

HARLOW COUNCIL

Addendum to Health and Safety Policy

Lone Working

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Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places specific duties on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst they are at work.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must assess significant risks to employees' health and safety and then implement procedures that will minimise the identified risks to an acceptable level.

Even though employees have their own health and safety duties, an employer cannot transfer the general responsibilities detailed above to employees who work alone.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence, which in serious cases could lead to dismissal.

General Statement

Harlow Council recognises that there are many jobs undertaken where staff will be required to work on their own for varying periods of time.

These can include:

- Working in an office with the door closed within a Council building
- Community Enforcement Officers out and about in housing estates
- Benefits/Housing staff who may have to visit members of the public in their own homes
- Licensing and Environmental Health staff that undertake out of hours enforcement duties
- Working late in a building and then having a responsibility for locking up

This above is not an exhaustive list

The Council is committed to ensuring reasonable control measures are put in place that will minimise the risks to staff working on their own.

Young persons (under 18 years of age) and inexperienced staff, until they are properly trained, will not be permitted to undertake lone working.

Assessing the Risk

Working alone is not illegal but it can, in certain circumstances, bring additional risks to a work activity or work process. Action is implemented in these ways to help control any risks from lone working:

- The Health and Safety Team will produce generic risk assessments/safe working procedures for some lone working activities

- A Staff Safety Register, (SSR), has been implemented and is in place to assist staff when meeting/liasing with members of the public. A Cautionary Contact icon will display to alert to specific measures to be taken prior to contact
- The Staff Safety Register is available for Teams to check whether there have been any previously recorded aggressive incidents at premises where Officers are required to visit or in the vicinity of where staff, are required to work
- Teams with a responsibility for staff that undertake lone working are required to carry out specific risk assessments on those work activities, and to then implement suitable and sufficient control measures
- There are measures in place to support lone working, however, not all processes suit all areas of work. There are team 'What's App' groups, whereby staff are in communication, checking in and out; some areas use lone worker devices monitored by a call centre; working in pairs; use of the Housing 'Stuart' telephone line in an emergency; reporting into HTS Central Control out of hours
- A lone working risk assessment is as much about work processes, the use of equipment and power tools as it is about the environment and location of where work is to be carried out

An assessment of the hazards and risks will help determine whether it is appropriate to continue with lone working, and if so what controls should be implemented

Particular consideration will need to be given to:

- The remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- The level of the likely health and safety risks associated with the work
- The nature of likely injuries or damage to health
- General supervision arrangements
- Line Managers/Supervisors accompanying lone workers from time to time to ensure that risk control measures are suitable and sufficient
- The possibility of interference, such as aggression from other persons (see policy on Aggression at Work)
- Communication between the employee and their base, e.g. Is general communication required? If so, how is this to be achieved?

Are there specific communication arrangements needed in respect of potentially aggressive situations? If so, how is this to be achieved?

- The provision of personal first aid kits
- The use of personal protective equipment

- Training requirements
- The development of Team specific safe working procedures

Defined Working Limits

Teams, if necessary in conjunction with the Health and Safety Team, should establish clear procedures to set limits of what can and what cannot be done while working alone.

Clearly this is difficult to define in general terms, but an example for Licensing might include giving permission to observe whether a premise is breaching its conditions at night, but not to permit staff to enter the premises alone. The general precautionary principle of 'if in doubt, ask your Line Manager' should be advocated.

Review

Lone working arrangements, and control measures, will be reviewed on a periodic basis by individual Teams, normally on an annual basis.

No member of staff under the age of 18 years old will be allowed to work on their own (Lone Working), also no member of staff under 18 years of age will meet a member of the public or interview a MOP alone under any circumstances.

Lone working does not apply to general office duties in a multi occupancy building, where entry and exit to and from the building is controlled for example by a swipe ID card, even if the person is physically working alone in an office, they are not alone in the building.

Summary

Working alone is not illegal, but it can bring additional risks to a work activity. Harlow Council has an ongoing programme of developing policies and procedures to control risks and protect employees. Apart from employees being sure that they are capable of doing the job on their own, the five most important things to be certain of are that:

- An assessment has been undertaken in respect of the potential health and safety risks associated with the lone working
- The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he or she may be exposed
- The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong
- The Line Manager/Supervisor knows the whereabouts of the lone worker and what he or she is doing
- Lone working arrangements are reviewed on a periodic basis

Health and Safety Team
August 2024

Revision History

Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
April 2020		Reviewed and updated	No
August 2024			