NHS Lothian

Title:	
Lone Working (Health and Safety) Policy	
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Approved by:	NHS Lothian Policy Approval Group
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Author/s:	Lead Health and Safety Adviser
Policy Owner:	NHS Lothian Executive Nurse Director
Executive Lead:	NHS Lothian Executive Medical Director
Target Audience:	All NHS Lothian staff but particularly those who undertake lone working
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Lone Working (H&S) Policy

Version Control

Date	Author	Version/Page	Reason for change
July 2008	Unknown	v1.0	Reviewed and updated
Nov 2011	Head of CFMA	v2.0	Reviewed and updated
Sept 2015	Head of CFMA	v3.0	Reviewed and updated
April 2018	Management of Aggression Team	v3.1 (TU)	Technical update
May 2021	Health and Safety Adviser	v4.0	Reviewed. Approved by the Policy Approval Group
February 2024	Lead Health and Safety Adviser	v4.1	Change to remove staff who work from home as Cat 2 lone workers, and inclusion of Senior Responsible Officers for the use of Lone Working Devices.
March 2024	Lead Health and Safety Adviser	v5.0	Approved by the Policy Approval Group

Executive Summary

NHS Lothian recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves for brief or significant periods of time wither within a building or in the community, without close of direct supervision. Lone workers face the same hazards at work as anyone else, but there is a greater risk of these hazards causing harm as they may not have anyone to help or support them if things go wrong.

NHS Lothian as an organization recognises that staff are exposed to differing levels of risk whilst lone working and have varying levels of access to support due to 24/7 shift patterns, locations of work and other individual factors. To reflect this and to assist the risk assessment and risk reduction process, lone workers will be categorised as a Category 1 and a Category 2 lone worker.

Staff identified in the NHS Lothian Risk Assessment and Training Needs System, Violence and Aggression and Lone Working Tool (Purple Pack) as Category 1 and 2 Lone Workers will complete the Management of Aggression Team's lone worker training.

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Lone working staff will be supported by effective, documented and up to date local safe and well procedures. Where the risk control measures, and lone worker category identify the use of lone worker devices these will be provided by the Service.

Managers must monitor the implementation of, and local compliance with this policy and its associated procedure. Effectiveness of implementation and compliance should be reported via the local health and safety committees.

Lone Working (H&S) Policy

Contents

1.0   Purpose

The purpose of this policy and its associated procedure is to assist managers and staff in the assessment of lone working risks, and to enable the service to meet, as a minimum, its statutory duty of identifying, managing, control and protecting staff as far as is reasonably practicable from the risks that can arise out of lone working.

2.0   Policy statement

NHS Lothian Health Board (NHS Lothian) takes the health, safety, and welfare of all staff seriously. NHS Lothian will therefore ensure that any foreseeable lone working risks to staff are eliminated, or reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable, by implementing risk reduction strategies: conducting risk assessments to identify the risk of lone working, providing access to Management of Violence and Aggression Lone Worker education, supporting staff by introducing effective Safe and Well Procedures, facilitating lone worker devices (and a mobile phone when needed), and ensuring that all adverse events and near misses relating to lone working are properly reported and investigated, in line with the NHS Lothian Adverse Event Management Policy and Adverse Event Management Procedure

3.0   Scope

This policy applies to all NHS Lothian staff working on NHS property and non-NHS property, and to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of our staff.

The policy is required to acknowledge the Health and Social Care Integration which will involve working in collaboration with external agencies. These agencies may have differing working procedures and policies. NHS Lothian staff members are governed by this policy, but where possible local operational procedures should be agreed through the examination of commonalities within each organisation's lone working policy.

4.0   Definitions

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."

Lone working can take place in a variety of settings and whilst undertaking a range of work activities, which include:

−   Conducting assessments, treatments, and the delivery of care in people's homes.

−   Conducting assessments, treatments, and the delivery of care in departments or clinics.

−   Staff who travel between places of work other than their base.

This list of activities is not exhaustive.

4.1   Category 1 Lone Worker

– Staff who visit patients in their homes alone out-of-hours and at weekends, and therefore may have a greater potential to come into contact with people in crisis, including those people: with mental health problems, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, with a history of violence or crime, or with child and/or adult protection issues.

– Staff who work in isolation within a department out of office hours and at weekends.

– Staff who may be more vulnerable to the risks of lone working due to short- or long-term medical conditions or disabilities.

– Staff who work with potential hazards such as electricity or at height.

4.2   Category 2 Lone Worker

– Staff who visit patients in their home or run clinics in buildings alone or in isolation, within office hours (Mon – Fri).

5.0   Implementation roles and responsibilities

The overall framework of accountability and responsibility for the organisation, managers and staff on the implementation of this policy follows that laid out within the NHS Lothian Health and Safety Policy. Specifically, the roles and responsibilities for senior responsible officers, clinical nurse managers/equivalent and service/ward/department managers and staff are provided below.

5.1   Senior Responsible Officers

– Co-ordination of all lone working devices for their areas of responsibility.

– Monitoring compliance of lone working devices e.g., elearning, recording on eEss and update alerts for their areas of responsibility.

– Communicate to departments any lack of compliance.

5.2   Clinical Nurse Manager (CNM) or Equivalent

– Ensuring that all Service/Departmental Managers are aware of this policy and the requirements within it.

– Ensuring that all Service/Departmental Managers have completed the NHS Lothian Risk Assessment and Training Needs System, Violence and Aggression and Lone Working document (Purple Pack) to the appropriate stage.

– Reviewing the content of risk assessment, ensuring that controls are proportionate and signing off satisfactory documents.

– Facilitating compliance with the identified level of staff education by ensuring wards and departments are sufficiently resourced to allow for release.

- Ensuring that all aspects of [NHS Lothian's Adverse Event Management Policy](#) and [Adverse Event Management Procedure](#) are implemented in relation to lone working.

- Ensuring that Service/Departmental Managers are implementing robust post event support strategies.

5.3 Service/Ward/Department Managers

- Ensuring that all staff members are aware of this policy and the requirements within it. This may require considering communication needs of staff whose first language is not English or who have sensory impairment.

- Completing the [NHS Lothian Risk Assessment and Training Needs System, Violence and Aggression and Lone Working document (Purple Pack)](#) to the appropriate stage.

- Implementing all controls identified during the risk assessment process and evaluating the effectiveness of controls.

- Assessing the level of education required by staff and ensuring that all staff complete the identified level of education. Ward and Departmental Managers are required to undertake violence and aggression risk assessment using the [NHS Lothian Risk Assessment and Training Needs System, Violence and Aggression and Lone Working Tool (Purple Pack).](#) Support and specialist advice is available from NHS Lothian's Management of Aggression Team

- Responsible for the management and monitoring the use of lone worker devices, ensuring that all escalation and contact details are kept up to date and communicated to the lone worker device supplier.

- Ensure that all Category 1 lone workers who are issued with a Lone Working Device complete elearning, attend face to face training, activate their device, provide regular device updates, and use the device in line with their service Safe & Well Procedure.

- Address any non-compliance with the use of lone working devices.

- Implementing all aspects of [NHS Lothian's Adverse Event Management Policy](#) and ensuring that all events relating to lone working are reported using the DATIX System and investigated in accordance with the [policy](#) and [procedure](#).

- Accessing support and specialist advice from NHS Lothian's Management of Aggression Team when risks and challenges cannot be managed effectively.

- Facilitating post event support strategies including adverse event investigation, review, de-brief and support for staff and others affected by these events.

5.4 All Staff

- Taking reasonable care of themselves, and any other people who may be affected by their actions.

- Follow all policies and procedures designed for prevention and management of violence and aggression.

- Contribute to the risk assessment and risk reduction process by completing the staff perspective questionnaire.

- Category 1 lone workers who are issued with a Lone Working Device must ensure they complete elearning, attend face to face management of aggression training, elearning to activate their device, provide regular device updates, and use the device in line with their service Safe & Well Procedure.

- Report any risks, they identify and implementing controls including the completion of identified education.

- Reporting all adverse events involving lone working, abuse, threats, or assault, including near misses, to their line manager and recording these using the DATIX system.

6.0 Associated materials

NHS Lothian Lone Working Procedure, March 2024

NHS Lothian Risk Assessment and Training Needs System, Violence and Aggression and Lone Working Tool (Purple Pack), approved by the Chief Nurse for Clinical Education and Training and the Head of Health and Safety, August 2023

NHS Lothian Health and Safety Policy, approved by Lothian Health Board, April 2021

NHS Lothian Adverse Event Management Policy, approved by the Policy Approval Group, September 2023

Adverse Event Management Procedure, approved by the NHS Lothian Executive Medical Director, September 2023

7.0 Evidence base

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

- Protecting Lone Workers: How to Manage the Risks of Working Alone: Health and Safety Executive (2020).

- Working Alone a Health and Safety Guide on lone working for safety representatives – Unison (2009).

- Keeping Safe When You are Working Alone - Royal College of Nursing (2016)

- Improving Safety for Lone Workers –NHS Employers (2013)

8.0 Stakeholder consultation

A draft of this policy was placed on the NHS Lothian Consultation Zone for a 4-week period to give all NHS Lothian staff an opportunity to provide comment.

9.0   Monitoring and review

9.1   Proactive management

Violence and Aggression, which includes Lone Working, is reviewed, and reported on annually as part of the Health and Safety Management Quarterly Reporting System. Documented information is gathered at ward/department level and then provided to the Service(s)/Health and Social Care Partnerships Management Teams. Reports are then provided to the respective Health and Safety Committees to determine the risk assurance level. This information is then submitted to the NHS Lothian Health and Safety Committee and the NHS Lothian Staff Governance Committee.

9.2   Reactive management

All adverse events involving Lone Working must be reported using the DATIX system and investigated in line with the NHS Lothian Adverse Event Management Policy and Operational Procedure.

9.3   Review

The policy will be reviewed and revised every three years, or as a result of any changes in level of risk and/or in legislation which may occur before this. This policy may also be subject to review if new guidance (e.g., Once for Scotland Policy) or legal opinion is issued, or NHS Lothian identifies a need for revision as the result of inspection, audit, or following investigation of an adverse event.