

# Frequently Asked Questions Lone Working

## 1. Is it legal to work alone and is it safe?

There is no single answer, it will depend on the findings of the risk assessment but often the answer will be yes.

## 2. What is the law?

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

It is the employer's duties to assess the risks to lone workers and take the steps to avoid or control risk where necessary.

Employees have responsibilities to take care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

## 3. Who undertakes the risk assessment?

If you have been identified as a lone worker then your manager should have carried out a risk assessment and should have given you a copy. If not, ask your manager for a copy of the risk assessment or significant findings.

## 4. Can I have a mobile phone?

This depends on a number of things, including the nature of your work, the location, hours of work etc that will be considered as part of the risk assessment process.

If you are issued with a mobile phone make sure you know how to use it, have stored the appropriate numbers and the battery is charged at all times. At no times should you use your mobile phone while driving. Remember that mobile phone is not a 'catch-all' answer and other steps should be taken to reduce the risks of lone working.

#### 5. I'm meeting someone on my own, what precautions can I take?

Before you carry out any home visits you must carry out a search in the INCHECK, SWIFT (Social Services) or ACADEMY (Housing) database system. These systems record the details of any reported incidents involving members of the public who have been violent, abusive or threatening to a council employee.

The system can also hold premises, which are considered dangerous to visit. Take the name of the person, premises you are visiting to your supervisor and they can then carry out a search on the database, if that person has been violent, abusive or threatening to another council employee and it has been reported to the system then their name will be on the database and precautions can be taken. The risk assessment will also need to consider this before you go out.

#### 6. What happens if I have an accident?

You should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. The risk assessment should identify foreseeable events. Your manager should provide you with information on what to do and who to contact in an emergency. You should also be trained in the emergency procedures. The risk assessment will also identify if a first aid kit is required.

#### 7. What do I do if I am threatened or assaulted?

In the event of a physical or verbal assault, employees who suffer shock or injury should obtain immediate medical attention. Where appropriate employees will be referred to a doctor as soon as practicable for a medical report.

You should also report the incident to your supervisor/manager and an accident/incident report can be filled in and forwarded to your Directorate Health and Safety officer and the Health and Safety Corporate Unit.

8. What support is there for me if I am threatened or assaulted?

Employees who have been the victims of physical or verbal incident may need practical information and emotional support. The STRESS LINE retained by the Authority is available to offer this support.

The free phone number for the 'STRESS LINE' is **0800 783 52 73**.

The Occupational Health Section is also available to provide practical information and emotional support.

Any information divulged will remain confidential and no information will be fed back to the council without the employees' permission.

9. Where can I get further information?

You can get further information from your Directorate Health and Safety Officer, telephone the HSE Infoline on 08701 545500 or you can access the following web site. You must have external Internet access to view this site:

- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/violindx.htm>

The following publications may also provide you with further information:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council Lone Working Policy

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