



ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy Statement

The council recognises that some of our staff work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. 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.
- 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 council 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.

Scope

This policy applies to all councillors and employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract workers, as well as volunteers associated with Alston Moor Parish Council.

Definition

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

- A caretaker who opens and closes the Town Hall either early in the morning or late at night.
- A grounds-person/Handy-person tending to community space.
- Parish Clerk who work alone in the premises.
- Home working.

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

Responsibilities

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

Councillors

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 that all lone working activities must be formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; 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

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work.
- To follow any instruction given by the council.
- Raise with the chair/vice chair any concerns they have in relation to lone working.
- Not to work alone where there is inadequate information to undertake a risk assessment.
- Inform the chair/vice chair or Clerk at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone.

Parish Clerk or chair/vice chair

- To be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine, unanticipated periods where there is no communication.
- Staff should ensure they maintain and share up to date contact details (see below)

Risk Assessments

Parish Clerk must complete (or ensure the completion of) a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to every lone working activity and updated as appropriate. The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and communicated to the clerk or councillors.

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/walking home alone
- Remote locations
- Abuse from members 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 risk assessment. The plan for a grounds-person/handy-person lone working with machinery will be more detailed than an administrator working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff and councillors where appropriate.

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
- Buddy scheme

Buddy scheme

The following information should be written down and kept by the lone worker and their buddy, next of kin and clerk (see the Lone Working Buddy Form):-

- Name and contact details of the lone worker.
- Name, relationship and contact details of the buddy (or an appropriate councillor who will act as a buddy).
- Name, relationship and contact details of the lone worker's next of kin.
- Any 'code word' that would indicate that the lone worker needs assistance.

Note: All these details must be kept securely in line with data protection legislation. If contact details are changed, contact the buddy and clerk immediately.

In circumstances where a buddy system is appropriate as a way of reducing the risks identified in the risk assessment, the buddy must have relevant details about the lone worker, that may include;

- Where the worker is going (address or area if there is no address)
- Details of the purpose (i.e. preparing the hall, grass cutting, meeting)
- Contact details of anyone the worker is intending to meet (any additional contact details for the location the worker is visiting)
- The mode of transport being taken.
- Expected time of arrival on site and leaving site.

The buddy must know what to do if the worker does not return or make contact at the anticipated/agreed time.

Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure personal safety, it is important that details are shared of any aspects of health that could lead to an increased risk with the clerk or specific councillors. This includes pregnancy. A plan can be jointly created to mitigate any potential risks caused by certain circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with confidentiality being of utmost importance.

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(s) 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,
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances thought to have contributed to the incident, e.g., the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator(s), or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support the council to review the risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If the worker feels unsafe, unwell, or become injured they must call the emergency services if immediate assistance is required. If possible, call the clerk, buddy or councillor to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

Call the clerk, buddy or councillor if plans change because of ill health or have a domestic emergency when working alone.

Date of policy: October 2025

Supersedes: Lone Working Policy December 2019

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