

# SAFE WORKING PROCEDURE

## Working Alone in Safety Controlling the Risks of Solitary Workers

CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY | VERSION 4.04 | September 2023

### **STATEMENT:**

In order to comply with legislation and fulfil statutory responsibility, the Council must make sure that:

- Risk assessments consider lone workers and work activities.
- Procedures are in place to identify the location of lone workers at all times and emergency procedures are established.
- Controls are in place to monitor lone workers who have been assessed as being at risk.

### **SCOPE:**

This Safe Working Procedure (SWP) applies to:

- All managers including headteachers referred to as managers herein.
- All employees of Southampton City Council.



## 1. Responsibilities

### Service Lead/Head Teachers are responsible for ensuring:

- 1.1. Risk assessments must consider lone workers.
- 1.2. Controls are in place to manage the risks to lone workers.

### Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this SWP and must:

- 1.3. Undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and consider lone workers as required by SWP Risk Assessment.
- 1.4. Check lone workers have no medical conditions which could increase the risks of them lone working (seek Occupational Health advice if necessary).
- 1.5. Reduce the risks to lone workers to as low as is reasonable practicable.
- 1.6. Ensure employees follow lone working controls detailed by the risk assessment.
- 1.7. Ensure lone workers are provided with information, instruction and training on the controls and what to do in an emergency.
- 1.8. Ensure where controls rely on other staff to act when alerted to safety concerns of lone workers, those staff are briefed and trained on what those procedures are.
- 1.9. Provide lone workers with appropriate communications.
- 1.10. Provide lone workers with first aid kits, where the level of risk dictates.
- 1.11. Provide systems to ensure that risk lone workers have returned to their base or home safely at the end of their shift and have procedures in place to manage the situation if they have not returned.
- 1.12. Consider that additional safety measures such as use of the Lone Work Management system (Jontek) may be required for some employees identified in the Risk Assessment. (Contact details in [section 5](#))

### Employees must:

- 1.13. Follow safe systems of work identified by the risk assessment.
- 1.14. Report any incidents to their line manager verbally and on the accident/incident or Violence and Abuse online database in accordance with the SWP Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigation.
- 1.15. Inform the manager of any medical condition that could influence the level of risk as a lone worker, e.g. suffering from a heart condition, or a new and expectant mother.
- 1.16. In the event of an Emergency, follow the procedures put in place by your line manager, if necessary, call the Police on (9)999.
- 1.17. If urgent police help is required through the 999 service but the lone worker is unable to speak, the Silent Solution procedure should be used ([Appendix 4](#))

## 2. Procedure

### 2.1. Introduction

- 2.1.1. A lone worker could be exposed to a greater level of risk when carrying out their work activities because they are unable to summon timely assistance; things to consider include: violence, harassment and abuse (including sexual), working at height, using machinery, slip/trip/falls and medical issues.
- 2.1.2. A lone worker may not always be 'alone' but could be the only employee of the Council amongst a group of people and it depends in what context they are working as to whether they are at risk of not. For example travelling on a train to London, and traversing the underground, the employee is a lone worker but not perceived to be at risk, on the other hand an employee taking vulnerable adults on a tour of the city could be at risk from the group or a member from the group after work.
- 2.1.3. The Council has based its controls for lone workers into four Risk Categories: Low, Medium, High and Very High (see Para 2.2.2).

### 2.2. Risk Assessment

- 2.1.1 Using the guidance and risk categories below, managers are to ensure risk assessments are suitable and sufficient by considering the risks faced by lone workers in line with the Council's SWP Risk Assessment.
- 2.1.2 Online Guidance – The links below will take you to sources of information that will help inform the risk assessment process and develop controls:
  - 2.1.2.1 HSEs guidance document INDG73 [Working Alone](#).
  - 2.1.2.2 HSEs [Workplace Violence microsite](#).
  - 2.1.2.3 [Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence](#), joint guidance, 'implementing a European social partner agreement' – source HSE.
  - 2.1.2.4 Skills for Care: [Supporting Lone Workers](#).
- 2.1.3 Risk Categories
  - 2.2.3.1. **Low Risk**  
There is no foreseen risk of violence & abuse or of an accident resulting in significant injury.
  - 2.2.3.2. **Medium Risk**  
There is some potential for violence and abuse or injury from an accident which could result in minor first aid treatment.
  - 2.2.3.3. **High Risk**  
There is greater potential for a violent and abusive situation or an accident that could result in significant harm and time off work.
  - 2.2.3.4. **Very High Risk**  
It is highly probable there will be a violent or abusive situation or accident resulting in significant harm, long term sickness absence or death.
- 2.1.4 Management Control Measures – For examples of how the order applies to the risk categories, see table 1 below:
  - 2.2.4.1. Do not carry out the task.
  - 2.2.4.2. Do not allow lone working.
  - 2.2.4.3. Apply management control measures for general risk (see SWP Risk Assessment).
  - 2.2.4.4. Develop and use 'Senior Officer Procedure' or equivalent ([see appendix 2](#)).
  - 2.2.4.5. Use the Jontek system where additional safety measures are required. (see contact information in [section 5](#))
  - 2.2.4.6. Use location whereabouts systems in/out boards, e-mail etc.
  - 2.2.4.7. Provide Information, Instruction and Training.

**Table 1 Examples of Tasks by Risk Category, to be used as a guide for risk assessment and the development of controls**

In an emergency or anytime a member of staff feels threatened by a situation, they should call the police by **dialling (9)999**.

Risk Level	Example of Tasks perceived to be at risk, there may be some cross over of risks levels according to local circumstances and this table is a guide.		Controls
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office based activities</li> <li>• General commuting (depending on final location task)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some cleaners</li> <li>• Researchers</li> <li>• Trainers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform colleagues of whereabouts by use of in/out boards, telephone, e-mail, keep diaries up to date.</li> <li>• If working very late in a building, inform Town Sergeant/ Manager; if using a car, move car closer to office.</li> <li>• Consider having a personal alarm.</li> </ul>
Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Long journeys</li> <li>• Maintenance staff (plumbers, decorators, carpenters, electricians)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some cleaners</li> <li>• Construction site visits</li> <li>• Parks and Open Spaces</li> </ul>	<p>As for Low plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with employees to see if there are any health related problems, e.g. prone to heart attacks, the manager should be aware of, that could affect their safety when working alone.</li> <li>• Book on/off duty.</li> <li>• Use a 'Senior Officer Procedure' procedure (see <a href="#">Appendix 2</a>).</li> </ul>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhoods wardens</li> <li>• Community workers</li> <li>• Domestic aides</li> <li>• Housing Services staff/ officers</li> <li>• Out Reach workers</li> <li>• Support workers</li> <li>• Cash Collectors</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding wardens</li> <li>• Homeless workers</li> <li>• Family Centre workers</li> <li>• Night Supervisors/ collectors</li> <li>• Debt collectors</li> <li>• Social/Care workers</li> <li>• Enforcement \Officers</li> </ul>	<p>As for Low and Medium plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive system in place to check on staff throughout the day/night, particularly when staff are overdue booking off (for example by use of the Jontek system – see <a href="#">section 5</a> for contact information)</li> <li>• Intelligence led approach, review Paris to check for red flag markers on clients or other systems such as the council 'Incident List' (see SWP Incident List). If higher risk identified consider two to attend, bring the client into a secure interview room.</li> <li>• Provide staff with diffuse/conflict resolution training.</li> <li>• Provide staff with First Aid Kits.</li> <li>• Ensure staff have communications (e.g. mobile phone).</li> <li>• Employees to carry out dynamic lone working assessment, if risk is deemed unacceptable, terminate lone working activities.</li> </ul>
Very high	<p>Those identified as very high risk where intelligence identifies high probability of an incident occurring, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confined Spaces</li> <li>• Electrical work at or near exposed live conductors</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working at height where fall arrest systems are used</li> <li>• Lone working not to take place.</li> </ul>

**Note:** Use the table above to help in the development of your risk assessment which must detail the controls you actually have in place.

### 3. Safe Working Procedures and Other SCC Information Relevant to This Document

- 3.1 Risk Assessment
- 3.2 Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence
- 3.3 Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigation
- 3.4 First Aid
- 3.5 Health & Safety Training
- 3.6 [Relevant forms](#)
  - 3.6.1. General Risk Assessment
- 3.7 [Lone Working Arrangements Document](#)
- 3.8 [Lone Working Risk Assessment](#)
- 3.9 [Lone Working Microsite](#)

**Note:** Other safe working procedures may apply and the assessor should consult the SWPs. An A-Z is available on the Council's [Health and Safety Intranet](#).

### 4. Main Legislation Relevant to This Document

- 4.1 [Health and Safety at Work etc Act](#)
- 4.2 [The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations](#)
- 4.3 [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations \(RIDDOR\)](#)
- 4.4 [Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations and The Health and Safety \(Consultation with Employees\) Regulations](#)

### 5. Contact Address's and Guidance Links

City Telecare (For Jontek services)  
Email; [city.telecare.services@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:city.telecare.services@southampton.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 023 8083 3673

- 5.1 Health and Safety Executive  
[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
- 5.2 Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents  
[www.rospa.co.uk/](http://www.rospa.co.uk/)
- 5.3 Institute of Occupational Safety and Health  
[www.iosh.co.uk/](http://www.iosh.co.uk/)
- 5.4 Skills for Care  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)
- 5.5 Corporate Health and Safety Service  
[Health and Safety Intranet](#)
  - 5.5.1. [Stress - Microsite](#)

For full contact address visit the health and safety intranet [Useful Contacts](#).

# Guidance for Employees

As an employee, you have a duty of care to yourself, if you are a lone worker you must follow the systems put in place by your manager. The following guide will also help you to help yourself.

- Assess the risk yourself; don't go into a situation if you feel at risk.
- Keep your diary up to date, use in/out boards, tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Don't take any unnecessary risks that could result in an accident, follow the safe system of work you have been taught.
- Don't make yourself an obvious target by walking alone in parks and open spaces.
- Don't carry laptops or other items in obvious bags, put them in a rucksack.
- Check system such as 'Paris' or the 'Incident List' before you make your visit to check for red flag markers, if necessary inform your manager and request two to attend or arrange the interview in a council secure interview room.
- Have a mobile phone at hand or other communication device.
- If the Jontek system is being used ensure you are familiar with the system and have received the appropriate training.
- If you are working late in the office let the Town Sergeant or your line manager know and tell them when you leave. If necessary move your car closer, if for example you're in the Civic for a public meeting till late at night or arrange for a taxi.
- If you are meeting a client, always stay between them and your route of escape. Use conflict resolution or defusing techniques, these include being aware of non-verbal communication; how to behave in a non-confrontational way; the importance of good customer care; being polite; and listening to clients.
- Be aware of surroundings. Keep your wits about you at all times and be aware of the situation you are in. Be aware of your own actions and how others may perceive you.
- If you feel threatened, make your excuses and leave. Make sure you can leave the premises quickly if you need to.
- Panic/rape alarms can be purchased for staff that need them.
- In an Emergency if you feel frightened or threatened follow your lone working procedure agreed with your line manager or if necessary call the Police on 999 if you can. The silent solution procedure can be used if you are unable to speak (please refer to [Appendix 4](#)).

# Senior Officer Procedure

The 'Senior Officer Procedure' has been developed for use by lone workers as identified by risk assessment and should be used as a fall back procedure in conjunction with other proactive lone working procedures.

The purpose of the procedure is to enable a staff member to summon an emergency Police response without alerting the aggressor/assailant by calling their office/manager and giving some code words where by the office or manager will call the Police on 999 for an Emergency Response.

If managers are going to adopt this procedure, they are to ensure all staff know how to use it and there are arrangements in place for an appropriate response. It is good practice to test these procedures periodically.

A template pocket card hand out has been developed below that can be handed out to all staff.

## Procedure

Use this procedure to call for emergency police response if you are in a situation where you feel frightened or threatened (assumes contacting the police direct may make the situation worse).

1. Tell the person who is causing the difficulty that you are unable to answer / respond to their problem and that you will have to speak to someone in a more senior position.
2. Phone **insert number including** situations outside normal working hours.
3. State your name; where you are; who you are with and say:  
**"I would like to speak to a senior officer"**.  
(This is a code indicating that you need help urgently.)
4. To confirm your situation and to avoid letting the other party know you are asking for help, you will be asked the following questions requiring 'yes' or 'no' answers.  
*Do you require urgent police attendance?*  
*You will then be asked to repeat: Your name? Where you are? Who you are with?*
5. Subsequent actions will vary depending on the circumstances. The situation will be monitored until the problem is resolved or until you are no longer at risk.
6. Senior management must be informed of the incident as soon as possible and then the completion of the online violence/abuse incident form via the intranet must be carried out giving full details of the incident.



## Senior Officer Procedure Pocket Card

Crop out the card below and fold in the middle, glue together and laminate.

Cut	Fold	Cut
	<b><u>Emergency?</u></b> <b>Call the Police on (9)999</b> If you are frightened or threatened and need a police response but do not want to raise suspicion to the person causing you concern by calling them direct, then follow the <b>Senior Officer Procedure</b> Phone _____ Procedure overleaf	<b><u>Senior Officer Procedure</u></b> 1. Tell the person who is causing the difficulty that you are unable to answer/respond to their problem and that you will have to speak to someone in a more senior position. 2. Phone _____. 3. <b>State your name, where you are, who you are with and say:</b> <b>“I would like to speak to a Senior Officer”</b> 4. You will be asked: <b>“Do you require urgent police attendance?” Yes/No</b>
Cut	Fold	Cut

## The Silent Solution Procedure

### What to do if you need urgent police help through the 999 service, but can't speak;

#### - From a Mobile Phone;

All 999 calls are directed to call centres and will be answered by BT operators. They will ask which service you need. If no service is requested but anything suspicious is heard throughout the process, BT operators will connect you to a police call handler.

It is always best to speak to the operator if you can, even by whispering. You may also be asked to cough or tap the keys on your phone in response to questions.

If making a sound would put you or someone else in danger and the BT operator cannot decide whether an emergency service is needed, your call will be transferred to the Silent Solution system.

The Silent Solution is a police system used to filter out large numbers of accidental or hoax 999 calls. It also exists to help people who are unable to speak, but who genuinely need police assistance. You will hear an automated police message, which lasts for 20 seconds and begins with 'you are through to the police'. It will ask you to press 55 to be put through to police call management. The BT operator will remain on the line and listen. If you press 55, they will be notified and transfer the call to the police. If you don't press 55, the call will be terminated. Pressing 55 does not allow police to track your location.

When transferred to your local police force, the police call handler will attempt to communicate with you by asking simple yes or no questions. If you are not able to speak, listen carefully to the questions and instructions from the call handler so they can assess your call and arrange help if needed.

#### - From a Landline;

Because it's less likely that 999 calls are made by accident from landlines, the Silent Solution system is not used. If, when an emergency call on a landline is received:

- there is no request for an emergency
- the caller does not answer questions
- only background noise can be heard and BT operators cannot decide whether an emergency service is needed

you will then be connected to a police call handler as doubt exists.

If you replace the handset, the landline may remain connected for 45 seconds in case you pick it up again. If you pick it up again during this 45 seconds and the BT operator is concerned for your safety, the call will be connected to police.

When 999 calls are made from landlines, information about where you're calling from should be automatically available to the call handlers to help provide a response.