WEST BEDLINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL

Lone-Working Policy
West Bedlington Town Council

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LONE-WORKING POLICY

1. Introduction

West Bedlington Town Council recognises that its employees are required to work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community, in isolated work areas and out of hours. The purpose of this policy is to protect such staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working. The Council also recognises it has an obligation under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health & Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999, for the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees.

2. Scope of the policy

The policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of the Council's employees.

3. Definition of lone workers

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision". This covers all of the Council's employees: the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk, all of whom are required to carry out their duties for all or part of their working day working in isolation.

4. Aims of the policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far is reasonably practicable
- Ensure that appropriate training is available to all staff in all areas that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone
- Ensure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Clerk to the Council

The Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council 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 Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of this policy
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy
- 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 are given appropriate information, instruction and training
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents

5.2 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions
- Co-operating by following rules 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

If the lone worker cannot telephone the Clerk to report an incident, they should contact the Chair or Deputy Chair. It is at the lone worker's discretion whether they let visitors into the Community Centre or not, and that decision will be fully supported by West Bedlington Town Council.

6. Risk assessment

Risk assessment is essential to good risk management. Assessment will be carried out for and by all staff whose working practice makes them vulnerable. This includes staff that are site-based but work in isolation as well as mobile staff whose work takes them out into the community.

Recommendations will be made to eliminate or to reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable. A risk assessment will be carried out and documented in a risk assessment form.

Risk assessments for site based lone workers will include:

- Safe access and exit
- Risk of violence
- Safety of equipment for individual use
- Channels of communication in an emergency
- Site security
- Security arrangements, i.e. alarm systems and response to personal alarms
- Level and adequacy of on/offsite supervision

Risk assessments for mobile lone workers will, additionally, include:

- Travelling between sites
- Reporting and recording arrangements
- Communication and traceability; and personal safety/security

Following completion of the risk assessment, consideration will be given to any appropriate action that is required.

7. Incident reporting

An incident is defined as "an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health or damage".

In order to maintain an appropriate record of incidents involving lone workers, it is essential that all incidents be reported to the Clerk who will prioritise each incident and identify any immediate action. Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or 'unsafe' (even if this was not a tangible event/experience) are reported. This includes incidents of verbal abuse. If the lone worker cannot telephone the Clerk in such an event, they should contact the Chair or Deputy Chair. It is at the lone worker's discretion whether they let visitors into the Community Centre or not, and that decision will be fully supported by West Bedlington Town Council.

8. Contacting/involving the Police

The Council is committed to protecting staff from violence and assault and will support criminal proceedings against those who carry out assault. All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to the police and will be supported by the Council throughout the process. Except in cases of emergency, employees should in the first instance inform the Clerk of any incident immediately. The Clerk will thereafter take responsibility for contacting the police to report the details of the incident.

9. Support for staff

Employees working for the Council should know that their safety comes first. Staff should be aware of how to deal with situations where they feel they are at risk, or unsafe. Staff should also be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response. The Clerk will ensure that all lone workers training needs are assessed and that they receive appropriate training.

10. Immediate support following a violent incident

In the event of a violent incident involving a lone worker, the Clerk will immediately ensure that the employee receives any necessary medical treatment and/or advice.

The Clerk will also consider whether the employee needs specific information or assistance relating to legal or insurance purposes. The Clerk will also ensure appropriate written and verbal reporting of any violent incident.