-employed people doing work for them.

This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working,
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone,
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk,
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers, and
- Encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

### THE SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

It applies to all staff, whether full time, part time or temporary workers. It does not apply to Councillors.

### POLICY

We will protect staff from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the Council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone.

### DEFINITION

'Lone Worker' refers to employees who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- Community Liaison Officer who works alone and enters the premises of the public,
- Lengthsmen working alone in tending open spaces,
- Clerk and Assistant Clerks who work alone in the office premises

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.



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## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

### **Clerk**

- Will try to avoid the need for lone working as far as is reasonably practicable;
- Ensure that the worker is competent to work alone;
- Ensure all lone working activities must be formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone works; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;
- Arrangements for lone working must be made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone explained;
- Lone workers must be informed of the hazards and understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place and have the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment;
- Must raise the alarm if staff cannot be contacted or do not return as anticipated;
- Must ensure that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working.

### **Lone Workers (to include Community Liaison Officer, Lengthsmen, Clerks, Assistant Clerks)**

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work;
- To follow any instruction given by the Clerks office or the Council;
- Raise with the Clerk any concerns they have in relation to lone working;
- Carry out risk assessment in accordance with dynamic risk assessment flowchart and from information provided, if applicable, from initial referral;
- Not to work alone where there is inadequate information to undertake a risk assessment;
- Inform the Clerk at the earliest opportunity in the event of any accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone;
- Inform the Clerk of any incident regarding attack by animals whether within a household or in the community;
- To be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine, unanticipated periods where there is no communication;
- To be aware of and know where all exits are;
- If working with another person, to ensure they maintain and share up-to-date contact details.

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

### **Community Liaison Officer**

Due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the role, a risk assessment may need to be completed by the Community Liaison Officer on a case-by-case basis prior to every lone working activity and up-dated as appropriate. The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and communicated, within confidentiality guidelines, to the Clerks Office or Councillors.

### **Lengthsmen**

A risk assessment should be completed by the Head Lengthsman for all projects that would require lone working, including lone working with machinery, and communicated to the Clerks Office or Councillors.



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## **Clerks and Assistant Clerks**

A risk assessment should be in situ regarding lone working within the Parish Office or at home.

People who work alone will, of course, face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles/tasks. However, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:-

- Sudden illness
- Faulty equipment
- Travelling alone
- Remote locations
- Abuse from member of the public
- Animal attacks

## **WAYS IN WHICH LONE WORKING RISKS CAN BE REDUCED**

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the Council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their particular circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the lone worker risk assessment. The plan for Lengthsmen lone working with machinery, and for the Community Liaison Officer, will be more detailed than the Clerk and Assistant Clerks working alone in the Parish office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff.

Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined).

- Signing in and out book
- Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up-to-date with meeting/visit/lone working details.
- Agreed times and method of contact.
- Agreed 'safe phrases' could be considered.
- Agreed communication via email, text, phone (including specialised lone working Apps).

## **STRESS, MENTAL HEALTH, HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

In order to ensure your personal safety, it is important that you share details of any aspects of your health that could lead to increased risk with the public, Clerks office, Lengthsmen, or specific Councillors. You can then jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by your circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with your confidentiality of the utmost importance.

"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." (HSE). These factors have to be managed properly by employers otherwise they can lead to work-related stress. Lone working can make it more difficult to support employees.

Procedures should be in place to allow direct communication between the employee and employer.

"Managing work-related stress relies on understanding what is 'normal behaviour' for an employee and recognising abnormal behaviour or symptoms at an early point." (HSE) An employees' stress levels or

mental health may be affected if they feel abandoned or alone. Therefore, communication is extremely important.



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## **REPORTING INCIDENTS**

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved.
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence, and,
- For any animal attack that occurs, details of the incident and of the animal (if possible) should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action, and
- In all instances, this might also include recording details of any circumstances you think might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support us to review our risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If you feel unsafe, unwell, or become injured call the emergency services if you need immediate assistance. If possible, call the Clerk's office to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

Call the Clerk's office if your plans change because you feel unwell or if you have a domestic emergency when working alone.

*This is a non-contractual policy / procedure which will be reviewed annually.*



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A dynamic risk assessment is a continuous safety practice that allows employees to quickly identify and analyse risks and hazards 'on the spot', remove them, and proceed with work safely. These assessments are performed by regularly observing and analysing high-risk or changing work environments and making quick, yet considered decisions.

## DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

What is Dynamic Risk Assessment?



## DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Dynamic Risk Assessment Flow Chart

Source- HM Fire Inspectorate, 1998

