

LONE WORKING

Lone worker procedures

Town Council responsibilities

1. Wareham Town Council has an obligation under the **Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974 (HSW Act)** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW Regulations)** to provide a safe, secure environment for every member of staff. This includes the risk of staff working alone. Employers are also under a duty to provide facilities for first aid under **the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981**. Working alone is not in itself against the law, however the law requires employers to consider carefully and then deal with any Health and Safety risks for people working alone.
2. The Town Clerk has a key role to play in ensuring that risks to lone workers are minimal.
3. These guidelines relate to all staff who are working alone within the premises or within the Parish boundaries. The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that any risks associated with working in isolation are identified and action is taken to remove or reduce those risks.
4. **Staff should bear in mind that although it is the legal responsibility of the organisation to provide safe systems of work, individuals have a responsibility to follow safe working practices. Where individuals work alone, they do need to remain alert to their own safety. To do this staff should:**
 - Ensure they do not take unnecessary risks.
 - Make the Town Clerk aware of any medical conditions that might have developed;
 - Seek and follow advice from the Town Clerk;
 - Follow all health and safety procedures;
 - Comply with requests for information on their whereabouts from Town Clerk or other authorised persons;

- Report any incidents including threats and potentially dangerous situations using an Incident Reporting Form. This form may be found in the Office Incident Report Log together with information on how to complete the form.

Who are lone workers and what jobs do they do?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision either in the General Admin Office (Town Hall) or employed in caretaking/groundsman duties in the community.

Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?

Risks

Some of the issues which need particular attention are as follows:

Lone workers should not be more at risk than other employees. This may require extra risk-control measures. Precautions should take account of the normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. The relevant issues are:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe entrance and exit?
- If equipment is involved, can one person safely handle the work?
- If the work involves handling/lifting objects, is it too much for one person working alone?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are men especially at risk if they work alone?

What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?

Training

Training is especially important where there is limited supervision. Training may be critical to:

- Help avoid panic reactions in unusual situations;
- Ensure that lone workers are sufficiently experienced to understand any risks and precautions fully;

- Ensure that staff are competent to deal with new or unusual circumstances or where incidents occur that goes beyond the scope of the training, either in the office or out in the wider community.

How will the person be supervised?

Supervision

Although lone workers cannot be constantly supervised, it is still the Town Clerk's duty to ensure their health and safety at work. This could be done through:

- Regular contact between the lone worker and another member of staff by telephone;
- Checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of their task.

Accidents / Illness / Emergencies

A risk assessment should identify foreseeable emergencies. The Town Clerk should then ensure that:

- Emergency procedures are established and employees trained in them;
- Information about a dangerous situation/area is given to lone workers;
- Staff have access to first aid facilities;
- Mobile workers carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries;
- The Town Clerk and caretaker/groundsman have appropriate training in first aid;
- Lone workers may require other items of equipment such as torches, personal alarms or a mobile phone.

To look to minimise these risks, the Town Clerk should ensure that

- Local operations policies, systems and guidance are put in place to minimise general risk to cover (a) the General Admin Office and (b) Caretaking, Groundsman and Lengthsman duties.
- All staff are informed of any potential risk;
- There is published a programme of all staff whereabouts and contact numbers which is easily accessible to all members of staff.
- Staff are supported in the realistic assessment of risk;

- Action is taken to eliminate, minimise or transfer the risk;
- In a difficult situation staff may be accompanied by another member of staff; e.g. caretaking/groundsmanship duties.
- All relevant hazards have been identified, appropriate controls chosen and staff consulted in these matters. (Consultation with employees and their representatives on health and safety matters is a legal duty).

If an incident occurs

- Put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. The Town Council does not require you to jeopardise your own safety. It is better to leave and find an alternative way of dealing with the situation;
- If a client/visitor etc. is aggressive but the aggression is not directed at you personally, allow them to “let off steam” and do not allow the situation to become confrontational.
- Never use control and restraint techniques when working alone;
- Use a panic alarm only in situations for surprise purposes only or to alert another member of staff who it is known is working on the premises;
- Call for assistance as appropriate. The Council will ensure that local procedures/guidelines, appropriate to the nature of the workforce, are put in place for responding to incidents.

After the incident has occurred:

- Contact the Town Clerk and return to base (as appropriate to the task);
- Allow yourself time to recover and if necessary seek practical support from colleagues;
- Even after minor incidents your feelings might be difficult to control. This is a perfectly natural reaction. If necessary, take time out to recover, keeping Town Clerk informed.
- Contact the police if appropriate;
- Town Clerk to ensure debriefing on the incident and for any counselling to be undertaken as necessary.
- Share information with others as appropriate to the incident.

- Report the incident through the Incident Report Log. The Town Clerk may wish to investigate the incident further and report to the Council with a view to modifying safety procedures for you and other staff in the future. It is also necessary to record any incident, so that the Town Council has a more secure basis for any legal redress relating to the incident.

Helpful policies and procedures

Guidance on the following may be obtained from the Town Clerk as line manager:

- Health and safety policy
- Bullying, harassment and violence
- Equality guidance
- Records management
- Data protection
- Fire and security/evacuation procedures

Helpful leaflets

These are:

- HSE Working Alone in Safety www.hsebooks.co.uk
- Working Alone – Unison Guidance www.unison.org.uk

Conclusion

It is important that managers talk to staff and their safety representatives, as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen and that as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe working environment is provided for staff.