

THE **D**IOCESE OF **S**HEFFIELD **A**CADEMIES **T**RUST

LONE WORKING POLICY AND RISK ASSESSMENTS 2024-25



THE
DIOCESE OF
SHEFFIELD
ACADEMIES
TRUST

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Policy for Lone Working on and offsite

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust (DSAT) recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves for periods of time and without close or direct supervision, in isolated areas. The purpose of this policy is to protect such staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working.

Lone Working is not encouraged by DSAT unless with specified and authorised members of staff who have undergone a specific Risk Assessment.

The trust also recognises it has an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 for the health, safety, and welfare of its employees. These responsibilities apply to those staff that, for whatever reason, work alone.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy is provided for use of ALL STAFF in their day-to-day work. The policy applies to all situations involving lone working in connection with the activities of the school. Reference to 'Head teacher' in this policy also includes Executive Headteachers and Heads of School.

DSAT has identified certain staff members who may regularly need to work alone. These include:

- Caretakers
- Cleaners
- Teachers working before or after school opening hours
- SLT members working before or after school opening hours
- Staff members leading after school clubs

DSAT also acknowledges that any members of staff may find themselves working alone in unplanned circumstances and therefore expects every member of staff to have received a copy of this policy.

3. DEFINITIONS OF LONE WORKERS

Where staff are engaged in work (either outdoors or indoors) where there are no other people who could reasonably be expected to come to their immediate aid in the event of an incident or emergency.

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure members of staff are aware of the risks of Lone Working.

Hazards identified will be evaluated by the Head Teacher for the likelihood of the hazard causing harm. Measures will be introduced if the assessment shows that existing precautions are inadequate to eliminate or adequately control the hazard. The risk assessment will be subject to review to ensure it is relevant and current to the workings of the school.

Lone working can be defined as a wide variety of situations including

- a. Staff in fixed establishments where:
 - Only one member of staff works on the premises
 - Staff working separately from others
 - Staff working outside normal hours
- b. Mobile lone workers working away from their base and when their work may be carried out in:
 - A child's home address
 - Traveling on School business
 - Multiple occupancy buildings and building site

4. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

The aim of this policy is to: -

- Increase staff awareness on safety issues related to lone working
- 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 is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure that appropriate training is available to all staff in all areas that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical safety advice when working alone.
- Ensure that appropriate support is available to staff who must work alone.

Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working and reduce the number of incidents and injuries relating to lone working.

5. CONTROLS

The experience and training of all staff and the activities to be undertaken will be taken into consideration before allowing lone working. Lone workers must be considered capable of responding correctly in an emergency.

Whenever possible, it is recommended that staff work with a colleague.

Members of staff who are lone working must ensure that they are able to contact the Head Teacher or another senior member of staff by ensuring they have access to a telephone.

Working onsite outside normal School hours and during School holidays

Good practice would be to liaise with other staff during school holidays, but in the absence of doing so, the member of staff should ensure a family member is aware s/he will be working alone on the school premises. At weekends and during School holidays, it is the staff member's personal responsibility to ensure someone is aware. If exceptions to this are identified, then the policy will be reviewed. The member of staff should sign in and out of the premises as they would during normal working hours so that a record of who has been on the premises is maintained.

Staff should not enter the School premises if there are signs of intruders and are advised to immediately call the police.

Staff should lock the outer doors when lone working and ensure that areas of the school not in use are kept secure. However, the designated fire exits in the area where working and the alternative exit must be able to be opened from the inside without the use of a key. Staff must not place themselves in danger by challenging intruders or vandals but should call the police for assistance. Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

All lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with either family, friends, or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers provide a relative or friend with a telephone contact number (Head Teacher's, SLT's mobile or nominated

buddy home/mobile numbers) to call if the lone worker fails to return home at the expected time.

It is not normally practicable for the Head Teacher to periodically visit and visually monitor people working alone.

Staff will receive information and/or training to help ensure they understand the risks associated with lone working and to minimise these risks. All lone workers, in an otherwise unoccupied building, should follow the school's Fire and Emergency Procedures. Staff have a responsibility for making themselves familiar with and following the school's safety procedures and location of safety equipment.

Contractors should have access to their own first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.

If staff rely on mobile phones, they must ensure that their network has good reception within school. Although phones can give extra reassurance, they do not provide complete protection and staff should still be always alert for their own personal safety.

In the situation where two or more people are working in isolated areas of an otherwise unoccupied building, personnel should keep each other informed about their movements.

Lone workers should not undertake activities that involve the handling of money, working at height, any task that has been identified as medium or high risk or which are potentially hazardous given their own level of experience and the nature of the task.

All School personnel are reminded about the importance of maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

It is the responsibility of all School personnel and contractors to adhere to the lone working procedures and to report any difficulties, failure of equipment or general concerns on health and safety to the Head Teacher. If members of staff fail to follow procedures designed to protect their safety, this could result in a disciplinary matter as they will have contributed to their injury and any compensation claims for damages or unfair dismissal may be reduced accordingly.

Lone Working Offsite – Home Visits

Background information on the family should be gathered as far as possible beforehand to ascertain the likelihood of staff being verbally abused or attacked, a specific risk assessment is conducted where necessary.

Staff will gain permission from the Head Teacher or School Leadership Team and home visiting information will be obtained (parents' details, home address, and staff contact numbers) before they leave the school.

Where possible all home visits will be carried out by two members of staff who will always be in mobile contact with the school.

Lone Working Offsite – On School Business

The Head Teacher or School Leadership Team will have prior notification as to the reason for the offsite School business appointment (training session, meetings etc) and staff will always be in mobile contact with the school.

The School respects the right of the employee, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, to refuse to carry out work where there is a serious and imminent risk of danger. They also can advise others to do the same without being dismissed as a result. Staff should be proactive in bringing to the attention of Head Teacher any aspect of work-related risks.

The Head Teacher will regularly monitor the implementation of these procedures. Following any incident an investigation will be carried out and its findings used to inform change to procedures and working practices.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS POLICY

6.1 Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for: -

- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating, and managing the risk associated with lone working.
- Providing resources for putting the policy into practice.
- Ensure that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is reviewed regularly

6.2 School Leadership Team

School Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly.
- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce risks associated with working alone.
- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction, and training, including training at induction, updates, and refresher training at necessary.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident
- Managing the effectiveness or preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigation and recording incidents.

6.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for: -

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions.
- Co-operation by following rules and procedures designed for safe working.
- Reporting all incidents that may affect health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate
- Taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy
- Report any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect to working alone.

7. RISK ASSESSMENTS

Risk Assessment is essential to good risk management.

Assessments shall be carried out for Lone Work, by the School Leadership Team with the assistance of DSAT Health and Safety personnel and DSAT People Director where required, before any work is due to be started and re-assessed every 12 months. Recommendations will be made to eliminate or to reduce risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

In all cases there is a fundamental question about the need for lone working.

The Head Teacher must decide whether systems can be adopted to avoid workers carrying out tasks on their own.

If this is not possible the working practice of the member of staff plus other contributory factors must be risk assessed.

Risk assessments for lone workers must include:

- Safe access and exit
- Risk of violence
- Safety of equipment for individual use
- Channels of communication in an emergency
- Site Security
- Security arrangements i.e., alarm systems
- Level and adequacy of on / off site supervision
- First Aid Provisions
- Client risk assessments where applicable
- Travelling between appointments
- Reporting and recording movements
- Communication and traceability
- Personal Safety and security

Following a completed risk assessment, consideration should be given to any appropriate action that is to be taken.

The Head Teacher needs to ensure that the risk assessment systems are in place to meet the specific needs of all lone workers within their control.

8. INCIDENT REPORTING

An incident can be defined as an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health, or damage.

To maintain an appropriate record of events involving lone workers it is essential that all incidents be reported by the member of staff to the Head Teacher and Compliance Education immediately.

All staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or “Unsafe” are reported. This includes incidents or verbal abuse.

9. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Staff should know that their safety comes first. Staff should be aware of how to deal with situations where they feel at risk or unsafe. Staff should be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response.

The Head Teacher will ensure that all lone workers training needs are assessed and that they have received appropriate training, when necessary, which includes

- First Aid
- Lone Working
- Manual Handling
- Driving

10. IMMEDIATE SUPPORT FOLLOWING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

In the event of a violent incident involving a lone worker, the Head Teacher or School Leadership Team should immediately ensure that the employee receives any necessary medical attention and or advice. If an incident occurs out of hours, the Head Teacher and School Leadership Team **MUST** be contacted ASAP.

The Head Teacher should be sensitive to the employee’s need to talk about the incident and should take care to avoid any impression that this is not accepted or expected. Staff should be made aware that the school has access to qualified counselling services through external services. These can be called upon at any time for any member of staff for a variety of reasons including a member of staff being assaulted, a grievance, family related issues etc.

Consideration should also be given to whether the employee needs specific information or assistance relating to legal or insurance aspects.

11. REFERENCES

1. Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
2. Managements of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999
3. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013