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This is a document that sets out North Tawton Town Councils approved and agreed practices. Any deviation must be by resolution of the full Council.

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Lone Working Policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Lone working refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone in the community, in the homes of individuals or in their own home or may be the only staff member present in an office or other establishment maintained by the Council. They will be physically isolated from colleagues, and without access to immediate assistance.
- 1.2 This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks.

2 Legislation

- 2.1 Employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare at work of their employees etc, including, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision and maintenance of a safe working environment, safe access and egress, safe systems of work and provision of suitable information, instruction, training and supervision.
- 2.2 There is nothing specific in general legislation that prohibits a person from working alone. Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires the employer to undertake a risk assessment, and so this shall determine whether an employee may work alone. Therefore, in general, an employer must assess whether an employee is at significantly higher risk when working alone.
- 2.3 Employers must be aware of any specific legislation on lone working, which may be applicable to their specific industry.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Town Clerk should:
- Identify all staff who undertake lone working.
 - Inform staff of their responsibilities under the lone working policy.
 - Make the policy readily available to all staff members on induction and ensuring local procedures are in place.
 - Ensure that risk assessments regarding the personal safety of staff, including those working alone, are undertaken by competent persons.
 - Ensure that lone workers have no medical condition that may make them unsuitable for working alone.
 - Assist in the development and implementation of safe systems of work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all staff.
 - Review lone working risk assessments on a regular basis, taking into consideration information provided by staff members regarding hazards relating to activities, environments and individuals.

- Ensure that staff members have access to appropriate training opportunities regarding challenging behaviour.
- Take all reasonable steps to minimise risks identified and report any substantial risks to the Personnel Committee.

3.2 Officers should:

- Take reasonable care to look after their own safety and health.
- Safeguard the safety and health of other people affected by their work.
- Co-operate with their employer's health and safety procedures.
- Use tools and other equipment properly, in accordance with any relevant safety instructions and training they have been given.
- Not misuse equipment provided for their safety and health.
- Report all accidents, injuries, near-misses and other dangerous occurrences.

4 Mandatory Procedures

4.1 Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the exits and alarms.

4.2 There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.

4.3 In situations where staff may be working with people in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

5 Personal safety

5.1 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard alone. The priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

5.2 Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances

- It is not wise to rely on alarm systems or breakaway techniques to get you out of trouble – there are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. The Council has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves. This is not about raising anxiety levels, but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk, for yourself and for service users in your care.
- Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.
- Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use and ensure that faults are reported /dealt with.
- If your work takes you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for high crime rates, arrange to check in when the visit is over, or work with a partner.

- If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes.
- Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings you control.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.

5.3 Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Town Clerk and/or in accordance with the task risk assessments already in place.

5.4 Staff must inform their Line Manager, when they will be working alone outside of the terms of their contracted working arrangements, giving accurate details of their location, and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed.

5.5 If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.

5.6 Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

5.7 Where staff are working alone in the office or they feel threatened or unsafe, they have the option to close the office to the public.

6 Staff working at home

6.1 An employer has the same responsibility for the health and safety of employees who are required to work from home as for any other employees. This covers the provision of supervision, education and training and the implementation of sufficient control measures to protect the homeworker.

6.2 There should be regular contact with their Line Manager or other designated person if working at home for extended periods, and an appropriate reporting-in system should be used if making visits from home.

6.3 Staff working from their own homes should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential.

7 Risk Assessment

7.1 The general principles of risk assessment must be followed for lone working. Assessments should be carried out by suitably trained and competent employees. The staff member undertaking the lone working duty should be involved in the risk assessment process. The risks to lone workers should be reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

7.2 In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access.
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.

- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations any other special circumstances.

7.3 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.

7.4 Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker/councillor/contractor or making other arrangements to complete the task.

7.5 While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

8 Support and Training

8.1 Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced to understand the risks and precautions fully. The Town Clerk will set limits on what can and cannot be done when working alone.

8.2 Any person who has concerns about the continuance of a lone activity being carried out should feel confident that they have the Town Clerk's support to terminate the task and return to office at any time. Where such incidents arise, they must be reported to the Town Clerk. On return to the office, employees should ask for a debrief with the Town Clerk if they feel any issues need to be addressed following a lone working activity. The risk assessment may need to be modified and used as part of the planning process for subsequent activities.

8.3 The Council shall provide any training necessary.