

TITLE: Lone Workers

Lone Worker Policy

PHOENIX HOUSE will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees and self-employed contractors who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety. Measures will also be adopted to protect anyone else affected by solitary working. The Organisation aims to fulfil its obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to maintain a safe working environment for all its employees. Solitary working exposes employees and others to certain hazards. The employer's intention is either to entirely remove the risks from these hazards or, where complete elimination is not possible, to reduce them to an acceptable level.

The person responsible for the implementation of this policy is the Service Manager. The co-operation of management and employees is essential to its success.

It is the general policy of Phoenix House that all employees should be accompanied while working on the premises, nevertheless, in the event that an employee is working alone then the employee is required to take an intercom phone with him/her as well as notify staff in the main office as to their location in the building.

Should an employee be working alone off the premises he or she is required to record in the log book where it is that you intend to go and what time you leave the premises and the time you are expected to return. You are also required to record in the 'Lone Working Log' the name of the service user who you will be supporting while you are away from the Organisation's premises. If the employee is away from PHOENIX HOUSE for longer than one hour, then they are required to phone in, via the mobile phone provided, and every hour thereafter until return.

POLICY STATEMENT

PHOENIX HOUSE will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees and self-employed contractors who are required to work alone or unsupervised for significant periods of time are protected from risks to their health and safety. Measures will also be adopted to protect anyone else affected by solitary working. Solitary working exposes employees and others to certain hazards. The employer's intention is either to entirely remove the risks from these hazards or, where complete elimination is not possible, to reduce them to an acceptable level.

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Arrangements for Securing the Health and Safety of Workers

Assessments for the risks of working alone carried out under MHSWR will confirm whether the work can actually be done safely by one unaccompanied person. This will include the identification of hazards from, for example, the service user group, means of access and/or egress, plant, machinery, goods, substances, environment and atmosphere.

Particular consideration will be given to:

- the possibility of interference, such as violence or criminal activity from other persons
- the remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- any problems of communication

- the nature of injury or damage to health and anticipated "worst case" scenario.

Information and Training

Employees and others will be given all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with working alone.

Employees will be required to follow the safe working procedures devised which will include the provision of first aid, communication procedures and awareness of emergency procedures.

All employees are required to co-operate with these efforts to ensure safe working and to report any concerns to management.

SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK

Policies, Procedures and associated guidelines will be developed, in writing, to cover the following.

1. Required ability of employees, e.g.:
 - professional training
 - qualifications and experience
2. Suitability of equipment, e.g.:
 - Level of personal protective equipment supplied by employer
3. Means of communication, e.g.:
 - Coins/change for use in public call boxes
 - mobile telephones
 - remote manual or automatic alarm system
 - regular visits by management.
4. Provision for treatment of injuries, e.g.:
 - portable first aid kit
 - availability of first aider.
5. Emergency and accident procedures, e.g.:
 - means of summoning help
 - means of raising alarm
 - rescue plans and equipment
 - fire fighting equipment.
6. Supervision for trainees, young people or new recruits, who must be confirmed as competent to work alone before supervision is relaxed to the level of occasional visits or solitary working.

Defined Working Limits

Employers will establish clear procedures to set limits of what can and what cannot be done while working alone.

Clearly this is impossible to define in general terms,

The general precautionary principle of "If in doubt, ask for advice or assistance."

Permits to Work

In certain circumstances, particularly when the risks are considered high or where specific legal requirements exist, some or all of the above procedures may be continued in a written and agreed permit to work, without which the activity may not take place.

SUMMARY POLICY STATEMENT

Working alone can bring additional risks to a work activity. The organisation has developed policies and procedures to control the risks and protect employees, and employees should know and follow them.

Apart from employees being sure that they are capable of doing the job on their own, the most important things to be certain of are that:

- ◆ the lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he or she is being exposed
- ◆ the lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong
- ◆ someone else knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and what he or she is doing.
- ◆ (see form 12-1 as an example of a location monitoring record)

SUMMARY OF DUTIES

The employer is under a general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and to provide adequate supervision (**s.2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**).

Where an employee puts his or her own health and safety at risk, the employer is required to take suitable preventive and protective measures, so far as is reasonably practicable.

This may extend to disciplinary procedures and even to dismissal in extreme cases.

All employees must ensure that, by their own acts and omissions, they do not put at risk the health and safety of themselves or others (**s.7 of HASAWA 1974**). This requirement applies both to conduct during normal working activities and during work outside the employer's premises, for example when travelling with a service user to an appointment.

The duty is wide ranging and requires the employee to comply with agreed systems of work and not to risk injury by cutting corners.

- ◆ **Failure to use personal protective equipment without good reason is an offence.**
- ◆ **Horseplay and practical jokes that may result in injury are a clear breach of law.**
- ◆ **Attempting to undertake a task for which the employee is not trained and authorised, such as taking a service user out alone without authorisation from management, entering a service user's bedroom alone, or making an electrical repair, contravenes HASAWA 1974.**

An employee must cooperate with his employer to enable all statutory duties to be met.

This means that, for example, employees must participate in fire evacuation drills and comply with other arrangements designed to promote their safety.

Indirect activities that can affect health and safety must be taken into account. For example, the use of radios playing music at excessively high volume could mask the sound of a warning signal or alarm.

- ◆ The use of "personal stereos" may distract concentration and render the wearer more likely to make mistakes or errors of judgement that could result in injury.
- ◆ The employee must not recklessly or intentionally interfere with or misuse anything that has been provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare (**s.8 of HASAWA 1974**).
- ◆ It is an offence to take actions such as working with machinery after having removed safety guards or negated safety devices, blocking open fire doors, misappropriating first aid supplies, switching off local exhaust ventilation or discharging fire extinguishers for personal amusement.

All these actions threaten the life and livelihood of the individual concerned and of other people.

Regulation 12 of the Management and Health and Safety at Work Regulations

1992 requires all employees to act in accordance with the information and training that they have been given. They must inform their employer of any shortcomings relation to the health and safety arrangements. Employees who feel that there are significant risks arising from a work activity, should obtain clarification before compromising their own safety by risking exposure to the hazards.

RECORD KEEPING

The standards of safety achieved by individual employees may be conveniently incorporated into an appraisal or review scheme that addresses individual performance. The frequency of review will depend upon the risks involved and the internal structure of the organisation, but usually will be annually.

Records should be kept as a matter of policy regarding issue, servicing and replacement of any clothing or equipment that is provided to enhance personal safety. Examples include personal protective clothing and equipment, communication devices for lone workers and lock-off keys, etc.

For further information please refer to health and safety section the 'Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations', sub section 'Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment' , record No. 220039.