



## NHS 24 013 - Peripatetic and Lone Workers Policy and Procedure

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## **Introduction**

NHS 24 takes the health, safety and welfare of all staff extremely seriously.

NHS 24 defines a lone worker as “any individual who in the process of undertaking their duties may find themselves working alone or in an area isolated from colleagues”.

NHS 24 recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves without close or direct supervision for significant periods of time. The dangers of working alone cannot always be foreseen or avoided. This policy is aimed at protecting staff so far as is reasonably practicable from lone working risks.

Due to the changing nature of NHS 24 activities it is not possible to provide a policy which covers all aspects of our work, this document has therefore been written to be as wide ranging as possible to support staff and managers.

Generally speaking lone working should not present any greater danger / hazard to staff working alone. However NHS 24 recognises that there are certain risks inherent to our operation which may expose lone workers to higher risk. In such circumstances additional control measures will be identified and implemented.

## **Scope**

This Policy applies to all NHS 24 staff, who, as individuals, in the process of carrying out their duties on behalf of NHS 24, may find themselves working alone or in an area isolated from colleagues Eg. any employee travelling between contact centres or offices, attending external meetings or those who may be the only person working in a building or coming to work early or staying late and those who are employed as home workers.

Staff who may work alone in an office environment have a responsibility for their own safety and should discuss their working arrangements with their line manager, highlighting any concerns that they may have.

## **NHS 24 Objectives:**

- To protect staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks associated with lone working
- To reduce lone working where operationally feasible
- To require that risk assessments are undertaken on a generic basis and an individual basis where additional risks are identified
- That risk assessments lead to safe systems of work for staff

- That suitable means of communication and systems of monitoring are in place
- To raise staff awareness of lone working
- To ensure staff have appropriate training and or experience to conduct suitable dynamic risk assessments (DRA)
- To encourage reporting of all incidents related to lone working
- To comply with all relevant legislation

Lone workers are:

- employees who work by themselves without direct or close supervision or without other colleagues
- they can be situated either in a fixed establishment e.g. only one person in the workplace or
- a mobile establishment e.g. peripatetic workers who work away from a fixed base

## **Responsibilities**

The **Director of Workforce** is responsible for:

- making sure that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working;
- providing resources for putting the policy into practice; and
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the NHS 24 Board regularly reviews the effectiveness of the policy.

**Senior and Line Managers** are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy;
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly;  
\*see notes below
- 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 groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary;
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident; and
- managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an

effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

\*Notes: Line Managers should ensure a Lone Working Risk Assessment is completed for each employee (**who requires more than the good practice guidance supplied in this procedure**) by using the risk assessment checklist accompanying this procedure {Appendix 1}. The assessment will either focus on the environment or the employee or a combination of both – depending on the identified risks.

It is important to discuss this process with each individual as circumstances may vary slightly between employees. This will also help to ensure that all the relevant hazards have been identified and the appropriate control measures implemented.

The risk assessment must be reviewed in light of any changes to the work environment, geographical area and work tasks or where an incident occurs.

**All staff are responsible for;**

- taking reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be 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; and
- reporting any dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

## **Lone Working Procedure**

### **Risk assessment**

NHS 24 is required to identify, assess, and manage risks to lone workers. It will undertake generic risk assessments of all lone working activities and will implement all reasonable control measures to provide for the health safety and welfare of staff.

NHS 24 duties include:

- Identification of hazards associated with lone working in the workplace, including working environments, and working practices, which have the potential to put staff at risk.
- Identify and assess the risk and who/how many staff will be affected in each case
- Evaluate the risk from each hazard and decide whether existing controls are adequate. Where adequate controls are not suitable or sufficient, the risk assessment will identify any necessary additional controls that are necessary to minimise the risk in each case
- Record all significant findings from the risk assessment, informing staff of the results.
- To ensure that any training needs identified are addressed
- Review the risk periodically and whenever the working environment introduces a significant hazard, or if there is a reason to believe that the assessment is no longer valid

### **Staff Duties**

- Individual members of staff working alone must undertake a dynamic risk assessment on approach or at the scene of a situation to ensure that they work safely. Staff should be aware that personal safety is a shared responsibility between NHS 24 and staff. Staff have a responsibility to help themselves to be safer.
- If staff have concerns regarding the issue of lone working they should discuss these with their line manager. It is the line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action in these circumstances.
- Reporting all incidents where issues have arisen around lone working through the appropriate system.

## Control Measures

Staff required to work alone will be provided with suitable portable means of summoning immediate assistance should it be required. Such equipment might include a mobile telephone, portable radio and/or panic alarm. Clearly defined “Safe Systems of Work” will be developed for all lone working posts (See Appendices).

Staff required to undertake lone working will be provided with such information, instruction and training as is necessary to enable them to undertake their work safely.

NHS 24 will provide Conflict Management Training to those identified as being at risk.

Staff required to work alone will only be tasked to do so if assessed by a manager as being competent to undertake such tasks.

### Note:

Regulation 13 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 states :

*‘Every employer shall, in entrusting tasks to his employees, take into account their capabilities as regards health and safety’.*

The Approved Code of Practice further states

*‘when allocating work to employees, employers should ensure that the demands of the job do not exceed the employees ability to carry out work without risk to themselves or others’.*

The control measures required will be identified from the risk assessment and may include some of the following:

- If the workplace or environment presents a special risk to the lone worker – can this be altered?
- Can the employee re-locate to a populated office or contact centre if due to unexpected absence they find themselves working alone?
- Are panic alarms required or would there always be someone to “shout to for help”?

- Is there a safe way in and out (access and egress) of buildings for the lone worker and if not can adjustments be made?
- Is there a system in place for working out of normal times when an employee may be the only person in the office or building?  
Does everyone consistently follow this?
- Would the lone worker be required to move and handle large, bulky, heavy or numerous pieces of equipment or materials and could this put them at risk of an accident or injury?
- Is there a risk from employees having to meet someone they have not met before and can an office or a public place be used to minimise this?
- Does the employee have a mobile phone with speed dial numbers and will someone be available to answer their call?  
Is there adequate network coverage in the area they will be working in?
- Is there a phone back procedure in place – whereby an employee will phone in their arriving and leaving times – and will someone call them if these go beyond the expected timings?  
Is contact made on an agreed basis with the remote sites?
- Are personal alarms available to those who require them – with the batteries regularly replaced?
- How will the peripatetic worker access welfare facilities such as somewhere to get a hot or cold drink, eat a meal, use the toilet etc?
- Does the employee drive or use public transport and would this be at night? Remember an employee driving on their own in NHS24 time is a lone worker.
- Are there certain areas the lone worker will visit that are known trouble spots?
- Is it possible to buddy the lone worker up with another worker?
- Is there a potential risk of violence - verbal and/or physical?
- Is training required for lone working employees – training is particularly important in high risk situations
- Is the employee medically fit and suitable to work alone? – consider both the routine tasks they will be doing and what would happen if the



lone worker had an accident or was involved in an emergency?

- Consider the potential for stress from working in isolation.
- Has a system of support and supervision been put in place? – usually a mixture of face to face and telephone/email contact
- Is there a system in place to ensure all peripatetic workers receive all the information they require and do not miss out on anything as they are not “office based”?
- All peripatetic and lone workers may benefit from a copy of the pocket guide “Personal Safety at Work” from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust - [www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)

## 6. General advice on personal safety

- When **walking** - people are safest whilst in bright, well lit and well populated areas
- Do not wear NHS 24 ID Badges outwith buildings and offices
- You should always try to look and act confident, look like you know where you are going, what you are doing and that you are meeting someone
- You may wish to spread valuables around your person (rather than all in one bag)
- Be aware of being “conspicuous” especially with valuables you are carrying – such as talking on a mobile phone, carrying a laptop, walking away from a cash machine or out of a shop putting money or change into your wallet/purse
- Walking whilst listening to an iPod or other personal device will make you less alert to your surroundings
- If someone tries to take something from you it may be best to let them do so {rather than risk a confrontation or injury } you might wish to consider throwing it away from you to place distance between you and the attacker
- You can use reasonable force in self defence – but you may have to explain or justify this.

- You are allowed to protect yourself and use something you would normally be carrying such as keys or a can of deodorant/hairspray/perfume etc – but you must not carry a weapon
- Shout “fire” rather than “help” it has shown to get better results – if you have a personal alarm – use it!
- On public transport – sit near other people or close to the driver if you are on a bus and move if someone makes you feel uncomfortable
- Alert the driver or conductor if you feel threatened
- Report abandoned bags or suspicious packages to the driver or conductor
- Whilst driving keep your car in good condition and try not to run out of petrol
- Keep doors locked and keep bags, phones and other valuables out of sight
- Try to park in well lit or busy areas
- If you break down on the motorway, wait outside your car and contact the emergency services – tell them you are alone – however if you are feeling threatened sit in the passenger side seat and lock the doors
- Do not accept or offer lifts to people you do not know

If you are expecting a colleague at a certain time and they do not arrive within a reasonable timescale or have not alerted you that they are ‘running late’ you should consider contacting the person.

Similarly all staff should be responsible for calling to cancel appointment or advising they will be late due to traffic etc.

## **7. Reporting an incident**

Employees must report and record any incident related to intruders, working alone, home working or when driving on behalf of NHS 24. This should be recorded in the Accident, Incident and Near Miss Form any risk assessments in place may have to be reviewed in light of the incident.

## **8. Employee Support**

Appropriate support will be provided for Employees who either have concerns around being a lone worker or have been involved in a work related incident.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Management of Road Risk  
Home Worker Policy  
Physical Security Procedures for staff and all other relevant policies.



**PERIPATETIC (LONE) WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT {Appendix 1}**

<b>Description of environment or name of lone worker (or teams)</b>	<b>Assessor's name</b>	<b>1. Date of assessment – 2. Review date -</b>

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Describe the risk and who is at risk</b>	<b>Action required to minimise the risk</b>
<b>1. Is there a specific activity that places the lone worker at risk?</b>			
<b>2. Are lone workers safe within buildings? Can alarm be raised/and is help available if necessary?</b>			
<b>3. Is there safe access and egress from buildings?</b>			
<b>4. Can the lone worker safely handle any equipment that may be required?</b>			
<b>5. Are there any manual handling risks?</b>			
<b>6. Will the lone worker be working when it is dark?</b>			
<b>7. Will the lone worker be carrying money or valuable goods?</b>			

<p><b>8. Will a mobile phone or personal alarm be carried?</b></p>			
<p><b>9. Does someone know the whereabouts of the lone worker and is there a phone back system in place?</b></p>			
<p><b>10. Is there an agreed frequency of contact between the lone workers and others?</b></p>			
<p><b>11. Are there arrangements in place for action to be taken in the event of the lone worker failing to report back at agreed times/intervals?</b></p>			
<p><b>12. Have welfare facilities been identified?</b></p>			
<p><b>13. Have foreseeable emergencies been identified e.g. what happens if the lone worker becomes ill or has an accident?</b></p>			
<p><b>14. Does the employee have any medical condition that may affect lone working?</b></p>			
<p><b>15. Do any of the buildings or environments a lone worker may go to present as a risk?</b></p>			

<b>16. Is there a risk from driving or using public transport?</b>			
<b>17. Are there any other risks that have not been identified in points 1-16</b>			