



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

MELTON PARISH COUNCIL LONE WORKING POLICY

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1. Introduction: Purpose of this policy and procedure

The council recognises that all of our staff will work alone, for at least some of the time, and because this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers, and
- Requires reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

The Council takes its responsibility for staff safety very seriously and will take every practicable step to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees and Councillors whenever they are required to work alone and without support.

2. The scope of this policy

It applies to all staff, whether full time, part time or temporary workers, whether office based or outdoor workers. It also applies to councillors whilst engaged on council business.

Policy

We will protect staff and councillors from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who do work alone.

3. Definition

'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples which apply to Melton include:

- A Maintenance Officer carrying out maintenance tasks in green spaces or woodland
- Office workers who work alone in the council's premises
- Office workers / councillors attending site meetings

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own. That requirement currently does not affect Melton as it has no employees under the age of 18.

4. Responsibilities

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations the Council is responsible for managing the risk to lone workers.

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

Managers

- Must ensure that the worker is competent to work alone;
- Must ensure that all outdoor lone working activities are formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;
- Must ensure that all necessary training and safety equipment is provided and available for staff appropriate to the tasks being undertaken;
- Must ensure that all foreseeable risks from office based lone working activities are formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any mitigations necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;
- Must make clear to staff arrangements for lone working and lone workers must understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place and have the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment;
- Must ensure that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working;
- Must ensure that all appropriate steps are taken in respect of security to the council's buildings e.g. external access door to be locked outside core opening hours if working alone;
- Must ensure that there is access to a first aid kit on the premises.

Lone workers

- Take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work
- Only carry out work for which they are qualified and for which (where relevant) they have undergone training e.g. working at height, using a brushcutter etc.;
- Use all safety and protective equipment appropriate for the task;
- Follow any instruction given by management or the council;
- Raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working in relation to a specific location or task;
- Not to work alone where there is inadequate information or it is not practicable to undertake a risk assessment;
- Inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone.

Staff

- To be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine, or unanticipated periods where there is no communication.

5. Risk Assessments

The council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees, volunteers and councillors, and in order to discharge that obligation the risks inherent in lone working must be assessed, together with training requirements and having systems in place to keep in touch.

Also individual employees, volunteers and councillors have responsibilities to take reasonable care of both themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with the council in meeting legal obligations.

Managers must complete (or ensure the completion of) a generic Lone Working Risk Assessment for (1) outdoor workers (who are invariably working on their own, and (2) office based staff who will work alone for some of the time. These assessments should be approved by FERM Committee. It is recognised that it is not practical to undertake an assessment prior to every lone working activity. However the risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and a copy provided to the employee as well as being retained in the office.

Lone workers will of course face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles / tasks. However, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:

- Sudden illness
- Faulty equipment
- Travelling alone
- Remote locations
- Abuse from members of the public
- Animal attacks.

6. Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Because of regular or anticipated lone working, the risk assessment should be incorporated into the work plan. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment.

It will be important to ensure agreed times for contact and reporting, and site visits in particular should be recorded in the office and advised to colleagues. Staff undertaking site visits to private dwellings should ideally be accompanied unless (1) the party being visited is known to the council or (2) the meeting will be attended as well by a council contractor or other third party.

All council staff shall provide their contact details to the council, including the contact details of their next of kin which will be retained securely in line with data protection legislation.

7. Health and wellbeing

In order to ensure personal safety, it is important that staff share any details of any aspects of personal health that could lead to increased risk, in strict confidence with the manager or specific councillors. This includes pregnancy. Any potential risks caused by the circumstances can then be mitigated. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis within strict confidentiality.

8. Reporting incidents

An incident can be defined as an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill-health or damage. All such incidents should be reported either to the clerk to the council or a councillor. Any incidents or perceived risks encountered whilst lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved;
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used by the police where appropriate. This will be important for more serious incidents of work-related violence;
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances which might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then assist the council to review the risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

The emergency services should be called if a staff member needs immediate assistance. If possible, call the manager, colleague or a councillor should also be contacted.

The manager should be contacted if the lone worker's plans change because of feeling unwell or other emergency.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Date of policy: 16 November 2021

Approving committee: Full Council

Date: 17 November 2021

Policy version reference: Version 1

Policy effective from: 17 November 2021

Date for next review: As required

Notes

The Health and Safety Executive have extensive advice and guidance on homeworking, lone working, including guidance on the risks of lone working.

Homeworking: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

Lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

Risks of lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf