

Lone Working Policy



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Introduction

Earley Springs and its Executive Board have a legal obligation to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all staff members while at work. Recognising that many staff members may work alone at times, whether regularly or occasionally, the Executive Board is committed to assessing and mitigating any risks associated with lone working. Staff members also share the responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others in such situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe, and appropriate precautions can effectively reduce associated risks.

This Lone Working Policy must be read alongside the Earley Springs Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the Staff Code of Conduct, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Safeguarding responsibilities remain in place at all times, including when staff are working alone.

Purpose

This policy outlines the Executive Board's responsibilities towards staff working alone, including:

- Defining "lone working."
- Taking action to minimise risks for lone workers.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities and have access to guidance to support lone workers.

Staff must never place themselves or pupils at risk when working alone. All lone working must follow the Safer Working Practice principles set out in KCSIE and the school's Staff Code of Conduct, ensuring professional boundaries and personal safety are maintained at all times.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, including temporary and casual employees, and should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. This can include individuals working alone in a building, working outside normal hours, working off-site without colleagues (e.g., home visits), or working from home.

The definition encompasses a range of situations with varying levels and types of risk. It is crucial to identify hazards and assess risks before implementing appropriate safety measures. This policy will differentiate between high-risk and low-risk activities, as well as frequent and occasional lone working.

Where lone working activities involve any safeguarding considerations — including working with pupils, visiting homes, or being alone with visitors — the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be consulted as part of the risk assessment process.

Potential Hazards of Lone Working

While lone workers face the same general workplace risks as others, they may also encounter specific hazards, such as:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses without immediate access to help or first aid.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Fire.
- Attempting tasks that require more than one person (e.g., heavy lifting).
- Unsafe building access (e.g., risk of being accidentally locked in).

The perception of these hazards and the actual risks can vary among individuals based on factors such as experience, vulnerability, and medical conditions. The school must consider these factors when conducting risk assessments. Managers must take appropriate steps to reduce risks, especially for those engaged in frequent or high-risk lone working.

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Lone Working

Supervision

While lone workers lack constant supervision, line managers play a crucial role in ensuring staff understand the risks associated with their work and the necessary safety precautions. This includes establishing clear communication channels for staff to seek guidance when needed. If a member of staff becomes aware of a safeguarding concern while working alone, they must report it to the DSL immediately in line with KCSIE and the school's safeguarding procedures. Lone working must never delay or prevent the reporting of a safeguarding concern. Occasional site visits, particularly for high-risk activities, may be appropriate. New staff or those undergoing training may require initial accompaniment. Regular contact by phone or radio can also be implemented. The Site Manager (responsible for Health and Safety) will determine the appropriate level of supervision.

Checking System

All staff working alone outside of normal hours should establish a check-in and check-out system with family, friends, or colleagues. Lone workers are advised to provide a contact number (e.g., line manager's) to a trusted person who can be alerted if the worker fails to return home at the expected time.

Reporting Back

A system should be in place for lone workers to report their return to their base or home after completing a task away from the workplace. For high-risk or frequent lone workers, the Site

Manager may require staff to provide their whereabouts and expected duration of the visit. This allows for a check-in call if the staff member does not report back by the expected time.

Occasional or low-risk lone workers should inform a colleague of their destination and expected return time. This can include arranging a call to the office at the conclusion of the visit, providing a mobile phone number for contact, or using diary systems or notice boards to indicate whereabouts. All staff share the responsibility of maintaining these informal systems for safe lone working.

The school should also consider staff who meet with visitors one-on-one on school premises. While not alone in the building, these staff members may be alone with a visitor in an area not visible to colleagues. Systems should be in place to ensure their safety after such meetings, including procedures for raising an alarm if necessary.

Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be trained to respond appropriately to emergencies, including awareness of special arrangements for incidents outside normal hours. First aid may be available from school staff, or individuals working frequently off-site may need to carry a basic first aid kit if there is a foreseeable risk of injury. Staff working alone in a building must also inform the Headteacher of their presence to ensure they are accounted for in case of a fire.

Medical Conditions

Staff with medical conditions that could lead to incapacity or unconsciousness should not work alone.

Tasks Not Suitable for Lone Working

Risk assessments will identify work hazards. If a risk assessment determines that a task cannot be safely performed by a lone worker, arrangements for assistance or backup should be implemented, the task should be reassigned, or it should be completed during hours when other staff are present. For example, a staff member arriving before colleagues may be instructed to avoid heavy lifting until assistance is available.

Staff must not work alone with pupils in any circumstances that cannot be observed by others, in line with KCSIE and safer working practice guidance. If a session becomes one-to-one due to pupil absence, it must be rescheduled or moved to a visible, supervised space. Staff must never meet pupils alone off-site.

Intruder

Staff should not enter the school premises if there are signs of intruders. In such cases, they should immediately contact the police.

Violence at Work

Staff conducting home visits must take precautions to reduce the risk of violence, such as avoiding solo visits or arranging meetings in alternative locations. The risk of violence may be associated with environmental factors (e.g., working alone after dark) or unpredictable situations. Staff who may encounter such situations should receive training in de-escalation techniques, recognizing risks, and behaviors that may reduce risks (up to and including terminating the visit). All incidents of violence must be reported.

When meeting visitors alone, staff must follow all safeguarding expectations relating to site security, visibility, and accountability. If a visitor raises any safeguarding concern or behaves inappropriately, staff must contact the DSL or senior leadership immediately.

Conclusion

Ensuring the safety of lone workers is fundamentally the same as organising the safety of any other staff member. However, risk assessments must account for any additional factors that may arise when individuals work alone. The school must not only implement measures to reduce risks but also clearly communicate expectations and provide appropriate training to lone workers. All staff, including those who work alone, share the responsibility of following safety procedures and taking steps to minimise risks in their daily work.

Student Lone Working Guidance – Working Off-Site Without Staff Supervision

Earley Springs does not permit students to work alone, either on-site or off-site. Students are always accompanied by a member of staff.

However, there may be instances where students work independently on tasks outside of school hours. In these situations, it is crucial for students and parents to assess the risks and take necessary precautions, as the responsibility for safety and well-being rests with them.

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

Potential Hazards of Lone Working:

Students and parents should be aware of the potential hazards associated with lone working, including:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses without immediate access to help or first aid.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Fire.
- Attempting tasks that are unsafe for one person to perform alone (e.g., heavy lifting).
- Lack of safe access to or exit from a building.

Students should be educated about these risks and understand the relevant safety precautions.

Considerations for Off-Site Work:

Before undertaking lone working off-site, students and parents should consider the following:

- Does the work area present any specific risks?
- Can all equipment and materials be safely handled alone?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Will the student be alone in a dark or remote location?

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Lone Working:

Checking System:

- Parents should check on the student regularly, at least every hour or more frequently if needed, by phone or in person.
- Students should establish a check-in and check-out system with family or friends, with an agreed-upon expected return time.
- Upon arrival at the off-site location, the student should call a designated contact to confirm safe arrival and phone functionality. Regular contact should be maintained at pre-arranged intervals.
- Clear procedures should be in place in case of missed contact times, and all participants should be familiar with these procedures before the off-site work begins.

Accidents and Emergencies:

- Students should be capable of responding appropriately to emergencies and may need to carry a basic first aid kit.

Medical Conditions:

- Students with medical conditions that could lead to incapacity or unconsciousness should not work alone and should arrange for someone to accompany them.

Violence:

- Environmental factors that may increase the risk of violence, such as working alone outside after dark, should be avoided.

Personal Safety When Working Off-Site:

- Minimise valuables carried and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Carry a personal alarm or other device to attract attention in an emergency.
- Carry small change for emergency calls, even if a mobile phone is available.
- Dress for safety and avoid standing out unnecessarily.
- Keep mobile phones concealed when not in use.
- If an item is grabbed, let go.
- Avoid walking alone if feeling vulnerable; use public transportation, a private car, or a reputable taxi service.

- Plan the route in advance and carry a map.
- Carry a torch in dark areas.
- Always carry identification with contact details.

If a student has concerns about a visit, they should arrange to be accompanied if possible. There are certain situations where lone working is strongly discouraged, and students should always be accompanied (e.g., work near water). In addition to the risk of personal injury, the possibility of exhaustion or hypothermia should also be considered.