



Safety Services Guidance



Guidance on lone working

Key word(s):	Lone working, remote working, working without supervision
Target audience:	Anyone working beyond earshot of another person, or otherwise unable to summon assistance; managers responsible for preparing risk assessments for lone workers.

Contents

Introduction	2
Objectives	2
Managing risk	3
Risk assessment	3
Example risk assessments	4
Dynamic risk assessment	5
Lone worker movements	5
The buddy system	6
Escalation process	6
Researcher safety	6
Further sources of guidance.....	7
Document control box.....	8

Management cycle	Useful paragraphs
Plan	1-7
Do	8-20
Monitor	
Review	21-22

Introduction

1. This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the University Arrangements [Chapter 10](#) on Lone Working. This chapter defines lone working as; “A person working without close or direct supervision and without contact from others. It can take place both out of hours and during the normal working day.” The key point is that the lone worker may not be able to summon assistance quickly in the event of an emergency.
2. This definition covers those workers who could be working in a university building or similar environment, in a community or research setting.
3. This guidance should be used to develop or revise local arrangements and systems to protect lone workers, reflecting the local needs of staff and the environments within which they work.
4. Line managers and staff who supervise students have a duty of care and responsibility to ensure that risk assessments and local procedures are developed, implemented, monitored and adhered to. Lone workers also have a responsibility to follow the procedures for their own safety.
5. In order that lone workers feel safe and secure, and perform their duties in a relatively safe environment they must be confident that there is organisational commitment and support, backed up by strong management procedures.
6. Incidents involving lone workers are very rare; however, it is important that lone workers are encouraged to report all incidents of physical and non-physical assault, using the University’s [incident report form](#). This will also ensure that any lessons learned can be fed back into risk management processes and further preventive measures can be developed. Some incidents may need to be reported to the enforcing authorities via the University Safety Office.

Objectives

7. This guidance is designed to provide lone workers and their line managers with practical advice to assist in preparing for a lone worker situation and meet legislative responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. In particular, it can be used to:
 - raise staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working

- ensure that lone working is risk-assessed in an appropriate way and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable
- help staff recognise risks and provide practical advice on safety when working alone, including, where appropriate, how to use technological solutions
- identify the organisational structures, communication links, and those with responsibilities to support lone workers if they need assistance
- encourage full reporting and recording of any adverse incidents relating to lone working.

Managing risk

8. The University is required to implement measures to manage, control and mitigate risks to lone workers. Once an incident occurs, the level of follow-up action should be proportionate to the risk. As a minimum, the risk assessment should be reviewed. Other measures might include removing weaknesses or failures that have allowed an incident to take place (procedural, systematic or technological), and identifying further training needs of staff and students in relation to the prevention and management of verbal or physical assault, or other training such as correctly identifying and operating the relevant technology.

Risk assessment

9. Schools and Directorates should use their existing risk assessment arrangements to manage risks in relation to lone workers: to identify risks in relation to lone working to:
 - assess the risks to lone workers
 - implement measures to reduce the risks to lone workers, including appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision to minimise these risks
 - evaluate the control measures and ensure that risks to lone workers are appropriately managed.
10. A suitable and sufficient risk assessment for lone working should be based on the University's Lone Working [Chapter 10](#), and consider the following factors, together with any specific risks associated with the work being undertaken:
 - Who is going to be working alone?
 - Where will they be working?
 - Are they competent to carry out the work?

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker in addition to risks associated with the work itself?
- Is there a safe means of access and egress from the work location?
- Can all plant, substances and materials involved in the work be safely handled by one person? (Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large or awkward for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment).
- Are some individuals more at risk than others when working alone?
- Are young persons especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Are the fire precautions for the building fully operational and understood by the lone worker?
- Are all fire precautions available if the work takes place out-of-hours?
- Is the lone worker fully familiar with how to respond in an emergency? E.g. do they know how to activate the fire alarm, phone numbers to call, who to contact?
- Are there effective communication links in the area they will be working at the time they are working?
- Is the level of supervision at other times sufficient to ensure that any problems are identified and dealt with?
- Is there a risk of accidental release of material which could cause acute injury or require extensive decontamination? e.g. gas release, explosion, spillage (Work such as this should not take place unaccompanied)
- Are any other precautions necessary?

Example risk assessments

11. To assist with the production of risk assessments, the following lone worker example risk assessments and checklists have been produced:

- Community based lone worker risk assessment
- Community based lone worker checklist
- On-campus lone worker in an office setting risk assessment
- On-campus lone worker in an office setting checklist

The above documents can be accessed at

http://www.healthandsafety.manchester.ac.uk/toolkits/lone_working/example_ras/

Dynamic risk assessment

12. There may be a requirement for risk assessments to be carried out by the lone worker on a dynamic basis, e.g. in response to frequent changes in circumstances. A generic risk assessment will need to explain the circumstances under which dynamic risk assessments take place, and address the competency and training needs of the individuals carrying them out.
13. See [Guidance on generic and dynamic risk assessment](#)

Lone worker movements

14. The specific controls necessary must be proportionate to the risk and will be informed by the risk assessment process but could include:
 - details of location and anticipated time of return left with a manager or colleague
 - details of vehicles used by lone workers left with a manager or colleague, for example, registration number, make, model and colour
 - regular contact with a manager or relevant colleague, particularly if they are delayed or have to cancel an appointment
 - panic buttons in isolated offices or consultation rooms
 - mobile phone solutions with text, panic, GPS, 'man down' and smartphone solutions.
15. Where there is genuine concern, for example, as a result of a lone worker failing to attend a visit or an arranged meeting within an agreed time, or to make contact as agreed, the manager should use the information provided in a log or Outlook diary to locate them and ascertain whether they turned up for previous appointments that day. Depending on the circumstances and whether contact through normal means (mobile phone) can be made, the manager or colleague should involve University Security if necessary (see escalation process para 22).
16. If it is thought that the lone worker may be at risk, it is important that matters are dealt with quickly, after considering all the available facts. Security will advise if police involvement is needed, and will need full access to information held and personnel who may hold it, if that information might help trace the lone worker and provide a fuller assessment of any risks they may be facing.
17. It is important that contact arrangements, once in place, are adhered to. Many such procedures fail simply because staff forget to make the necessary call when

they finish their shift. The result is unnecessary escalation and expense, which undermines the integrity of the process.

The buddy system

18. It is essential that lone workers keep in contact with colleagues and ensure that they make another colleague aware of their movements. This can be done by implementing management procedures such as the 'buddy system'.
19. To operate the buddy system, managers must ensure that a lone worker nominates a buddy. This is a person who is their nominated contact for the period in which they will be working alone. The nominated buddy will:
 - be fully aware of the movements of the lone worker
 - have all necessary contact details for the lone worker
 - attempt to contact the lone worker if they do not contact the buddy as agreed
 - follow the agreed local escalation procedures for alerting their senior manager and Security if the lone worker cannot be contacted or if they fail to contact their buddy within agreed and reasonable timescales.
20. The buddy must understand their role and what the procedures and requirements are. Contingency arrangements should be in place for someone else to take over the role of the buddy in case the nominated person is unavailable, for example if the lone working situation extends past the end of the nominated person's normal working day or shift, if the shift varies, or if the nominated person is away on annual leave or off sick.

Escalation process

21. It is important for School and Directorates to have a risk-based escalation process, outlining who should be notified if a lone worker cannot be contacted or if they fail to contact the relevant individual within agreed or reasonable timescales. The escalation process should provide identification of contact points at appropriate stages which may include, line manager, senior manager, security and, ultimately, the police. Any individual nominated in an escalation process should be fully aware of their role and responsibilities.

Researcher safety

22. Researcher safety is well documented by the Social Research Association (SRA), in their [code of practice](#).

23. The University of Manchester has issued [Guidance on conducting interviews and research in fieldwork](#). Safety Services [Lone Working toolkit](#) contains useful checklists.

Further sources of guidance

[Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

For information on lone worker alarms and alerting devices:

<http://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/lone-worker-devices>

For safety apps

<http://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/app-directory>

For advice on safe travelling alone

<http://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/personal-safety>

[HSE Publication on Lone Working](#)

[Royal College of Nursing Guide to Lone Working](#)

Document control box	
Title	Guidance on lone working
Link to Policy or Chapter	University Health & Safety Arrangements Chapter 10 on Lone Working
Date issued:	November 2016
Issued by:	Safety Services
Implementation date:	Feb 2006
Version:	v2.3 (November 2016) personnel change and links updated v2.2 (January 2015) v2.1 (June 2014) v1.1 (January 2009) v1.0 (February 2006)
Next review date:	Upon significant change
Owner of this document:	Head of Safety Services, Dr Patrick Seechurn
Lead contact:	Sheila Chisholm