Fakenham Town Council

LONE WORKING POLICY

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1. Introduction to Policy

Fakenham Town Council will take every practicable step to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees and Councillors whenever they are required by the nature of their duties to work alone and without direct support and supervision.

Whilst working alone is not in itself unsafe there may be circumstances where working alone can increase risks. The Council recognises that there may be increased risks to staff that are required to work alone. The implementation of this policy should help to reduce these risks.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties of the Council. For the purposes of this policy lone working is defined as any activity or function performed on behalf of the Council without any close supervision or with other employees.

3. Policy Aims

i. To increase awareness of safety issues relating to lone working.
ii. To ensure control measures are introduced to reduce any identified risks to health and safety caused by lone working.
iii. To give staff and councillors appropriate information, instruction, or training ahead of being expected to work alone depending upon risk assessment.

4. Legal Requirements

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety, and welfare of employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to consider hazards and reduce the risk of injury to employees so far as is reasonably practicable.

5. Definition of a Lone Worker

A lone worker is 'someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision'.
Examples of lone workers within Fakenham Town Council are;

- employees working at home on their own, working outside of normal office hours, travelling on their own, attending sites on their own.
- Councillors visiting electors on their own, travelling to meetings on their own and attending sites on their own.

6. Responsibilities

Everyone has an individual responsibility for both their own health and safety and the health and safety of their colleagues. The key responsibilities are.

(i) Employers Responsibilities
   a) To ensure that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating, and managing risks associated with lone working.
   b) To investigate potential hazards faced by lone workers and assess the risks involved to the lone worker and to any person who may be affected by their work and then ensure that measures are in place to control or avoid such risk.
   c) To involve staff when undertaking the required risk assessment process, take steps to check control measures are in place and review risk assessments annually or when there has been a significant change in working practice.
   d) To ensure staff receive all relevant training and information as applicable.

(ii) Employee Responsibilities
   a) To take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their work.
   b) To follow any guidance or instructions given by council management
   c) Taking part in any training required by council.
   d) To raise any concerns, they have in relation to lone working with the Clerk
   e) Not to work alone where there is inadequate information to undertake a risk assessment.
   f) Inform the Clerk at the earliest opportunity in the event of any accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone.
   g) Be alert to colleagues' whereabouts when lone working and be alert to unexpected routine changes or unanticipated periods on non-communication
   h) To be aware of where medical assistance can be obtained.

7. Potential Risks

People who work alone will face the same risks in their work as those doing similar roles or tasks, however they may additionally encounter hazards such as:
   i. Sudden illness
   ii. Faulty equipment
   iii. Travelling alone
   iv. Working in remote locations
   v. Abuse from members of the public
   vi. Animal attacks
   vii. Sudden weather events

8. Risk Assessments

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, a risk assessment of lone working tasks should be carried out. Lone working issues may be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. Where lone working has not been considered as part of other risk assessments, a specific risk assessment should be carried out.

When carrying out the risk assessment particular consideration should be given to the remoteness of location, communications, adverse weather conditions, the nature of any potential injury and damage to health, any previous incidents/accidents/level of individual experience and training and availability of first aid facilities. It should also be recognised that changes to these conditions could make tasks more hazardous.

In relation to First Aid, the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 place a general responsibility on employers to provide first aid facilities.

Before recording the assessment of risk, it must be established;
  i.   Whether the work can be done by a lone worker.
  ii.   What arrangements will be in place to ensure an individual is not exposed to unnecessary and unacceptable risk?

9. Safe Systems of Work

Every lone working environment and situation is different and as such it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment. Precautions should take account of normal work and all foreseeable emergencies, e.g., fire, equipment failure, violence, verbal abuse, illness, and accidents.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision and control. This may be critical to avoid mistakes being made on the day that could lead to panic reactions and unnecessary stress. Staff working alone must be competent for the work they undertake and fully understand the risks and precautions relating to those tasks. They should be able to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training.

Tasks that are unsafe to be carried out by a lone worker in circumstances where, even with all the controls in place, the risk assessment identifies that it is not possible for a task to be carried out safely by a lone worker, should only be done by two people.

10. Good Practice

During working hours staff leaving the workplace should leave details of where they are going and estimated timings. If plans change significantly this should be communicated.
Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities and should carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.
Lone workers should be provided with a mobile phone and other personal safety equipment where this is necessary.
Employees should carry out their own 'Personal Assessment' before undertaking any activity which involves working alone.
Before starting work, employees should be advised that, if they have a feeling that something is wrong, that they should rely on their senses/professional judgement. They must not commence the task, but report to the Clerk to seek clarification or advice.
Groundsman are issued with body worn cameras that should be worn whilst on duty and switched on in the event of an incident.
Office staff that are work late in the evenings to facilitate Council meetings are advised to lock and leave the building in the company of another (e.g., a Councillor)

Ratified at Full Council 22nd November 2023
Reviewed at Governance & Finance 19th August 2025