



LONE WORKING POLICY

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Lone Working Policy

1 Lone Working Policy Statement

- 1.1 Blackwood as an employer has a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to provide a safe and secure environment for every member of staff. These responsibilities apply equally to those staff that; for whatever reason, work alone. Blackwood recognises that lone working can bring additional risks to a work activity, and that the nature of the work undertaken by Blackwood necessitates the need for lone working practices. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that these risks are managed in accordance with good practice and legislation.

2 Definition of Lone Working

- 2.1 The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone working as “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. Within Blackwood this definition can apply to several categories of employee including, homeworkers, employees who work one to one with Customers/Service Users, those who are required to travel to attend meetings and office staff who may need to work outwith “normal’ working hours.

3 Risk Assessments

- 3.1 Risk can be associated with many types of work but it is generally accepted that lone workers face increased risk due to the isolated nature of their work. The level of risk will depend on a number of variables including the type of activity being carried out, or the situation in which the lone worker may find themselves. For example, an employee working from home will be exposed to significantly lower risks than an employee visiting a new customer/service user in their own home. Establishing the level of risk that a lone worker may be exposed to is an important part of the risk assessment process.
- 3.2 Risk assessments should therefore be used to establish whether the work can be done safely by a lone worker, and what arrangements are required to ensure the safety of the lone worker.
- 3.3 Blackwood will ensure that all lone working activities have been identified and assessed through the process of risk assessment. The risk assessment process requires that the hazards associated with lone working are identified, the risks assessed, the findings of the assessment recorded and suitable control measures implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- 3.4 Risk assessments can be recorded using Blackwood's electronic CareSys system, Blackwood's general risk assessment form [Risk Assessment Form.doc](#) or Blackwood's individual lone worker risk assessment form [lone worker assessment.xlsx](#) can be used for this purpose.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Managers Responsibilities

4.1.1 It is the responsibility of the lone workers' line manager to ensure that lone workers are made aware of the Lone Working Policy before any lone working commences and at regular refresher intervals thereafter, for example annually.

4.1.2 Line managers are also responsible for carrying out risk assessments and devising and implementing safe working systems for lone workers to avoid or control the risks from lone working. Line managers must ensure that the system in place includes the ability for staff to be traced and that any system in place is regularly checked. These safe systems of work must be recorded.

4.2 Lone Workers Responsibilities

4.2.1 It is the responsibility of the lone worker to ensure they are aware of the lone working policy and any safe working systems in place relating to lone working and comply with them at all times.

4.2.2 Lone workers also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their work, and to co-operate with their employers to allow them to meet their statutory obligations

4.2.3 Lone workers will be required to attend any training provided in relation to Lone Working and this will be a mandatory requirement.

5 Lone Worker Training

5.1 All lone workers should be aware of how to deal with situations when they feel they are at risk or unsafe. Lone workers should also be able to recognise how their own actions can influence or even trigger an aggressive response. All staff will receive Blackwood's standard H&S induction/refresher training and in addition, employees deemed to be lone workers will also receive lone working/challenging behaviour training which will comprise of the following elements;

- the duties of the particular post and in addition the risks and hazards to which he/she is being exposed;
- lone worker dynamic risk assessment process;
- dealing with challenging behaviour;
- systems of monitoring, supervision;
- what to do if an emergency situation occurs;
- training on the use of lone worker devices where applicable.

6 Whereabouts of Lone Workers

6.1 It is generally considered that lone working increases the vulnerability of workers therefore it is essential for staff safety that people working away from the office or in the community can be located by staff in their home unit/office.

- 6.2 Blackwood will store details of lone workers' emergency contacts and other details (such as car registration, home phone number, etc.) in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and they will only be used in circumstances when the lone worker has not followed the Lone Working procedure, or we are unable to contact them and therefore have concerns for their safety.

7 Supervision and Communication

7.1 Supervision

- 7.1.1 All lone workers must be supervised. The extent of supervision will depend on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and deal with any health and safety issues that may arise. The level of supervision required is a management decision and must be based on the findings of a risk assessment. The higher the risk the greater the level of supervision required.

7.2 Communications

- 7.2.1 Supervision and communication go hand in hand, so the means of communication will also be dependent on the level of risk and the control measured identified in the risk assessment. A suitable means of communication must be adopted for all lone workers which may include one of the following;

- 7.2.2 **Buddy System** – whereby a second person is present at all times. This person may not necessarily be by the individual's side but must be in close proximity to ensure that help may be quickly summoned in the event of emergency. The 'buddy' must not be exposed to the same hazard simultaneously and they should have sufficient knowledge on the activity being undertaken and should be properly equipped with emergency equipment and be capable of putting any emergency plan into operation.

- 7.2.3 **Personal Checks by Another Person** – where someone is checking on the individual on a regular basis. The frequency of checks will be determined by the risk involved in the activity.

- 7.2.4 **Periodic Telephone Contact** – telephone contact should be made at regular intervals. Emergency contact numbers should either be displayed prominently or pre-programmed into telephones. The interval between telephone calls *should* be pre-determined i.e. checking in/out with line managers or other work colleagues as appropriate.

- 7.2.5 **Constant or Intermittent Surveillance** – use of personal pagers, two way radios, *lone working devices (identicom badges)* and visual monitoring systems. In the case of visual monitoring system it must be ascertained that their use is in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The use of *all* other communication equipment must be tested for suitability and range.

7.3 Mobile Phones

- 7.3.1 Where a works mobile phone has been provided to a lone worker as part of a safe system of work, they will be expected to carry it at all times during their working hours. When provided, they must also ensure that the phone is sufficiently charged at all times.

7.4 Identicom Lone Worker Devices

- 7.4.1 Where an Identicom lone worker device has been provided to a lone worker they must receive training in its use. When a device has been provided to a lone worker as part of a safe system of work, they will be expected to carry it, and use it at all times during their working hours. When provided, they must also ensure that the device is sufficiently charged at all times. Detailed instructions for the use of this device can be found in the user guide [Blackwood Identicom Guidance](#).

8 Incident Reporting

- 8.1 In order to maintain appropriate records of incidents involving lone workers it is essential that all incidents are reported. Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or unsafe are reported even if it is not a tangible event or experience. Reports of these incidents are imperative in informing future visits, meetings, etc. and will help to inform lone working policies and procedures. All reported incidents will be recorded on the relevant database where information on the customer/service user is kept.
- 8.2 Lone workers will receive appropriate refresher training every 3 years or sooner if considered necessary.

9 Policy Revisions

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years and amended as necessary, or earlier if deemed necessary.

Appendix A

Good Practice Guidelines

The following guidelines are good practice and must be considered when staff are likely to be in a lone working situation. It is easy to focus on the risk of potential physical harm but we must also bear in mind the risk of false accusations from customers/service users and others. It is therefore imperative that all lone workers are vigilant and conduct their duties with safety in mind at all times.

This guidance is not exhaustive but provides examples of the types of actions which contribute towards a safe working environment.

1. Before setting out:

- Before setting out be aware of the weather forecast and do not risk being caught up in bad weather conditions;
- Ensure that your vehicle has sufficient petrol and is well maintained;
- Allow yourself sufficient time for your journey so that you are not rushing;
- Drive with any bags, records and equipment hidden so that you are not seen hiding them as you park;
- Maintain a weekly diary at your base of all proposed visits;
- Ensure that colleagues can make contact with you if there are concerns. (It is essential that if you change your programme you notify a colleague. A system must be in place whereby should a member of staff not arrive back within a reasonable time, and if they cannot be contacted, that their Manager is notified and the Police contacted if that is deemed the appropriate action);
- Make sure that any personal safety alarms, mobile phones, Identicom devices are in working order and that you have your base/unit/office number (or other as is appropriate) set up so that it can be rung by pressing one button if possible;
- ALWAYS inform other colleagues of possible dangers;
- Ensure that a friend, relative or colleague is aware of your electronic diary.

2. Whilst travelling:

- Lock your door whilst driving;
- Do not use mobile phone

3. Home visits:

- Park as near as possible to the address to be visited;
- At night, park in a lighted area;
- Avoid as far as possible waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, especially at night;
- Assess the situation as you approach. If you are in any way unhappy be prepared to abandon or postpone the visit. Do not compromise your own safety;
- Do not enter a house if the person answering the door gives any cause for alarm i.e. if the customer/service user is not there, if a potentially dangerous relative is present, or if you think they are under the influence of drink or drugs;
- Always follow the occupants into a building;
- Treat customers/service users courteously, remembering that you are a visitor in their home;
- If possible do not schedule a home visit for the last session of the day.

4. If an incident occurs:

- Put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. It is better to leave and find an alternative way of providing support to the customer/service user;
- If the customer/service user is aggressive, but the aggression is not directed at you personally, allow them to "let off steam", then calm them and help them to think of ways of resolving their problems;
- Do not be confrontational;
- Apply what you have learnt from any lone working/challenging behaviour training. This will provide information on how to handle difficult and threatening situations;
- Use a panic alarm only in situations where there is a clear escape route, and for surprise only;
- Call for assistance from the police or your team, as appropriate.

5. After the incident has occurred:

- Contact your manager and return to your unit/base/office;
- Allow yourself time to recover and if necessary seek practical support from colleagues;
- Even after minor incidents your feelings might be difficult to control. This is a perfectly natural reaction. If necessary – take time out;

- Contact the police if appropriate;
- Ask for a debriefing and for further counselling if the post-trauma condition continues;
- Share information with others who might visit;
- Report the incident.

Remember, Never Assume;

- **It won't happen to me**
- **It's only a short journey**
- **He/she/they looks respectable**
- **Finally – don't ignore your instincts!**