Lone Worker Policy

Thurston Parish Council

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Next Review: Policy & Resources Committee February 2027

This document is subject to revision and is maintained electronically. Electronic copies are version controlled and printed copies are not subject to this control.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate systems in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of lone workers in order to reduce the risks of lone working as far as is reasonably possible and practicable. This policy does not apply to councillors.

INTRODUCTION

The Council's employees are expected to work alone because of the nature of their jobs. Whilst working alone is not in it-self unsafe there may be circumstances where lone working can increase risk to an employee.

This policy applies to employees and for the purposes of this policy lone working is defined as anyone who works in isolation from their colleagues without close or direct supervision.

DEFINITION

'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours.

Employee examples include:

- Office staff alone in the Parish Office
- Parish Councillors and Staff working alone in premises outside of the Council's office

Examples of lone working outside of the office include but are not limited to:

- Visiting Recreation Ground/Pavilion
- Inspecting play equipment on the Recreation Ground/New Green Play Area/Heath Road Play Area
- Meeting with contractors on site
- Attending site and changing information on noticeboards
- Carrying out litter picking duties
- Carrying out village maintenance

ORGANISATION AND ARRANGEMENTS

Thurston Parish Council is responsible for:

- The lone working arrangements of employees and volunteers working under instructions from the Clerk to the Council;
- Determining the contents of this policy;
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working;
- Ensuring compliance with the policy and providing resources for putting the policy into practice;
- Making sure that support is given to employees and volunteers involved in any incident.

The Parish Clerk is responsible for:

- Making sure that risk assessments are carried out;
- Reporting any incidents to the Council;
- Ensuring that the worker is competent to work alone;
- Ensuring that arrangements for lone working are made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone explained;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working.

All employees and volunteers are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their actions;
- Following rules and regulations laid down by the Council;
- Reporting incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others;
- Reporting dangers or concerns they may have;
- Recognising potentially high-risk activities and putting in place arrangements to mitigate risk associated with working alone.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of colleagues and volunteers working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine, unanticipated periods where there is no communication.

Risk Assessments

- The Parish Clerk must complete (or ensure the completion of) a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to every lone working activity and updated as appropriate.
- The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work and communicated to all relevant staff.

LONE WORKER GUIDANCE

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach.
Where there is regular or anticipated loan working, the council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their particular circumstances.
The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment.

Generic lone worker guidance:

- Carry a mobile phone with you if you have one;
- Do not put your-self at undue risk;
- Discuss any concerns with the Parish Clerk;
- Plan the visit – let someone know time of leaving, where you are going, who you are visiting, estimated time of return, mode of transport;
- Try to avoid confrontation. If a situation develops, try to remain calm. If violence is threatened, try to withdraw from the situation or call for help;
- If in the office, ensure that the outer door of the Office is locked outside of public opening times;
- Whilst it is appreciated that the Clerk, RFO and Deputy Clerk have to be available to meet members of the public, this should be during office opening hours;
- Ensure that the inner stable door to the office is kept locked at all times;
- Access to the Parish Council rear office should be by invitation only.

Health and safety:
It is important that staff and volunteers share any details of any aspects of their health that could lead to increased risk with the Parish Clerk. This includes pregnancy.

The Parish Clerk will then jointly plan to mitigate any potential risks caused by these circumstances.

All collated information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with the person's confidentiality of the utmost importance.

Reporting incidents

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon.

The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved,
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence, and,
- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances that might have been thought to have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances.

The above information would then support the Parish Council to review its risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

If a member of staff or volunteer feels unsafe, unwell, or becomes injured, they must call the emergency services if they need immediate assistance.

If possible, call the Parish Clerk to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

If a staff member or volunteer's plans change because they feel unwell or if they have a domestic emergency when working alone, they must contact the Parish Clerk to let them know.