

LONE WORKING POLICY

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Statement of intent

River Tees Hospital School recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves, without close or direct supervision and sometimes in isolated work areas or outside of office hours.

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of staff. The policy outlines lone working procedures and what is expected of employees who undertake lone working.

This policy aims to:

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

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Lone Worker Risk Assessment
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Manual Handling Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Home Visit Risk Assessment

2. Definitions

For this policy, '**lone working**' refers to situations where staff, in the course of their duties, work alone either on or off the school premises and are physically isolated from colleagues, possibly without immediate access to assistance.

Due to the possibility of buildings creating isolated areas, it is possible for a staff member to be 'lone working' with other staff members in the building.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for identifying, evaluating and managing the risks associated with lone working.
- Implementing this policy.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of this policy.
- Taking all possible steps to ensure that lone workers are at no greater risk than other employees.
- Identifying situations where staff work alone and deciding whether systems can be adopted to avoid workers carrying out tasks on their own.
- Ensuring that the relevant 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 lone working.
- Ensuring that staff identified as lone workers are given appropriate information, instruction and training that is updated as necessary.
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through a robust system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.
- Providing lone workers with personal safety equipment, e.g. a mobile phone, where necessary.

Lone workers are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their working.
- Following the school's policies and procedures for safe working.
- Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for advice as appropriate.
- Taking part in training related to lone working as required.
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.
- Seeking the permission of the headteacher before working alone.
- Ensuring they have the necessary equipment with them while lone working.
- Always adhering to all necessary policies and procedures while lone working.

4. Authorisation

The headteacher, in conjunction with relevant staff members, will develop an approved list of lone working activities, outlining situations where lone working may be authorised and the necessary precautions and work methods to be followed.

Staff members will request authorisation from the headteacher to undertake lone working.

Subject to the completion of a risk assessment, lone working will be authorised if it is on the approved list. If the lone working is not on the approved list, it can only be undertaken following explicit authorisation from the headteacher.

5. Risk assessment

Prior to a member of staff undertaking lone working, a risk assessment will be conducted by the line manager.

The risk assessment will cover all work proposed to be undertaken alone and where risk may be increased by the work activity itself or by the lack of available assistance should something go wrong.

Depending on the tasks the lone worker is proposing to undertake, the risk assessment will cover the following as appropriate:

- The staff member's medical fitness and suitability to work alone
- Channels of communication
- Any specific risks related to the lone working activity
- The risk of violence
- Access and egress
- Reporting and recording arrangements
- The ability to trace the staff member's whereabouts
- Situational hazards

6. Procedures for lone workers

A record will be kept in the staff teams area containing details of all staff members that undertake lone working, including the tasks they undertake, where they undertake them and when.

If a staff member is required to work alone with a child or vulnerable adult, they will follow the procedures outlines in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Under no circumstances should a lone worker compromise their personal safety. If a lone worker feels in danger, they will remove themselves from the situation immediately.

Where there is a genuine concern about the whereabouts or safety of a lone worker, the headteacher will use the information held on record to try and ascertain the whereabouts of the worker. If contact cannot be made, the headteacher will decide on the best course of action depending on the circumstances, which could include contacting the emergency services.

7. Home visits

A list of home visits is kept securely in main reception. This record includes details of the following:

- The address the lone worker is visiting
- Details of the persons whom they are visiting
- A known contact number for the lone worker and the persons they are visiting
- How long the lone worker expects to be at the location

Once in place, appointment arrangements should be adhered to. The lone worker will notify their line manager of any changes to their schedule.

Initial visits and any visits deemed high risk, e.g. where there is a history of violence or the location is high risk, will only be undertaken if absolutely necessary and in pairs. In these cases, the lone worker may request a meeting in a more suitable location or to be accompanied by another member of staff. A Home Visit Risk Assessment will be undertaken where necessary.

During a home visit, the lone worker will:

- Carry an ID badge and be prepared to identify themselves.
- Carry out a visual risk assessment when they first arrive at the location. If they feel in danger, they should have an appropriate reason to not enter the house and arrange an alternative appointment.
- Be aware of any animals in the house and ask for them to be secured in a separate room.
- Ensure that they shut the door behind them and make themselves familiar with the door lock, in case an emergency exit is required.
- Not position themselves in the corner of a room or in a situation where it is difficult to escape.

Remain calm and focussed at all times, and keep their possessions close to them.

8. Safeguarding

Where a lone worker is required to work with pupils, physical intervention will never be used.

If a lone worker is required to conduct one-to-one sessions with pupils, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

- A full and appropriate risk assessment will be undertaken prior to any sessions taking place
- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be always adhered to
- Full and ongoing training regarding child protection and the use of reasonable force will be provided to the worker
- Meetings or sessions will never be held in remote or secluded areas
- At least one other member of staff will be informed of when and where a one-to-one session is taking place
- The lone worker will not use 'engaged' or equivalent signs on rooms used for one-to-one session
- Doors will be kept open during sessions – where this is not possible, the worker will ensure both parties are visible through a window
- When holding the session, the worker will talk to the pupil with a desk between them, or otherwise arrange the room or environment to avoid unnecessary physical contact
- Both parties will sit near to the door during sessions
- If a pupil becomes emotionally distressed or angry, the worker will seek assistance, and a record will be kept of the incident

Any allegations against a lone worker will be dealt with in line with the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

9. Training

All lone workers will be fully trained in safe working practices.

Lone workers will undertake additional training that is relevant to their lone working, e.g. first aid.

10. Safety issues

Lone workers will report incidents such as accidents, near misses and threatening situations to the headteacher who will make a record.

Lone workers should raise any safety concerns with their line manager, who will arrange for additional precautionary measures to be put in place.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board and headteacher.