

LONE WORKING POLICY



THE ARTHUR ELLIS
MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION



Purpose

AEMHF defines a lone worker as someone whose activities involve all or part of their working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or without close or direct supervision: at AEMHF offices, out in the community or online.

This policy aims to:

- Increase awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working.
- Make sure that the risk of working alone is properly and regularly assessed, and that a risk assessment identifies systems and methods of work to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Make sure that appropriate training is available to staff in all areas that equip them to recognise risk that may be present, act to minimise risk, report any concerns and provides practical advice on safety when working alone.
- Make sure that appropriate support and contact details are available to staff who have to work alone.
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all incidents relating to lone working.
- Minimise the number of incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and contractors working in or on behalf of AEMHF. It includes students, work experience, visitors and agency staff. It includes any provision provided online or face to face and any specific events or activities.

This policy should be used in conjunction with AEMHF safeguarding policy.

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Responsibilities of AEMHF

Although there is no specific legal guidance on working alone, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, AEMHF must reduce the risk to lone workers as much as possible.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring:

- A thorough risk assessment is undertaken that identifies the risk to individuals.
- Risk assessments identify any risks and how to mitigate them.
- Reasonable resources are allocated to support the implementation of this policy and procedures.
- Arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working are in place and staff are aware of them.
- Annually review risk assessments identifying any areas of concern.
- All staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instructions, and training (e.g., induction training), updates and refresher training.
- Record any incident, investigate the circumstances and make recommendations to reduce repeat incidents.
- Appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.
- Staff are consulted about the equipment they need to keep them safe in their jobs.
- Staff are trained in the safe and proper use of equipment.
- Provisions or resources needed for safe working practice are in place.
- First Aid and emergency training is carried out for relevant members of staff.
- Staff are not asked to work lone unnecessarily.
- The Lone Working Policy is implemented and reviewed.
- Lone workers are given a contact person.
- Ensure that new and existing members of staff are aware of the Lone Working Policy and procedures.
- Ensure staff have an emergency contact in the event of an immediate risk.
- Review the policy and procedure to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.

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Responsibilities of Staff

AEMHF expect all staff, to adhere to the risk assessments and not place themselves into an unnecessary risky position.

We expect all staff to ensure they:

- Are involved in the risk assessment process developing sensible and practical procedures for lone workers.
- Set a good example to others by visibly working within the policy and procedure.
- Be responsible for themselves and other people who may be affected by their actions.
- Always follow rules and procedures designed for safe working.
- Report all incidents or near misses that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others.
- Ensure that their manager is aware of any and all periods of lone working.
- Notify DSL by WhatsApp, when they start and finish a lone working session.
- Seek guidance as appropriate.
- Know the contact details for the emergency contact.
- Engage in training designed to support and meet the requirements of the policy.
- Actively identify any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.
- In the event of being notified that a lone worker is overdue, taking immediate steps to investigate the situation.
- Be part of the review process.

AEMHF Safe Systems

We will ensure that all staff are aware of the safe systems in place.

These include:

- Ensuring the lone worker has full knowledge of the hazard and risk to which they are being exposed.
- The location of lone workers should as far as possible be known at all times.
- Staff must notify DSL by WhatsApp when they start and finish a lone working session.
- The lone worker must know what to do if something goes wrong and be able to summon help.
- Guideline should be flexible and responsive to the lone worker's needs.
- Guidelines will be regularly reviewed and checked for effectiveness.

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Training Requirements

AEMHF will provide sufficient mandatory training and information to the lone worker to enable them to identify hazards and take appropriate action to avoid them. The training will be based on the needs identified through local risk assessment.

Procedures for Staff

First person to arrive on site

Ideally two people will arrive together, however practically the first person into the building should be alert to any potential issues. If an overnight break-in is suspected the lone worker must not enter the building but must wait outside, they should contact their emergency contact and phone the police. They should not enter the building until emergency support arrives.

If the lone worker believes they are being followed or watched, they should not enter the building or home until it is safe to do so and should notify the DSL and Police if necessary.

At no time must AEMHF staff attempt to protect property from damage or theft. If damage or theft is taking place, then staff have a responsibility to keep themselves and others safe. Under no circumstances, should they challenge the perpetrators.

On the rare occasion when you know you will be in a building alone, a “Remote Panic Alarm” should be issued and worn around the neck. Visitors can then be admitted. The front door is fitted with an Electronic Door Entry Intercom System so that the lone worker can converse with visitors before deciding whether to allow them access and the lone worker should be provided training by the owners of the premises to use this effectively.

Under no circumstances while AEMHF is primarily based at Home (remotely) and using others premises that the premises holder should let in anyone else other than AEMHF staff or the client(s) they are seeing. Non-AEMHF Staff who work in the premises should already have a security pass.

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Daytime Lone Working

Whilst it may be necessary for a member of staff to work alone in a premises during the day, whenever possible more than one person should be in the premises.

If working in a lone working capacity, staff need to be aware that they are alone in the building and take any precautions that they believe to be sensible in that situation. Any lone working staff must wear a “Remote Panic Alarm” around their neck. The door is an Electronic Door Entry Intercom System and should only be opened in the case of an emergency or to allow entry to visitors that they feel comfortable with.

Evening/Weekend Lone Working

Any member of staff who believes that they will be working in the premises after the close of working hours should park their car as close as possible (preferably under a light) during the working day. This is particularly important in the wintertime because of the early dark nights. They should only open the premises door to visitors out of official opening hours, when it is an expected client they are seeing or a familiar member of staff.

If a member of staff feels threatened, the “Remote Panic Alarm” should be worn around the neck when working alone in the building. This will sound an audible alarm and alert others in the building.

If staff feel unsafe when lone working, they should contact the Police as soon as they suspect a problem and their manager.

When staff are scheduled to see a client outside the normal day (after 6pm or at weekends), ensure AEMHF management know to ensure that another member of staff can be available, in case you need any help or support. Should another member of AEMHF staff being in the premises deem impractical then a nominated person should be texted stating that they are on site and when they have finished work the lone worker must notify the nominated person to let them know that they are leaving the building and home.

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Lone Working Off Site

Home visits are not normal practice but may be allowed in exceptional circumstances, if the client is unable to attend a premises and with the full knowledge and agreement of AEMFS management. Do not just leave a message without confirmation that it has been received.

During home visits – make sure your phone mobile is kept switched on but, on silent. Should the lone worker exceed the period of time that they have stated, then an initial call will be made to assess what (if any) action is required. MK Together provide specific guidance for safe home visits.

When seeing a client outside the office (home visit or in a public place) – text the nominated person when you arrive outside the location with the address, who you are seeing, how long you are likely to be and any other information that you feel is relevant. Once the session is completed text again once you have left to say so.

If the client has been referred, check with the referrer if there is any known risk from that home. [TR1] A phone call to the police can also be undertaken to check if there is a flag on the address for violence.

If you are working with a child or young person aged under 18 years old – only continue the session if a parent/carer is present, never enter the location if they are alone. Sessions should never be held in a bedroom, but in a space where you can be seen, whilst maintaining confidentiality (as much as possible). You must consider your own safety as well as the safety of the child.

Any issues or incidents must be reported through to the DSL following the visit.

Risk Management Process

AEMHF is under a general duty to maintain safe systems of work under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, which means we are legally obliged to assess and minimise the risks that you may face. Setting up safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff, so the general principles of risk assessment must be followed. If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, other arrangements must be put in place. The worker should never knowingly be placed at risk.

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Risk Assessment

Risk assessments should take account of both normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, illness and accidents. Information on risk assessment can be obtained through the procedure for risk assessments, the risk assessment strategy or from AEMHF management.

Risk assessments must be carried out in all areas of work where working alone poses an actual or potential risk to staff. The risk assessment will involve identifying all potential dangers and the risks associated with specific work tasks or activities. It should identify who will be affected and how, and the control measures which are needed to get rid of or reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably possible. Risk assessment should be carried out and should be recorded and shared with relevant others. Factors to consider when carrying out the risk assessment include the following:

- Does the workplace present a special or specific risk to the lone worker?
- Can one person adequately control the risks of the job?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What training is needed to make sure the staff member is competent in safety matters?
- Have staff received the training which is necessary to allow them to work alone?
- How will the person be supervised?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are people of a particular gender especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are new or inexperienced staff especially at risk if they work alone?
- What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or if there is an emergency?

Details of the risk assessment should be recorded and 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

Information from the risk assessment should be fed back to staff. Risk assessments should be reviewed and updated each year (or sooner should circumstances change).

AEMHF encourages the use of risk assessments.

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Risk Management

AEMHF has a responsibility to make sure that staff have the lowest level of risk that is reasonably practicable.

Issues to consider in developing safe systems of work include:

- Joint working with others for high-risk activities.
- Improvements to security arrangements.
- 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 or mobile phones or personal alarm.
- Regular training.

Reporting and Recording

Staff should report all incidents (including near misses) to AEMHF management at the earliest opportunity. These should be reported on an incident form and AEMHF management should investigate all reports. To monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and associated local protocols, local statistics and incident reports should be reviewed regularly.

AEMHF management should ensure that feedback is given to the member of staff within an appropriate period. There should be immediate initial feedback provided following an incident or a near miss and then follow-up feedback provided following an investigation into the matter.

Monitoring and Reviewing

AEMHF will monitor and review this policy to make sure the aims of the policy are being achieved. This will be undertaken annually by the CEO.

Staff are encouraged to feedback any observations and comments.

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless:

- Changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children or adults at risk.
- Significant changes within AEMHF.
- Following recommendations about an incident or near miss.

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