



Berkshire & Hampshire Borders Methodist Circuit

Lone Working Policy

Introduction

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, an employer is responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their staff and volunteers. (In this document the words “staff” and “employee” are interchangeable and relate to Ministers and Lay Employees.) They also have responsibility for the health and safety of any contractor or self-employed people doing work for them. However, staff and volunteers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to cooperate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations. Many staff work from their own home and are entitled to expect systems to account for their safety there too.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit. Each Methodist Church within the Circuit is responsible for its own risk assessment of its activities, when employees, Church members, or volunteers are working alone.

A lone worker is anyone who works in isolation from their colleagues without close or direct supervision. This includes:

- i) Those working at their main place of work where:
 - Only one person is working on the premises
 - People are working separately from each other, e.g. in different locations
 - People are working outside normal office hours (9am – 5pm).
- ii) Those working away from their fixed base where:
 - One worker is visiting another agency’s premises or meeting venue
 - One worker is making a home visit to an individual
 - One worker is working from their own home.

Many lay employees work on a part-time basis, from their own home and so it is equally important to have a system in place to account for their safety too. It is important to note that lone workers maybe at higher risk of being seriously harmed by hazards at work because there may not be anyone to support or help them in the event of an accident or illness. The Circuit must ensure that it trains, supervises, and monitors the provision of robust health and safety practices for its employees, as part of its overall duty of care.

Aims of Policy

The aims of the policy are to: -

- increase Circuit staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working and acknowledge the responsibility of Church Councils within the Circuit with regard to lone working of their own employees (e.g. cleaners) and volunteers.
- ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk, so far as reasonable and practicable.
- ensure that appropriate support and training is given to all staff and volunteers, that enables them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone.
- encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working.
- reduce the number of incidents involving staff and volunteers which are related to lone working.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of **the employer** to:

- assess the 'reasonably foreseeable risks' (e.g. Is there glass in the office door so that all callers can be seen before the door is opened? Does the cleaner work late at night and needs to use an un-lit passageway to get home?)
- ensure that a system is in place for calling for help if there is a problem on the premises (e.g. emergency alarm).
- keep on file in a secure place, the employee and their next-of-kin contact phone numbers (and vehicle registration details if this is used for work purposes).
- keep records of any health issues that may affect the employee whilst working alone and review this as necessary
- ensure that a system is in place so that the employer knows that an employee is safe when working on their own either on or off the premises. (e.g. via phone calls and location visits)
- provide all employees making home visits with a mobile phone or reimbursement of costs incurred for work-related calls made. Consider whether other employees would benefit from the provision of a mobile phone as well.
- ensure that the employee receives a Health and Safety Induction training and that the Certificate of Employers Liability is always displayed in the office.
- check that insurance cover adequately covers the work to be undertaken. Ensure an accident book is always kept up to date.
- ensure the availability of appropriate and adequate personal protective equipment for mandatory use by employees as necessary.
- provide an accident book and ensure it is always kept up to date.

It is the responsibility of **the employee** to:

- take reasonable care for your own safety.
- report any incidents of violence or aggressive behaviour
- arrange to meet unknown individuals in a public place and preferably with another person present.
- if making a home visit, to make sure that someone knows where you are going and when you can be expected back. Ensure that you have a switched on working mobile phone on you, always.
- if practical, to leave a note stating who and where you are visiting and how you will get there.
- consider a 'buddy system' when you let a colleague or friend know that you have arrived at a visit/premises and when leaving a visit/ premises.
- consider carrying a Personal Shriek Alarm
- always stay alert and be 'streetwise' and vigilant, taking note of what is going on around you.

Guidance for Risk Assessments of Lone Working

A risk assessment should be undertaken of:

- the working practices for a lone worker.
- the working environment provided by the employer for an employee.

The risk assessment would be part of the Health and Safety at Work Policy of an Employing Body.

In relation to a lone worker risk assessment, consideration should also be given to:

- the remoteness of the workplace.
- potential communication problems (e.g. how a lone worker would be “missed” if taken seriously ill and unable to summon help).
- potential for verbal and physical abuse and violence.
- the vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress, anxiety and depression.
- whether or not all the plant, equipment, materials etc can be handled safely by one person.
- whether or not the person is medically fit and able to work alone.
- how the lone worker will be supervised effectively.
- how the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as assault, vehicle breakdown, accident or fire.
- whether or not there is adequate first aid cover and the lone worker’s capacity to administer this on themselves before help arrives.
- whether safe travelling between appointments has been arranged.
- whether an alternative to a home visit could be arranged.
- whether the whereabouts of the lone worker can be traced.
- whether suitable reporting and recording arrangements have been made where appropriate.