

# **Corporate Guidance on Lone Working**

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## **1 Introduction**

Changing work patterns within Merton mean that more and more staff could be working alone. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HASAW) Section 2(1) places a duty on every employer to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of employees.

Additionally, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR) places a duty on employers to consider hazards and reduce the risk of injury to employees so far as is reasonably practicable.

## **2 Who are lone workers and what jobs do they do?**

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They are found in a wide range of situations, as described in this policy and from The Health and Safety Executive's publication (HSE INDG 73 (rev)).

Examples of permanent or temporary lone workers in Merton include workshop and maintenance staff, architects, surveyors, solicitors, grounds maintenance, cleaners, construction workers, security and heritage staff, teleworkers, computer room, filing room, domestic, delivery and social work staff etc. Also, people who work at home, early or late, at night and at weekends, or who lock up / unlock buildings or parks on their own at the beginning /end of the day.

## **3 Legal Requirements**

Legislation requires that in specific circumstances a minimum of two staff must always be involved in the workplace and specifies that a safe system of work should be developed and followed, such circumstances include:

- Entry into confined spaces.
- Using ladders which cannot be secured and require footing.
- Certain fumigation work and other work involving substances hazardous to health.
- Working with explosives.
- Unloading of petroleum spirit at petrol stations and other places.
- Certain construction work, e.g. erection of scaffolding
- Work involving trainees and young people who have not received sufficient training and achieved an appropriate level of competence.

## **4 Assessing and Controlling risks**

There is no general legal prohibition on lone working, the general duties of the Health and Safety At Work etc Act and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations still apply and employers must manage the risks to ensure the workplace is as safe as is reasonably practicable.

It is important that all those with line management responsibilities including Assistant Directors, Heads of Service, managers and supervisors talk to their staff and their safety representatives, as they are a valuable source of information and advice.

Managers must also consider the individual capability of their staff, as this will ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls are chosen and put in place.

Remember that consultation with staff and their representatives on health & safety matters is a legal duty.

Control measures should include instruction, training, supervision and personal protective equipment. Managers and Heads of Service should take steps to check that control measures are used and reviewed regularly.

When the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be undertaken safely by an individual worker, arrangements for providing help or back up should be put in place. Advice can also be sought from the Corporate Safety Services on specific circumstances.

In cases where an individual is required to work at another employer's workplace, the individual's manager must contact the host employer to discuss arrangements for the safety of the individual and obtain copies of the host employers risk assessments and all other relevant information.

The lone worker's manager will then undertake the risk assessment and share this with the host employer and agree on the control measures to be implemented.

## **5 Safe working arrangements for lone workers**

Establishing safe working procedures for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff members. Managers and Heads of Service should look at all the circumstances relating to the work their staff undertake, look at existing standards and guidance relating to those tasks and evaluate them against the background of working alone. Managers should also take into account existing risk assessments relevant to the tasks to be performed.

Further guidance is available on the intranet at: [Corporate Safety](#)

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other staff members. This may require extra risk control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and all foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, violence, verbal abuse, illness and accidents.

Managers and Heads of Service should identify situations where staff work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to staff members working alone?
- Is there a safe way in and a safe way out for one person? Can any temporary access equipment which is necessary, such as portable ladders, trestles etc, be handled safely by one person?
- Can one person handle all the equipment, substances and materials needed for the task? Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person, or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for safe running of equipment.
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are younger workers especially at risk if they work alone?

## **6 Training for staff working alone**

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision and control. This may be critical to avoid mistakes being made on the day that could lead to panic reactions and unnecessary stress.

Staff working alone must be competent for the work they undertake and fully understand the risks and precautions relating to those tasks.

They should be able to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training, e.g. when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor and how to handle aggression.

## **7 Working Practices**

Merton Council is aware of the potential risks associated with lone working, and requires all such work to be subject to risk assessments and sensible controls to minimise the risks.

- Managers of lone workers are required to ensure that risk assessments are carried out, that the required precautions are taken and that staff do not experience significant adverse reactions as a result of lone working.

- Staff must be reminded of the potential risks associated with lone working, and are required to follow the specified safety procedures and to report any problems to their managers.
- Arrangements should be put in place for the reporting of and back-up of staff working away from base, particularly at the end of the day.
- Systems for raising alarms should be available and the response practised. Vulnerable staff should not be left alone without the ability to raise the alarm. Ideally there should be escape routes to secure areas for such staff.
- Equipment provided for lone task work must be capable of being handled and operated by one person and should be appropriate for the working environment.
- Personal protective equipment may be needed for specific hazards related to the work activity and should be suitable for the task.
- Lone workers must have reasonable access to welfare facilities including water and soap for hand washing, sanitary accommodation and a suitable rest area for eating and drinking.
- Emergency procedures must be in place including first aid and/or medical assistance.
- Lone workers must be suitably fit and healthy to work alone. Advice and assistance can be obtained from Occupational Health via the Human Resources Section.

## **8 Procedures for Managers and Heads of Service**

Managers and Heads of Service will need to put in place departmental procedures and monitoring systems to ensure staff working alone remain safe. They must also communicate these procedures and systems to all staff that require it. Departmental procedures should include the following as a minimum:

- The process by which Managers/supervisors periodically visit and observe staff working alone
- The procedure for maintaining regular contact between the lone staff and supervision using telephone or radio
- The procedure for checking that lone staff have returned to their base or home on completion of work
- Details of any automatic warning devices which operate if specific signals are not received periodically from lone staff
- Details of other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency and which are operated manually or automatically by the absence of activity

## **9 Record of Assessment**

Whilst it is a legal requirement to record significant findings of a risk assessment, where lone workers are concerned it is also advisable to consider maintaining a log of activities and reporting times etc.

## **10 Employees Responsibilities**

All employees have a general duty to take care of themselves and others whilst at work. With regards to lone working, employees should familiarise themselves with the lone working procedures in place in their department and with the risk assessments associated with the work they do.

All accidents and incidents at work must be reported to their line manager using the councils online accident reporting system found on the intranet at: <http://intranetapps/accident/>

Employees must also inform their line manager of any changes to their working practices that may require them to review or modify the risk assessments and control measures.

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