



Workforce

Lone Working Policy: guide for managers

This guide explains how you, as a manager, apply the Lone Working Policy to keep your team safe.

The following guide forms part of the standard for workforce policies. These policies apply to all eligible staff within NHS Scotland, regardless of the board they are employed by. The guide covers:

What is the purpose of the Lone Working Policy?	3
Who is covered by this policy?	3
Manager responsibilities	3
Assessing risk.....	3
Managing risk.....	3
Risk assessment process.....	4
Identifying lone workers.....	4
Identifying risks	5
Assessing risks	5
Putting control measures in place and developing safe systems of work	6
Reporting and recording.....	7
Useful links.....	7

What is the purpose of the Lone Working Policy?

This Lone Working Policy provides a safety framework for anyone who works alone. Its aims are to:

- raise awareness of the safety issues related to lone working
- support staff who work by themselves
- assess and manage all associated risks
- encourage full reporting of any incidents
- reduce injuries and incidents for all lone workers

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to everyone working within NHS Scotland. That includes all employees, plus bank, agency, and sessional workers, volunteers, contractors, and anyone on placement, such as students or trainees.

Manager responsibilities

As a manager, you are responsible for the safety of your lone workers. You must:

- Know the policy and make sure all employees are aware of it.
- Assess the risks by carrying out and regularly reviewing risk assessments.
- Implement safe systems of work into practice to eliminate or reduce risks.
- Provide information, training and clear instructions to all lone workers. This should include training during a departmental induction, updates and refresher training as necessary.
- Support your team if an incident occurs.
- Manage the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

Assessing risk

In most circumstances, lone working is safe. Where lone working is identified, the risk should be assessed. Where appropriate, suitable risk

management should be applied. Lone workers should not be at an increased risk of 'harm' compared to other employees.

As a manager, you are responsible for making sure a risk assessment is carried out for every situation where an employee works alone. This assessment should take into account both normal work and foreseeable issues.

Risk assessments must be done by a trained person, recorded, reviewed regularly, and shared with the employee. They should be carried out for all lone working situations and regularly reviewed. By prioritising risk assessments, you'll ensure the right control measures are in place to protect your lone workers and keep them safe.

[Download Combined risk assessment form.](#)

Managing risk

You should aim to reduce risks to the lowest possible level. As every lone working situation is different, you will need to use a person-centred approach.

Risk assessment process

You should make sure that lone workers do not face any more risks than other employees within the organisation. Setting up safe working arrangements for lone workers follows the same principles as ensuring safety for any other employee. The process involves identifying who works alone, what the risks are, and how to control them.

Risk assessments should consider both normal work and foreseeable incidents, such as fire, medical fitness, and accidents.

Identifying lone workers

As a manager, it's your responsibility to identify lone workers.

A lone worker is anyone who works in isolation. Although there is no single definition that encompasses all lone working situations, some examples include:

- without a colleague nearby
- out of the visual and hearing range of another colleague
- without close or direct supervision

Lone working can occur during normal working hours within any workplace, during a domiciliary or other site visit, or when working outside normal working hours. Examples of lone working may include:

- Accompanying or transporting a patient, materials or specimens in and around hospital grounds.
- Working alone in a laboratory or undertaking plant maintenance.
- Undertaking deliveries.
- Working alone or in isolation in a clinic, treatment room, or reception area.
- Working away from a fixed base, in the community or in a patient's home.

Identifying risks

You should separate the range of risks associated with the workplace, work processes and the individual. Factors you should consider when carrying out the risk assessment include the following:

- Specific risks the workplace presents to the lone worker.
- Any increased risk particular to the individual.
- Whether the risks of the job can be adequately controlled by one person.
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Is the employee appropriately trained for the work involved?
- Whether appropriate planning for when an employee becomes ill, has an accident, or has an emergency has been undertaken.
- Whether systems are in place for contacting and tracing those who work alone.

Assessing risks

You should review generic risk assessments developed within your board and, if necessary, complete individual or local risk assessments. This will enable you to prioritise the level of associated risk.

You should include the details you have considered when carrying out the risk assessment. This should include:

- the extent and nature of the risks
- factors that contribute to the risk, including job content, specific tasks, and activities

- the safe systems of work to be followed to eliminate or reduce the risk

Putting control measures in place and developing safe systems of work

You should assess how effective the existing control measures are and review them if appropriate.

Issues to consider include:

- joint working with others for high-risk activities
- security arrangements in buildings
- security lighting in parking areas
- using checking-in and monitoring systems
- communication systems for sharing information on risk with colleagues in other disciplines and agencies
- using personal protective equipment, mobile phones, and personal alarms.

If a risk assessment shows that a lone worker cannot safely do the work, other arrangements must be made.

Arrangements for managing risk should include:

- Guidance for lone workers on assessing risk.
- Details of when to stop and get advice.
- The procedures to be followed in the event of an incident or emergency. All employees must be familiar with these local protocols.

Information from the risk assessment should be passed to all relevant employees.

Evaluating, monitoring and review

You must have procedures to monitor lone workers to make sure the control measures are effective. Monitoring can include:

- Supervisors periodically checking and observing employees following lone working protocols.
- Pre-agreed intervals for regular contact between you and the employee.
- Using lone worker technology, such as apps or alarms.

- Having a robust system to confirm the employee has returned home or to base safely.

You should audit your lone working procedures regularly and after any significant changes. This ensures local procedures remain effective at keeping everyone safe, including staff, visitors, and contractors who may work alone.

You must review risk assessments annually, or sooner if circumstances change.

Reporting and recording

As a manager, you should encourage your team to **report all incidents**, including near misses, as soon as they happen. It's your responsibility to make sure:

- They are recorded on the correct system.
- They are investigated properly,
- Local incident reports are reviewed regularly to improve safety

Useful links

- [HSE Guidance 'Working alone, Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working' 03/20 INDG73 \(rev4\)](#)
- [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)
- [Combined risk assessment](#)