LONE WORKER PROCEDURE

Introduction and Aim

The procedure outlines the overarching process for lone working, covering all Directorates and applies to All Public Health Wales NHS Trust staff.

The purpose is to protect staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working. To protect the wellbeing of staff from criminal attacks, abuse or sudden onset of ill health when engaged in lone working situations. The Trust fulfils it legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and outlines responsibilities for the Chief Executive and delegated responsibility as outlined in the Health and Safety Policy.

This procedure supports the Health and Safety Policy.

Supporting Procedures and Written Control Documents

- Violence and Aggression Protocol
- Incident Reporting Policy
- Risk Assessment Procedure
- All Wales Violence and Aggression Information and Passport Scheme

Scope

All persons employed or engaged by Public Health Wales, including part time workers, temporary and agency workers, those holding honorary contracts and those engaged by the NHS Wales Health Collaborative, who experience or supervise lone working as part of their role.

Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessment	Insert link to completed **Integrated Screening Tool**.
Health Impact Assessment	Insert link to completed **Integrated Screening Tool**.
Approved by	Health and Safety Group

Approval Date	9 April 2018
Review Date	31 March 2021
Date of Publication:	16 April 2018
Accountable Executive Director/Director	Huw George, Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director of Finance and Operations
Author	Mark Parsons Head of Estates and Health and Safety / Nicola White, Health and Safety Manager

Contents Page

1 Introduction

Public Health Wales has a duty of care to its lone working staff, both in the community and on its property. Working alone is not in itself against the law and will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers to consider carefully, and then deal with, any health and safety risks for people working alone.

There is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act etc., 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 apply. These require identifying the hazards, assessing the risks, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks identified. Public Health Wales is committed to ensuring this duty is fulfilled, by providing lone workers sufficient information, instruction and training to make them competent to deal with hazards that may be found in the work place.

This procedure covers all Public Health Wales employees, contractors and the self-employed who have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and of others who may be affected by their activities and to cooperate with the employer in meeting their legal obligations.

Within the organisation managers have delegated responsibility for ensuring the pro-active risk assessment of activities within their area/remit for lone workers is completed by competent staff. Managers should promote staff participation in the risk assessment process and ensure that health and safety issues that may affect lone workers are identified and discussed and included on the risk assessment form.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Trust Health and Safety Policy and the Management of Violence and Aggression Procedure and Incident Reporting Policy.

2 Scope

All persons employed or engaged by Public Health Wales, including part time workers, temporary and agency workers, those holding honorary contracts and those engaged by the NHS Wales Health Collaborative.

3   Legislative and national initiatives

- Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- All Wales Violence and Aggression Information and Passport Scheme
- HSE Working alone guidance INDG73(rev 3) published 05/13

4   Definitions

A Lone Worker can be defined as any staff member who carries out their work activity alone without close or direct supervision and out of visual / aural contact with other members of staff who would be available to assist in an emergency.

This includes staff who:

• work at a fixed location;
• work from home;
• are mobile and move from one location to another;
• work with patients in the community;
• work on call or out of hours.

Lone working activities are performed in office, laboratory, hospital, home and community environments by a wide range of staff including, occupational therapists, stop smoking, health protection, receptionists, drivers, cleaners, new-born hearing screeners, not an exhaustive list). Explanation of any key terms used throughout the policy.

The Health and Safety Executive definition is; "Lone Workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision" either in a fixed location or mobile workers. Working alone: Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working –
http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

5 Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall accountability for the management of Lone Workers and for ensuring an effective Trust Lone Working Policy is implemented.

5.2 Deputy Chief Executive / Executive Director of Operations and Finance

The Deputy Chief Executive /Executive Director of Operations and Finance is the Executive Lead for Health and Safety and responsible for ensuring that the procedure is promoted and communicated across the Trust.

5.3 Executive Directors and Executive Team Members / Director of the NHS Wales Collaborative

The Deputy Chief Executive / Executive Director of Operations and Finance will be supported to ensure that an effective Risk Management System is in place within their Directorates/Divisions and Teams. Also responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are completed in line with Trust Policy. Risk controls should be identified that are proportionate to the risk.

5.4 Managers/Supervisors

The line manager/supervisor has explicit responsibility to identify and record all those staff members who are lone workers under their control. The local record of lone workers must be periodically reviewed and updated. The line manager has a responsibility to ensure that the lone worker procedure is implemented and disseminated to lone working staff for which they are responsible. They must ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is conducted in consultation with appropriate people (e.g. lone workers, security lead and health and safety manager), thus ensuring that all risks from lone working are identified and appropriate control measures introduced to minimise, control or remove them.

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring pro-active risk assessment of any lone working tasks or activities within their remit. The risk assessment should identify hazards that the workplace itself presents, and should include the risk to the lone worker of violence and aggression, or from the activity being completed whilst working alone e.g. manual handling, working at height etc. Managers/supervisors should also consider the individuals medical suitability to work alone and where

appropriate refer staff with medical conditions to Occupational Health for advice.

These control measures will include ensuring that lone workers receive sufficient information, training, instructions and advice. The line manager must also ensure that any physical measures are put in place, appropriate technology is made available and, where the safety of lone workers is threatened, that alternative arrangements can be made. The line manager must undertake a periodic review to ensure that all measures are effective and continue to meet the requirements of the lone worker.

If a lone worker incident occurs, the line manager must ensure that the employee involved completes an incident report (Datix), conducts an investigation into the incident and reviews existing control measures. If an incident occurs, i.e. the staff member goes missing; the line manager should contact the police and the trust lead for security.

5.5 Staff

All staff are responsible for taking reasonable care of their own health and safety, and ensuring others are not harmed or injured by their activities. Staff must cooperate with the employer, by reporting health or medical conditions which may make them more vulnerable when working alone. Also discussing safety related issues, and participate in risk assessment when requested.
The key areas for staff are:

- ensure that you perform your duties in a safe way
- follow the Trust policies, local procedures and safe systems of work
- take reasonable steps to protect yourself when working alone
- do not take unnecessary risks
- discuss health or medical conditions with your Manager
- ensure someone is aware of your whereabouts

5.6 Lone Workers

Staff members have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and to cooperate with the Trust under health and safety legislation. This includes making full use of risk assessments, client/patient information, local standard operating procedures, appropriate training and training in the use of any technology issued and advice from their line manager regarding lone working.

Staff should plan appropriately and risk-assess before commencing lone working, undertake continuous dynamic risk assessment of the situation that they find themselves in, being aware of any changing circumstances

and taking necessary action to minimise the possibility of an incident occurring.

Under no circumstances must an employee put themselves at risk. If a situation arises that they are unfamiliar with or in which they feel unsafe, they should withdraw to a designated place of safety and seek further advice and assistance.

If an incident occurs, even if it is considered a minor incident, the staff member must complete an incident form so that the line manager can complete an investigation and review the lone worker risk assessment.

6   Lone Working Undertakings

Management instructions to staff should make it clear that they should not enter into a lone working situation where they feel their safety or the safety of their colleagues/others could be compromised. Staff should not be penalised for not performing their duties if they perceive that their personal security and safety may be in jeopardy. However, this needs to be balanced against providing a good standard of care for the client/patient or undertakings of the Trust. Where there are perceived or real risks, alternative provision should be made, such as arranging appointments in a secure premises or organising accompanied visits.

7   Lone Worker Movements (Whereabouts)

Lone workers should always ensure that someone else, a manager or appropriate colleague, is aware of their working locations and travel arrangements. This means providing them with the address of where they will be working, details of the people they will be working with or visiting, telephone numbers and expected arrival and departure times. Details of vehicles used by lone workers should also be left with a manager or colleague, for example, registration number, make, model and colour.

Arrangements should be in place to ensure that if a colleague with whom details have been left leaves work, they will pass the details to another colleague. If details have been left on a whiteboard they must not be erased until it has been confirmed that the lone worker has returned safely or completed their duties that day. Procedures should also be in place to ensure that the lone worker is in regular contact with their manager or relevant colleague, particularly if they are delayed or have to cancel an appointment.

Where there is genuine concern, as a result of a lone worker failing to attend a visit or meeting within an agreed time, or to make contact as agreed, the manager should ascertain whether they turned up for previous appointments that day. Depending on the circumstances and whether contact through normal means, mobile phone, pager, etc., can be made, the manager or colleague should involve the police.

If it is thought that the lone worker may be at risk, it is important that matters are dealt with quickly, after considering the available facts. If police involvement is needed, they should be given full access to information held and personnel who may hold it, if that information might help trace the lone worker and provide a fuller assessment of any risks they may be facing.

8   Buddy System

It is essential that lone workers keep contact with colleagues and ensure that they make another colleague aware of their movements. Implementing management procedures such as a 'buddy' system can do this. To operate a buddy system, a lone worker must nominate a work colleague as a buddy. This is a person who is their nominated contact for the period in which they will be working alone.

The nominated 'buddy' will:

- be fully aware of the work locations and travel arrangements of the lone worker
- have all necessary contact details for the lone worker, including next of kin
- have details of the lone workers known breaks or rest periods
- attempt to contact the lone worker if they do not contact the buddy agreed
- follow the agreed local escalation procedures for alerting their senior manager and/or the police if the lone worker cannot be contacted or if their buddy within agreed and reasonable timescales.

The following are essential to the effective operation of the buddy system:

- the buddy must be made aware that they have been nominated and what the procedures and requirement for this role are
- contingency arrangements should be in place for someone else to take over the role of the buddy in case the nominated person is unavailable, for example if the lone working situation extends past the end of the nominated person's normal working day or shift, if the shift varies (if applicable), or if the nominated person is away on annual leave or off sick.

8.1   Code Words / Phrases

Code words or phrases can be used to signal for help, for instance if the lone worker calls the base or their 'buddy' and asks … "Did I leave a red file on my desk?" this could be a signal to trigger an emergency response. (This is only an example)

It is important to bear in mind that frequently used or well-published code words and phrases may also be well known to the clients.

9   Escalation Process

It is important local standard operating procedures including escalation process, outlining who should be notified if a lone worker cannot be contacted or if they fail to contact the relevant 'buddy' or manager within agreed or reasonable timescales. The escalation process should include risk assessment and identification of contact points at appropriate stages, including a line manager, senior manager and, ultimately, the police. Any individual nominated as an escalation point should be fully aware of their role and its responsibilities.

10   Management of the Lone Worker Risk

Public /health Wales is required to implement measures to manage, control and mitigate risks to lone workers. The measures should be proportionate to the level of risk. The measures should be achievable, commensurate with the risk identified, and realistic. Any associated costs need to be included not only in terms of resources and purchasing equipment but also staffing, training and expertise. Measures might include removing systemic weaknesses that have allowed these incidents to take place, indemnifying further training needs of staff in relation to the prevention and management of violence, or other training such as correctly identifying and operating any relevant technology.

11   Risk Assessment

The identification of risks relies on using all available information in relation to lone working to ensure that the risk of future incidents can be minimised. This includes from operational experience or previous incidents and involving feedback from staff and stakeholders. It is therefore essential that staff are encouraged to report all incidents, so that a risk assessment can be carried out, appropriate action taken and control measures put in place.

11.1   Key to Risk Assessment

To understand how and why incidents occur in lone working situations and learn from that understanding is key to make improvements to controls and systems to reduce the risk of lone workers. To achieve this, the following factors should be considered and documented; type of incident risk (e.g. physical assault/theft of property or equipment), frequency/likelihood of the incident recurring and having an impact on individuals, resources and delivery of care/or service, severity of the incident: costs to the NHS organisation in human and financial terms, confidence that the necessary control measures are in place or improvements are being made, the level of concern and rated risk, what further mitigation action needs to be taken to ensure that improvements are made and risks reduced.

11.2   Identification of risk for lone workers

The risk identification process should be carried out to identify the risks to lone workers and any others who may be affected by their work. This information is needed to make decisions on how to manage those risks and ensure that action taken is proportionate. Risk factors might include;

- community lone working groups
- working conditions – abnormal and hazardous conditions, such as an isolated work place, poor lighting etc.
- risk to lone workers with medication on their person, particularly controlled drugs
- staff delivering unwelcome information or bad news
- increased risk of violence from service users/clients/patients due to alcohol or drug abuse, drug misuse or non-compliance in relation to their clinical condition or response to treatment, and the risk of violence from their carers, relatives or visitors
- lone worker wearing uniforms, travelling between certain environments or setting and visiting the same destination over a number of occasions especially at the same time
- lone workers carrying equipment that makes them a target for theft or makes them less able to protect themselves
- evaluation of capability to undertake lone working – for example, being inexperienced.

12   Dynamic Risk Assessment

During a lone working community visit, a dynamic risk assessment focuses on reducing the prevalence of a problem. This is done by minimising known or suspected risk factors and by early intervention (when violence

is perceived to be imminent, while it is occurring or immediately post-incident). A dynamic risk assessment can be defined as a continuous process or identifying hazards and the risk of them causing harm, and taking steps to eliminate or reduce them in the rapidly changing circumstances of an incident.

12.1   The dynamic risk assessment involves staff

- being alert to warning signs as covered in appropriate training
- carrying out a '10-second risk assessment'; if staff feel there is a risk of harm to themselves, they should leave immediately
- placing themselves in a position to make good escape, i.e. where possible, being closest to an exit
- being aware of all entrances and exits
- being aware of the positioning of items, including those belonging to the lone worker (scissors, scalpels etc.), that could be used as a weapon
- making a judgement as to the best possible course of action, for example, whether to continue working or withdraw
- utilising appropriate physical security measures (e.g. mobile phone, or other appropriate devices to raise the alarm)
- ensuring that when they enter a confined area or room, they can operate the door lock/release mechanism in case they need to make an emergency exit
- avoid walking in front of service user/patient/client, and not positioning themselves in a corner or in a situation where it may be difficult to escape
- remaining calm and focussed during an incident in order to make rational judgements
- being aware of their body language (as well as that of the service user/patient/client), as there is a risk of exacerbating the situation

12.2   Recognising warning signs

Lone workers should be able to recognise the risks presented by those who are under the influence of alcohol/drugs or are confused, or where animals may be present. Being alert to these warning signs will allow the lone worker to consider all the facts to make a personal risk assessment and, therefore, a judgement as to the best course of action (for example, to continue with their work or to withdraw). At no point should the lone worker place themselves or their service user/patient/client at risk of danger.

13 Dealing with Animals

If there is a known problem with animals at a particular address or location, the occupants should be contacted and politely requested to remove or secure the animal before arrival of the PHW staff. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements should be made to carry out the visit.

Even if there are no known problems with animals, the request should still be made for them to be secured, to minimise the possibility of a reaction from the animal. Alternatively the animal's presence may be disruptive, so it may be prudent to request that it be removed or placed in a different room.

If an aggressive animal confronts a lone worker on a visit to a patient, they should not put themselves at risk. If necessary, they should abandon the visit and report the incident. This information should then be disseminated to other relevant PHW staff to reduce the risk of another incident occurring.

14 Lone Working and Vehicles

Before setting out, lone workers should ensure that they have adequate fuel for their journey. They should give themselves enough time for the journey to avoid rushing or taking unnecessary risks. Items such as bags, cases, controlled drugs and other equipment should never be left visible in the vehicle. These should be out of sight, preferably in the boot of the vehicle. Lone workers should always hold the vehicle keys in their hand when leaving the premises, to avoid being distracted by searching for them when outside. A visual check should be made of the outside of the vehicle. The inside of the vehicle should also be checked for possible intruders before entering.

Once inside the vehicle, all doors should be locked, especially when travelling at slow speed, when stationary at traffic lights and when travelling in high risk areas. Some staff may understandably feel that a locked door may prevent them from escaping or receiving help in the event of an incident. However, modern vehicles and rescue techniques make this less of a factor than it may seem. Lone workers should always try to park close to the location they are visiting and should never take short cuts to save time. At night or in poor weather conditions, they should park in a well-lit area and facing the direction in which they will leave.

They should ensure that all the vehicle's windows are closed and the doors locked. Lone workers should avoid parking on the driveway of the property they are visiting as their vehicle may be blocked in, delaying or preventing escape. The Health and Safety Executive's safe driver training programmes advise that lone workers should reverse into car parking spaces so that the door can act as a barrier.

Lone workers driving alone, especially after dark, should not stop, even for people who may appear to be in distress or require help. The lone worker should stop in a safe in a safe place and contact the emergency services as appropriate. If followed, or concerned that they might have been followed, lone workers should drive to the nearest police station or manned and well-lit building, such as a petrol station, too request assistance.

In case of vehicle breakdown or incident, lone workers should contact their manager, colleague 'buddy' immediately. If they need to leave the vehicle to use an emergency telephone, they should put their hazard warning lights on, lock their vehicle and ensure that they are visible to passing traffic. Lone workers should not display signs such as 'doctor on call' or 'nurse on call' as this may encourage thieves to break in to the vehicle to steal drugs for example. Lone workers should avoid having items in their vehicle that contain personal details, such as their home address.

15   Lone Working Travelling by Foot

Planning before a journey should include determining the safest route for lone workers. When setting off, lone workers should walk briskly, if possible, and not stop in areas that are unknown to them (for example, to look at a map or ask for directions). If they require assistance, they should go into a safe establishment, such as a police station, petrol station or reputable shop and ask for directions or, if necessary, to call for assistance from their manager, colleague or 'buddy'.

Lone Workers should avoid using mobile phones overtly in any area and, if carrying equipment, should ensure that this is done using bags that do not advertise what they are carrying. Lone workers should stay in the centre of pavements, facing oncoming traffic. They should remain alert to the people and environment around them, staying on well-lit paths and areas if possible. They should avoid waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, particularly at night.

If someone attempts to steal what he or she is carrying, they should relinquish the property immediately without challenge. If carrying a handbag or similar, they should consider carrying their house keys and mobile phone separately.

16   Incident Reporting

All incidents including lone worker device malfunction involving a lone worker should be reported and managed as per the Trust Incident Reporting policy. The lone worker's manager must complete a review of lone worker risk assessments and control measures as part of the incident investigation.

17   Lone Worker Systems

It is essential to recognise that lone worker systems will not prevent incidents from occurring. They will not make people invincible, nor should they be used in a way that could be seen to intimidate, harass or coerce someone. However, if used correctly in conjunction with robust procedures, they add an additional layer of protection for lone workers. Lone workers should still exercise caution even if equipped with such systems and continue to use the dynamic risk assessment process. The requirement for technology should result from risk assessments, pre-or post-incident reviews and analysis of relevant reports and operational information. It is essential that the Health and Safety Manager and the Head of Estates and Health and Safety, with support of the Managers, take responsibility for ensuring that technology is used appropriately and effectively and that it is proportionate to the problem it is intended to address. Technology should not be seen as a solution in itself. Technology, however, can play an important part in helping to protect lone workers. Technology can only be effective if it works alongside;

- a rigorous risk assessment process for managers and staff
- clear and robust management procedures that put in place measures to address identified and potential risks and to deal with incidents when they occur
- managers and staff accepting responsibility for and supporting technology provided for their protection
- the sharing of information from within and outside the NHS on identified and potential risks
- support and proportionate response from the police and technology support services when a lone worker system is activated
- the provision of good-quality conflict resolution training to help staff prevent and manage violent situations
- system-specific lone worker safety training including scenarios that reflect the fact that lone workers have been issued with a device and that support services are in place
- commitment from staff to use the technology appropriately it is essential that lone workers receive appropriate training and instruction in the use of such systems. They must be given

sufficient time to become familiar with lone worker procedures and systems before they are expected to use them in their day-to-day work.

18   Training

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision and control, guidance and help in situations of uncertainty. Therefore, training maybe critical in order to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. Information should be provided to an adequate level to ensure that lone workers understand the risks of their work, the precautions that are needed, including if necessary the use of any equipment provided and what they should do in an emergency.

Training should also be comprehensive enough to ensure that employees are competent to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training, for example, when to stop working and seek advice from a manager/supervisor and how to handle aggression.

A number of courses are available and you must contact the Learning and Development team for information on training packages. These packages are available through e-learning and face to face.

The violence & Aggression Module B, E-learning programme contains a module on Lone Working. The programme is divided is to introduce the learner to the general concept of violence & aggression and personal safety awareness. The programme is divided into 4 sections:

- Personal Safety and De-escalation
- Legal Requirements
- Lone Working
- Precautions against Violence and Security Incidents

Where the use of Lone Worker devices have been risk assessed and deemed essential, training in the use of the devices will be given upon dissemination of devices and in the event of any upgrades / changes to the devices and delivered either in a classroom session or via e-learning. No refresher training is required where staff can demonstrate frequent use of the device.

19   Monitoring and auditing

Regular local monitoring through the review of Datix incidents must be undertaken by the Trust to ensure:

- lone worker incidents are being reported;
- safe systems are in place;
- staff have received adequate training.
- the devices are being used correctly and to acceptable levels. (Staff should be reminded of their legal obligations under Health and Safety legislation to encourage compliance)
- any operational issues are identified, reported and further control measures identified and put in place

Additionally, the Health and Safety Manager will ensure that monthly reports of user activity will be forwarded to line managers to ensure;

- successful implementation of this procedure
- that devices are being utilised effectively;
- monitor and review any activations that may have safety implications to the user.

19.1   Non Compliance

If any trust employee fails to comply with this procedure, the matter may be dealt with in accordance with the Trusts Disciplinary Policy/procedures.

20   Information Governance Statement

As any incidents reported will be logged into the Public Health Wales DATIX system, access to this controlled environment is on a 'need to know' basis and meets Information Governance requirements.

Managers and staff should be aware that whilst entering information into DATIX about an incident, if possible the individuals identity should be anonymised, where reasonably practical, so that it person identifiable information does not appear in any management DATIX report.