

Village Halls Topic Note 16

Lone Working Policy and Procedures for a Community Building

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The term lone working is used to define any working practices that involve an **employee** undertaking duties not in the presence of, or easily accessible to other employees during any or all of their working hours.
- 1.2. Note that while this Policy is drawn up to assist community buildings to address the safety of their employees, it will hopefully also be relevant to the safety of volunteer trustees, councillors and other managers and users of the building, whether employed, volunteers or in a private capacity.
- 1.3. Examples of lone working involving Community Buildings typically include:
 - working at the premises when no one else is present (eg cleaning, caretaking, building maintenance or management, office work)
 - being the last person to leave the premises after other users have departed
 - providing services to the public from the community building (eg parish clerk)
 - travel as part of work for the community building (eg banking, collecting equipment, attending training, visiting vulnerable people at home).
- 1.4. The main issues surrounding lone working relate to health and safety.
- 1.5. Trustees may also wish to obtain ACRE Village Hall Information Sheet 38, A short guide to security in your village hall, or look at the following guide from Orange and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust:
http://business.orange.co.uk/documents/ice/business/orange_lone_worker_guide.pdf
A few halls in Sussex have installed CCTV in response to persistent security problems. AirS staff can put you in touch to share their experience if needed.

2. General Policy

- 2.1. The trustees will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees who work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety. A nominated trustee who is the employee's supervisor will be responsible for overseeing implantation of this policy.
- 2.2. Employees and others will be given all the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise hazards and appreciate risks involved with working alone.

2.3. Hazards which lone workers may encounter include:

- Accidents or emergencies arising out of the work eg when performing tasks at height, using ladders, lifting equipment, spillage of cleaning fluids etc.
- Sudden illness
- The possibility of abuse, threats or assaults by one or more visitors to the hall when no-one else is present,
- Becoming concerned about the presence or behaviour of one or more person outside the hall when leaving the hall at night.
- Working with vulnerable client groups
- The possibility of fire spreading from an unoccupied part of the building.

In addition staff may feel isolated or otherwise require extra support from the nominated trustee.

3. Managing the risks of lone working

- 3.1. No specific legislation for lone working applies but all employees are required under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work act to "take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work".
- 3.2. All employees are required to read the Health and Safety policy, which provides guidance on safe working. Employees are encouraged to speak with the nominated trustee about any specific concerns or queries.
- 3.3. Employees should, as far as possible, avoid working at height (eg using a low stool or small step ladder) without another person present on the premises. Employees must not use ladders unless another person is present and holding the bottom of the ladder.

3.4. Staff working alone should:

- Ensure that they have access to a telephone to call for help if needed
- Ensure they have the telephone numbers of 5 people who can be contacted in case of emergency (eg trustees, family, friends)
- Ensure that doors and windows are secure to prevent unauthorised access
- Ensure that they are aware of their means/route of escape.
- Ensure that keys are secure and not accessible to members of the public
- Call the nominated trustee, another trustee if they are not available, or, if anxious about their safety, the Emergency Services.
- Report any incidents to the nominated trustee as soon as practical after the event.
- Ensure that all windows and doors are locked when leaving the building
- Ensure that all electrical equipment is turned off when leaving
- Ensure that a trustee or employee knows the date(s) and exact times from and to when they are likely to be working alone on the premises.
- Ensure that they have access to a First Aid box.

4. Working at home or from home

- 4.1. Employees working from or at home at times of the day when no other family member is present should ensure that:
 - they are near to a telephone to call for help if needed

- if they become anxious regarding safety, they should call the Emergency Services for assistance
- they report any incidents to the nominated trustee as soon as practical.

4.2. Travel

4.3. Cars used for work (eg collecting supplies) must have sufficient insurance cover and current road tax and if required by law an MOT certificate. They should be roadworthy.

4.4. Staff are expected to drive safely and within legal requirements, this includes not using a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving.

5. Providing services to the public in the community

5.1. If work is needed with individuals and groups in the community should preferably be carried out at the community building or another public building. If visits need to be made to an individual's home a trustee or employee should be notified in advance of the location. Staff should ensure that they are aware of their means/route of escape.

5.2. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified common key risks as:

- Alcohol and drug use by clients and members of the public with whom a lone worker has contact – can make people aggressive and their behaviour unpredictable
- Geographical locations – certain town centres / estates known to have a higher risk of violence
- Late evening / early morning work – fewer people around, greater number of 'unsavoury characters', people under influence of alcohol / drugs
- Nature of job – in some jobs lone workers hold positions of power or authority over clients which can cause resentment
- Client behaviour – for a number of reasons clients can be highly emotional, unpredictable or aggressive
- Other people or situations encountered whilst doing job – these include members of the public, youths, family members, animals
- Travelling, visiting homes and carrying money or equipment.

(taken from Work-related Violence – Lone workers case study – Summary of Key Points, HSE updated 10.08)

5.3. Staff working with children, young people, families and other vulnerable groups should ensure that they maintain professional boundaries at all times to prevent possible allegations of misconduct. Any concerns should be raised with the nominated trustee at any time if urgent.

5.4. At all times staff must ensure that their safety is not compromised. If in doubt, an employee should not enter a potentially dangerous situation, but if they are already in one, they should make an excuse and leave. All such incidents must be reported to the nominated trustee as soon as possible.

5.5. A procedure should be agreed between staff, the nominated trustee and other emergency contacts for alerting them to a potentially dangerous situation. For example, if meeting someone for the first time or there have been previous incidents causing concern, the nominated trustee might ring at a pre-arranged time and during the conversation the lone worker would refer to a "green file",

an “amber file” or a “red file”: Green meaning all is well, amber meaning call me back in fifteen minutes and red meaning call the police.

6. Support and supervision

6.1. Employees should be able to raise concerns and talk over difficult situations with the nominated trustee in the strictest confidence , both in supervision meetings or on a more informal basis. All concerns, however trivial, will be taken seriously. The nominated trustee will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that staff understand and follow policies and procedures
- Organising induction and other training
- Listening to concerns
- Identifying and assessing risks
- Informing and liaising with the police in regard to any threats or incidents of abuse or violence or similar issues (eg drug taking on the premises) which might recur or have wider significance in the community.

7. Incident Reporting

7.1.1 All incidents giving rise to concern must be recorded by the nominated trustee in a book, which must be kept securely at an agreed location, including the date and action taken, in the same manner as the hall’s accident reporting procedure.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for keeping Safe

The chance of being a victim of violent crime is low – violent crimes are comparatively rare and account for a very small part of recorded crime. The best way to cut the risk of attack is to take sensible precautions. Most people already do this as part of their everyday lives.

- Be aware of your environment
 - notice what is going on, who is around, exits etc.
 - trust your intuition and pick up on warning signals that all is not well
 - do not go into an enclosed area without checking who is in there and how to get out again.

- Look confident
 - avoid looking lost or vulnerable
 - if you feel threatened make your way to the nearest place with lots of people and 'phone the police
 - walk in the middle of the pavement facing on-coming traffic
 - if you think you are being followed cross over the street
- Try to blend in with surroundings
 - dress appropriately and don't wear conspicuous jewellery
 - wear clothing and shoes that allow you to make a getaway
 - carry bags close to you & keep keys in your pocket
- Plan journeys
 - check car before travelling – oil, water, petrol etc.
 - obtain full details of destination, check route and obtain contact details
 - if travelling by public transport have backup plans
 - check mobile is fully charged & has relevant numbers entered
 - plan for breaks
 - avoid unlicensed minicabs
- Don't take unnecessary risks
 - Plan ahead and anticipate contingencies
 - allow plenty of time, running late often makes us take chances
 - avoid dark, lonely areas
 - park so that you can make an easy getaway
 - don't draw attention to yourself
 - ask for back-up
- Tell colleagues, friends and family of your plans
 - let people know where you are going and when you are likely to arrive
 - inform people of any change in plans
 - keep your mobile on, it could be used to help trace you
- If you break down:
 - put your hazard lights on and call breakdown company or the police
 - if on the motorway you may be safer standing on the verge rather than staying in the car as there is a risk of collision. If you wish to stay in the car use the passenger seat.