

Lone Working Policy

Frinton & Walton Town Council

1. Introduction

Frinton & Walton Town Council will take every practicable step to protect the health, safety and welfare of its staff and elected members whenever they are required, by the nature of their duties, to work alone and without direct support and supervision. Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require employees to work alone, both the individual staff member and their Line Manager have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy is designed to alert employees to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give employees a framework for managing potentially risky situations. This policy applies to all staff and elected members who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below. Volunteers would not normally be expected to work alone and so should be outside the scope of this policy.

3. Context

Some staff and elected members work outside office hours and/or alone due to flexible working patterns and/or to undertake their job role. Frinton & Walton Town Council's principles for supporting lone workers include:

- A commitment to supporting employees both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices.
- Recognising and reducing risk.
- A commitment to the provision of appropriate support for employees.
- A clear understanding of responsibilities.
- The priority placed on the safety of the individual over property.
- A commitment to providing appropriate training for employees.
- Where possible, reduce the need for lone working.

4. Definition of Lone Workers

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision". This covers all Council employees, all of whom are required to carry out their duties for all or part of their working day working in isolation. This may be within the office or outside the office.

Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where employees in the course of their duties work alone or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

5. Aims of the Policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- a. Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working.

- b. Recognising and reducing risk by ensuring that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as reasonably practicable.
- c. Ensure that appropriate training is given to all staff in all areas that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone.
- d. Ensure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone.
- e. Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working.
- f. Reduce the need for lone working where possible.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Town Clerk (or Designate)

The Town Clerk (or Designate) on behalf of the Town Council is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working.
- Providing resources for putting the policy into practice.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of this policy.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy.
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly.
- 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 are given appropriate information, instruction and training.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

6.2 Staff and elected members

Staff and elected members are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others 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.
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

7. Building Procedures

7.1 Security of Buildings

Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:

- Appropriate steps should be taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.
- Alarm systems are tested regularly.
- External doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone.
- When working alone staff are familiar with exits and alarms.

- There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.
- If applicable, key codes for access should be changed from time to time and when a member of staff or sub-contractor that knows the code leaves and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected.
- If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they call for assistance before entering.

8. Personal Safety

To ensure personal safety:

- Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a backup plan is sufficient. The priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
- Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety.
- Before working alone, assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager.
- Employees must inform their Line Manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following an external commitment rather than returning to their base.
- Where required, employees must ensure that they sign in and out of building registers.
- If a member of staff does not report as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on their situation and then to respond as appropriate, using emergency contact information if necessary.
- Where staff work alone for extended periods and/on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, to monitor and to counter the effect of working in isolation.

9. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is essential to good risk management. Assessment will be carried out for and by all staff whose working practice makes them vulnerable. This includes staff that are site based but work in isolation as well as mobile staff whose work takes them out into the community.

Recommendations will be made to eliminate or to reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

9.1 Risk assessment for site based lone workers will include:

- Safe access and exit.
- Risk of violence.
- Safety of equipment for individual use.
- Channels of communication in an emergency.
- Site security.
- Security arrangements i.e. alarm systems and mobile telephones.
- Level and adequacy of on/off site supervision.

9.2 Risk assessment for mobile lone workers will additionally include:

- Travelling between sites.
- Reporting and recording arrangements.

- Communication and traceability.
- Personal safety/security.

Following completion of the Risk Assessment, consideration will be given to any appropriate action that is required.

All available information should be considered and checked or updated, as necessary. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in each situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

10. Incident Reporting

An incident is defined as “an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health or damage”.

To maintain an appropriate record of incidents involving lone workers it is essential that all incidents be reported to the Town Clerk (or Designate who identify if any immediate action is required).

All staff are provided with the Town Clerk (or Designate) contact details. Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or unsafe are reported. This includes incidents of verbal abuse.

11. Support for Staff

Employees working for the Council should know that their safety comes first. Staff should be aware of how to deal with situations where they feel they are at risk, or unsafe. Staff should also be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response. The Town Clerk (or Designate) will ensure that all lone workers training needs are assessed and that they receive the appropriate training.

There are several things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. The Town Council has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves. The following points may be helpful in recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk.

Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.

- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.

With regards to other people:

- Take note of their non-verbal signals.
- Be aware of their triggers.
- Do not crowd people – allow them space.

- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.
- Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- Listen to them and show them you are listening.

12. Contacting/Involving the Police

The Council is committed to protecting the staff from violence and assault and will support criminal proceedings against those who carry out assault. All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to the police and will be supported by the Council throughout the process. Except in the cases of emergency, employees should inform the Town Clerk (or Designate) of any incident immediately. The Town Clerk (or Designate) will thereafter take responsibility for contact with the police to report the details of the incident.

13. Immediate Support Following a Violent incident

In the event of a violent incident involving a lone worker, the Town Clerk (or Designate) will immediately ensure that the employee received any necessary medical treatment and/or advice.

The Town Clerk (or Designate) will also consider whether the employee needs specific information or assistance relating to any legal or insurance matters. The Town Clerk (or Designate) will also ensure appropriate written and verbal reporting of any violent incident.

14. Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed by Frinton & Walton Town Council 12 months from the date of implementation.

The policy will also be reviewed to identify any areas requiring improvement following any incident.

Approved by Personnel Committee on – 1st November 2022

Next Review Due – 1st November 2023