

Lone Working Policy

This document is relevant to:	
Trustees	✓
Staff	✓
Volunteers	✓

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to underline safety issues and contribute to the provision of a safer working environment for staff, Trustees and volunteers working alone.

Policy

Definition of Lone Working

Any paid member of staff, Trustee or volunteer who carries out their work in a location away from the office base and in isolation from colleagues, or who is travelling between work locations on Dorset Mind business, or who is working alone in the office, or is working from home. This may be on a regular or occasional basis.

Legal Context

Dorset Mind aims to comply with its obligations under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA '74) to maintain a safe working environment for all staff. Under this Act the employer is under a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees are safeguarded (s.2 HASAWA '74).

Employees in turn have a duty to ensure that by their own acts and omissions, they do not put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others. They must also co-operate with their employer to enable all statutory duties to be met (s.7 HASAWA '74).

Regulation 12 of the Management and Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 requires all employees to act in accordance with information and training given. Employees must inform their employer of any shortcomings in the health and safety arrangements.

This policy is also grounded in employment law under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This gives protection (for example against dismissal or disciplinary action) in defined circumstances to employees who disclose information to a third party about an alleged wrong doing.

Arrangements for Securing the Health and Safety of Lone Workers

Consideration of the risk factors involved in working with service users is built into the assessment and support planning processes of the organisation. Individuals are expected to use these systems to make a sensible judgement as to whether they consider it safe to work alone with a service user (or group of service users) in any given setting, including a re-appraisal of the risks when the situation changes.

All individuals must familiarise themselves with the principle of Dynamic Risk Assessment and this process should be practiced whenever an individual is lone working to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken in order to avoid danger. All individuals should make safety plans for any lone working activity and all Trustees, staff and volunteers likely to be lone working will be joined into the buddy scheme unless they opt out.

Where individuals work alone they need to remain alert to their own safety and that of their colleagues. To do this they should:

- ensure they do not take unnecessary risks
- seek and follow advice from Dorset Mind
- follow all health and safety procedures
- comply with requests for information on their whereabouts from Dorset Mind
- report any incidents including threats and potentially dangerous situations
- make Dorset Mind aware of any relevant medical conditions.

In cases where staff are regularly and routinely working alone, the line manager for the individual staff member will undertake an individual risk assessment on an annual basis. Safeguards may be put in place to counter the effects of working in isolation.

Staff who regularly work alone off-site will be issued with mobile phones and personal panic alarms. They will be responsible for ensuring that the phone is in working order, charged and with sufficient credit; that the personal alarm is also in working order.

Staff should not ordinarily be carrying service users in their own cars. If required, then staff will be expected to undertake a risk assessment and put appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the service users and their own safety.

Dorset Mind will maintain a record containing lone worker details such as description, mobile phone number, vehicle type and registration number, home address and telephone number, next of kin, and any other relevant information. This information can be used to assist in tracing the worker should this be necessary, will be stored securely, and will be available to the Service Delivery Manager, Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees, both in and out of office hours. It will be the responsibility of each lone worker to report changes in their personal information to the Service Delivery Manager who will amend the record. In addition, the record will be checked and updated annually by the Service Delivery Manager.

Where a significant risk to personal safety is identified, lone working should not continue until safe working practice has been discussed and agreed upon by the worker and their line manager. Individuals are NEVER expected to undertake a visit where there is a perceived risk to their personal safety.

Any incidents of hazard, threat, violence or 'near miss;' whilst lone working must be reported by the individual concerned to their line manager by the next working day, or as soon as possible thereafter. Dorset Mind will offer support to the individual and examine whether the existing lone working procedures need to be amended in any way, based on real life experience.

Risk Assessment

Before working alone, an assessment of the risks should be undertaken by the individual concerned with their line manager. Where a lone working situation arises unexpectedly in the course of working, the individual will need to assess the risks in the light of the changed situation. Where possible a manager should be informed and involved in the assessment.

The assessment of risk should consider all relevant information to make a reasoned judgement about risk, including the following issues:

- the service users concerned: mental state, mood, medication, past and recent history of challenging behaviour, known triggers for this
- the nature of the task: size of the group, sensitivity of the task, activities with access to tools/potential weapons, special circumstances or history of problems associated with the activity (eg service users arriving under the influence of drugs or alcohol)
- the environment: location, isolation, security, access and exits, any risks the building itself poses, eg faulty lighting and heating systems
- communication: reliability of the technology provided eg mobile phone, alarm systems and ability of worker to manage the risks
- transport: can lone worker manage transport arrangements of self and for service users where required.

Once the potential hazard(s) and degree of risk have been identified, a judgement needs to be made whether the risks can be managed or reduced to an acceptable level. If the outcome of the assessment is that safe working practice cannot be sustained, the lone worker should cease until agreed adequate safeguards can be put in place. In the meantime, support arrangements may need to be put in place for users until the service can be resumed.

Decisions not to proceed with working alone should at all times be based on a risk assessment which identifies that safe practice cannot be undertaken. The decision should wherever possible be made in conjunction with the individual's line manager. However, where this is not possible, individuals are NEVER expected to proceed where there is a perceived risk to their safety.

The Buddy System

Lone workers must ensure that their buddy knows when they will be working alone, the exact location of where they will be working and with which service user(s). In the absence of their buddy, the line manager will fulfil this role or delegate it to another senior colleague.

Lone workers must use the 'Buddy System' to advise departure and return from each visit/session.

Lone workers must inform their Buddy of the time they expect to return from each visit/session. If a lone worker fails to return or to check in at that time, the Buddy should alert the line manager or other senior colleague to assess the situation and take appropriate steps in response – this response is likely to vary according to circumstances. In the event that no senior colleague is available, then the Buddy should take steps they feel appropriate.

Information Sharing and Recording

Staff have a duty of care for each other and must promptly communicate any risk from service users to their line manager or other senior colleague when not available. The line manager (or other senior colleague) will consider what action needs to be taken in response to this risk and will ensure that the staff group are informed promptly and appropriately and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Staff will be expected to routinely share information about service users and incidents with each other where it is relevant and with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Lone workers must report incidents such as accidents and near misses, including all incidents where they feel threatened, in writing (normally via email) to the Service Delivery Manager, with a copy to their line manager. The Service Delivery Manager will ensure these details are entered into the Dorset Mind incident log. This includes incidents of verbal abuse.

Monitoring and Review

Lone Working Practice will be monitored through the supervision process, at team meetings, management meetings and at other times as required, for example when an incident occurs and learning needs to take place.

Individual practice will be appraised through the staff appraisal system.

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review, and certainly not less than once every 2 years.

Responsibilities

The **Executive Committee** is responsible for:

- ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working
- providing resources for putting the policy into practice
- ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed.

Managers and Health and Safety Representatives are responsible for:

- ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy
- taking all possible steps to ensure that lone workers are at no greater risk than other employees
- ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly
- putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone
- ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updating and refreshing this training as necessary
- managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigations and recording incidents
- ensuring that appropriate support is given to individuals involved in any incident
- providing a mobile phone, and other personal safety equipment, where this is felt to be desirable.

Employees, individual Trustees and volunteers are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions
- following guidance and procedures designed for safe working
- reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate
- taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy

- reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

Associated Policies and Procedures

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The equality impact of this policy has been considered and Dorset Mind believes that it complies with its commitment to equality as stated in its Equality Policy

Policy Ownership

Policy Name	Version	Doc ref
Lone Working Policy	1.0	Lone Working Policy

Policy Owner	Chair of Trustees
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Approval Status

Date adopted by Trustees	February 2016		
Date published	February 2016	Date for next review	February 2018

Consult the Dorset Mind website for the latest version of this policy.

Document Control

Reviewers

Name	Position
Chris Price	Chair of Trustees
Mandy Nicholson	Staff
Jane Kilpatrick	Trustee

Change History

Issue	Date	Author	Reason
1.0	Feb 16	Chris Price	New policy