LONE WORKING AND WORKING IN ISOLATION POLICY

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Responsible Lead Executive Director: | Human Resources Director
Endorsing Body: | Human Resources Forum
Governance or Assurance Committee | Occupational Health and Safety Performance Group
Implementation Date: | July 2019
Version Number: | 3.2
Review Date: | July 2022
Responsible Person(s): | Salus Occupational Health, Safety and Return to Work Service General Manager
CONTENTS

i) Consultation and Distribution Record
ii) Change Record

1. INTRODUCTION

2. AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

3. SCOPE

3.1 Who is the Policy Intended to Benefit or Affect
3.2 Who are the Stakeholders

4. PRINCIPLE CONTENT

4.1 Lone Working Risk Assessment
4.2 Dynamic Risk Assessment
4.3 Lone Working Procedures
4.4 Risk and Control Measures

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Chief Executive
5.2 Director of Human Resources
5.3 Acute University Hospital Site Directors/ General Manager/ Heads of Service and Service Managers
5.4 Department / Line Managers
5.5 Employees
5.6 Salus Health and Safety Section

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7. COMMUNICATION PLAN

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 Policy Review
8.2 Control Book Audit

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. REFERENCES
## CONSULTATION AND DISTRIBUTION RECORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing Author(s)</th>
<th>Consultation Process / Stakeholders</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>• Head of Health and Safety</td>
<td>• Human Resources Director&lt;br&gt;• Joint Policy Forum Members&lt;br&gt;• Human Resources Forum Members&lt;br&gt;• Occupational Health and Safety Performance Group Members</td>
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## CHANGE RECORD

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<td>Implementation</td>
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<td>Oct 2011</td>
<td>Senior Safety Advisor</td>
<td>Content review to reflect current organisational structure and policy format</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Head of Health and Safety</td>
<td>Review and update of Policy in line with updated HSE Guidance on Lone Working INDG73 (rev3), published 05/13 and revised risk assessment format in Appendix 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Head of Health and Safety/ Nominated Health and Safety Advisor and PaMoVA Service Team Lead</td>
<td>Review and update of Policy content, lone working definition revised, lone working guidance and risk assessment form and development of Lone Working procedure checklist revised and removed from Policy document. These are now being retained on FirstPort as part of the suite of Control Book documents in Section 3L for Lone Working and Working in Isolation.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>May 2018/ October 2018</td>
<td>Deputy HRD/ Head of Health and Safety</td>
<td>General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) changes applied to ‘Change Record’, and updated and GDPR statement added to Section 3, ‘Scope’</td>
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<td>May 2019</td>
<td>Head of Health and Safety</td>
<td>Review of Policy and minor revisions in line with 3 yearly review schedule</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy is concerned with arrangements for NHS Lanarkshire employees who lone work and/or work in isolation including those working alongside patients during the course of their employment. The Policy recognises there will be circumstances where it is unavoidable that an NHS Lanarkshire employee will be required to lone work or work in isolation (hereafter, lone working and working in isolation will be referred to as ‘lone work’ or ‘lone working’).

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to encourage the development and use of local procedures to support employees who are required to lone work.

1.3 The policy clarifies roles and responsibilities and should be communicated to all NHS Lanarkshire employees that lone work through either accessing the policy direct from FirstPort and/or where appropriate circulated as part of a new employee(s) induction and/or at a team meeting.

1.4 NHS Lanarkshire recognises that as an employer, it has a duty of care towards its staff and that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure their health, wellbeing and personal safety. It is also acknowledged that all employees have a responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others affected by their acts, decisions and/or omissions.

1.5 Whilst there is no single definition that encompasses all situations where employees lone work, NHS Lanarkshire defines ‘lone working and working in isolation’ as “any situation or location in which someone is working without a colleague nearby or when someone is working out of visual and hearing range of another colleague”.

1.6 Lone working can occur during normal working hours within any NHS Lanarkshire premise or during a domiciliary or other site visit and/or when working outside normal working hours. Below are some typical examples of NHS Lanarkshire employee’s lone working in the Corporate, Acute, Health and Social Care and the Mental Health and Learning Disability Services:

- Porters/nursing staff accompanying or transporting a patient or materials and/or specimens in and around hospital grounds;
- A technician working alone in a laboratory;
- A transport driver undertaking deliveries;
- A receptionist working alone or in isolation in a clinic/reception area;
- Community nurses, social workers, midwives and other allied health professionals i.e. occupational therapists working away from their fixed base, out in the community and/or in patient’s homes;
- Employees who see patients/service users for individual sessions in an isolated/secluded treatment and/or assessment room;
- Employees who work in the same building as colleagues but on their own i.e. receptionists, hotel service staff, clinical staff treating / assessing a patient, etc.

1.7 Lone working does not automatically mean a higher risk of vulnerability or an incident occurring although it is generally accepted that lone working can provide a greater potential perception of being vulnerable. This vulnerability will depend on the type of work/situation in which the employee(s) are lone working.
1. **INTRODUCTION** (continued)

1.8 It is recognised that most employees may spend a limited amount of their time working alone and/or working in isolation. However, for the purpose of this policy, the term ‘lone worker’ is used to describe a wide variety of staff who either regularly or on occasion(s) work on their own and/or work in isolation without access to immediate support from work colleagues i.e. *without a colleague nearby or when someone is working out of visual and hearing range of another colleague* within either NHS Lanarkshire premises, in a community setting and/or elsewhere undertaking NHS Lanarkshire work.

1.9 The risks associated with the work are likely to be the same whether it is carried out alone or accompanied, although the possibility of violence towards the lone worker should always be considered in conjunction with the ‘Prevention and Management of Violence and Aggression Policy’. Departmental and/or local procedures need to take account of the possibility of lone working situations arising.

1.10 Lone working is only prohibited by legislative standards in a small number of well-established high risk situations such as working with live electrical conductors, entry into confined spaces that pose a significant potential risk i.e. where emergency breathing apparatus and/or air monitors/gas analysers are required, etc. In the majority of occasions lone working is completely safe. However where lone working is identified the risk should be assessed and where appropriate suitable risk management applied to ensure that ‘lone workers’ are not at an increased risk of ‘harm’ than other employees.

2. **AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES**

2.1 **Aims and Purpose**

2.1.1 The aim and purpose of this policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that NHS Lanarkshire employees, students and volunteers who lone work are not exposed to a significant risk to their health and safety and outlines the steps to reduce and improve personal safety for employees, students and volunteers who may carry out lone working.

2.1.2 This policy encourages Services to develop localised arrangements for employees that lone work. A number of NHS Lanarkshire employees may routinely lone work, others may do so infrequently. Lone working may mean that there are additional difficulties in obtaining assistance in the event of an emergency such as a serious incident, medical emergency, vehicle breakdown in fast flowing traffic, being subject to an act of violence and aggression, etc.

2.1.3 This policy also aims to:

- Promote the management of lone working within the organisation;
- Raise staff awareness of lone working;
- Encourage lone working to be risk-assessed and for safe work procedures to be considered and where appropriate put in place to reduce the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- Provide access to training that helps employees, students and volunteers to recognise risks and provide practical advice on safety when lone working, including, where appropriate the use of communication and/or alert systems and other technology that can be utilised for lone workers;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
2. **AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES** (continued)

2.1.3 This policy also aims to: (continued)

- Encourage reporting and recording of any incidents related to lone working.

2.1.4 NHS Lanarkshire is committed to eliminating, so far as is reasonably practicable, the potential for lone workers being exposed to a significant risk of ‘harm’ or otherwise reduce the residual risk of harm to lone workers to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

To facilitate this NHS Lanarkshire is committed to providing:

- Practical guidance on lone working control measures and work procedures;
- A model risk assessment format.
- Access to training.
- Access to health and safety specialist advisors i.e. Salus Health and Safety Section.

2.2 **Outcomes**

2.2.1 The outcomes of this policy will be to ensure:

- Services identify lone working that requires additional assessment;
- Risks inherent in lone work situations are assessed and where appropriate suitable precautionary measures are taken;
- This policy applies to all employees, including temporary and contract workers who are provided through an agency and to students who are undertaking any placement or practical / experimental projects during their academic programme without direct supervision and volunteers providing a service on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire. It is not intended to apply to individuals who work in an office on their own during normal working hours, unless their working alone presents a significant risk. All Services are required to have in place local arrangements that comply with this policy.
- The policy sets out a clear intent and management commitment to ensuring the safety and welfare of employees, agency workers, students and volunteers and includes specific information on those with direct responsibility for the implementation of the policy. It also acknowledges that all employees have a responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of themselves, their work colleagues, patients, visitors, contractors and other persons affected by their acts or omissions.

3 **SCOPE**

3.1 **Who is the Policy intended to Benefit or Affect**

All employees of NHS Lanarkshire, including temporary and contract workers who are provided through an agency and to students who are undertaking any placement or practical/ experimental projects during their academic programme without direct supervision and volunteers providing a service on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire.

3.2 **Who are the Stakeholders**

Employees of NHS Lanarkshire, including temporary and contract workers who are provided through an agency and to students who are undertaking any placement or practical / experimental projects during their academic programme without direct supervision and volunteers providing a service on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire (hereafter referred to as ‘others working on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire’).
3.3 **General Data Protection Regulation**

NHS Lanarkshire takes care to ensure personal information is only accessible to authorised persons. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk) or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.

4. **PRINCIPLE CONTENT**

4.1 **Lone Working Risk Assessment**

NHS Lanarkshire recognises the importance of identifying, assessing and managing risks associated with lone working through Department / Speciality Health and Safety Control Books. Managers/Control Book Holders should apply the risk assessment process, to ensure that where required, suitable controls are identified and implemented for lone working.

Following a risk assessment, control measures should be put in place where required to manage those risks. A core element of the risk assessment process is to promote safe working arrangements. Attention is required when assessing lone working as there will be no direct supervision of the work. Monitoring procedures may also need to be considered.

4.2 **Dynamic Risk Assessment**

4.2.1 Traditional risk assessment is about identifying risks in the workplace so that suitable controls can be implemented. A dynamic risk assessment can help to manage risks as they arise. Lone workers among others may have to make swift judgements and identify appropriate actions in various work scenarios, on occasions on their own initiative and within the scope of their job role.

4.2.2 Employees and others working on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire undertaking lone work should be aware of the need to ‘dynamically’ risk assess work activities and respond accordingly. The dynamic risk assessment is an on-going process of identifying hazards and the risk of harm and taking steps to eliminate or reduce that risk which may occur in rapidly changing circumstances.

4.2.3 Effective dynamic risk assessment requires staff to be alert to warning signs and changing circumstances in order to consider all the facts at their disposal, allowing them to dynamically risk assess and make a judgement as to their best possible course of action, for example, to continue with their work, request additional assistance or to withdraw to a safe place pending further advice and/or support.

4.2.4 Lone Workers should remain alert to the risk of ‘harm’ presented from those who are under the influence of drink, drugs and/or who are confused or where animals may be present i.e. during home visits. Under no circumstances should an employee or others working on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire compromise their personal safety. If an employee or others working on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire feel unsafe at any point whilst in a lone working situation they should remove themselves from the situation as soon as is practicable and seek further assistance / advice.
4.3 **Lone Working Procedures**

4.3.1 Local procedures should detail the arrangements in place to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, security and well-being of lone workers.

4.3.2 Arrangements may justifiably differ within different departments/services and/or locations but should (minimally) consider the following:

- Planning work schedules to identify potential hazards and appropriate control measures;
- Awareness of lone workers schedule/movements;
- Keeping in contact with lone worker(s);
- Lone Worker awareness/working practice;
- Arrangements to ‘hand over’ lone worker information;
- Lone worker responsibility to inform a suitable colleague of any changes or delays to scheduled activities or plans;
- Safety and security of mobile/community/peripatetic/on-call staff;
- How to summon assistance/support;
- Escalation Procedures;
- Monitoring and Review of the effectiveness of safe working procedures.

4.3.3 Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, personal safety is the responsibility of both the employer and employee and employers obligated to providing a safe place to work, with employees having a duty of care to both themselves and others affected by their acts, decisions and/or omissions.

4.4 **Risk and Control Measures**

4.4.1 Where employees lone work, managers should read the Control Book Section 3L guidance for Lone Working and where appropriate 3K for domiciliary visits. The appropriate checklist and risk assessment process should be completed for staff lone working whose working practice makes them vulnerable. This includes staff that are site based but lone working as well as mobile staff whose work involves them working away from their designated base. The above Control Book documents are available through the NHS Lanarkshire Health and Safety Service FirstPort intranet page under ‘Control Book’, ‘Section 3L’.

4.4.2 Where required control measures can be established to eliminate or reduce any identified risk(s) to the lowest level reasonably practicable. Where staff either lone work and/or carry out home visits, Line Managers and/or Control Book Holders should complete the relevant Lone Workers Checklist and Lone Working Risk Assessment which is posted on FirstPort’s Salus Health and Safety Section page and posted as Control Book Section 3L.

The checklists can be used as a tool to assist managers to identify if the existing control measures are adequate and if not, what modifications or additional actions can be considered to help reduce the risks associated with lone working.
4.4 Risk and Control Measures (continued)

4.4.3 Control Book Section 3L for Lone Working contains:

- Lone Working and Working in Isolation Guidance (3L);
- Lone Working / Working in Isolation Procedure Checklist (3L1);
- Lone Working / Working in Isolation Risk Assessment Form (3L2);

The above are posted on FirstPort’s Salus Health and Safety Section intranet page.

4.4.4 Control Book Section 3K for Domiciliary Visits contains:

- Domiciliary Visits Guidance (3K);
- Domiciliary Visit Procedure Checklist (3K1).

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Chief Executive:

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of the Lone Working and Working in Isolation policy.

5.2 The Director of Human Resources:

- Acting on behalf of the Chief Executive to ensure that the Lone Working and Working in Isolation policy is implemented
- The General Manager for SALUS will act on behalf of the Director of Human Resources to ensure the policy is revised and updated as required

5.3 Acute University Hospital Directors / Divisional General Managers / Heads of Service and Service Managers:

- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risk(s) associated with lone working;
- Identifying employees who are lone workers and implement the policy for their area of responsibility;
- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and guidance;
- Eliminating lone working where practicable. Where this is not practical undertake a risk assessment for lone working;
- Where appropriate, encourage Department / Line Managers to evaluate the risk of ‘harm’ to lone workers within their area of responsibility and assess the adequacy of control measures;
- Ensuring control measures and associated lone worker procedures are implemented in order to reduce or eliminate identified risk(s) to “as low a level as is reasonably practicable;
- Monitoring reported incidents on Datix associated with lone working for employees within their area of responsibility.
5.4 **Department / Line Managers With Responsibility for Employees Who Work Alone And / Or In Isolation:**

- Ensuring that lone working is risk assessed in their area of responsibility;
- Communicating this policy to employees who lone work within their job role;
- Implementing appropriate local departmental / service policy / procedure/arrangements for lone working;
- Avoiding lone working where practical;
- Designating sufficient Control Book Holders to administer Control Books for service areas involved in lone working;
- Encouraging employees administering a Control Book to attend the Risk Assessment in Practice Course and Control Book training course to help them undertake risk assessments;
- Where appropriate ensure Section 3L of the Control Book for Lone Working is completed for employees lone working including undertaking a risk assessment, completing the check sheet, etc. which are designed to assist in assessing lone working;
- Assessing if associated risks are adequately controlled;
- Ensuring that the lone worker risk assessment(s) are communicated to employees or others working on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire involved in lone working;
- Where required develop and implement safe lone working procedures to ensure staff safety when lone working i.e. is there any requirement for communications systems, staff alert systems, anti-barricade doors, etc. and/or training for staff who work alone within the confines of the building, community venues and/or home visits;
- Encouraging lone workers to comply with lone working procedures;
- Ensuring that the necessary records are kept e.g. copies of risk assessments on lone working, documented procedure to be followed by lone workers, communication arrangements, supervision etc.;
- Periodically review risk assessments and working practices in order to ensure that all situations where staff are required to lone work are kept to a minimum and appropriate control measures are in place;
- Ensuring staff are aware of the process to follow where a developing high risk of ‘harm’ is dynamically assessed;
- Where appropriate collate additional information for staff members under their control e.g. lone worker schedules, emergency contact numbers, vehicle details (make, model, colour and car registration, etc.). This information should be readily available if required during normal as well as outside normal working times so that appropriate action can be taken in line with local escalation procedures;
- Developing clear algorithms that instruct staff in the course of action that should be followed should concerns for staff members safety be raised and escalation procedures are indicated;
- Demonstrating that all staff lone working under their area of responsibility have been made aware of NHS Lanarkshire’s Lone Working and Working in Isolation policy;
- Making sure that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, and updates / refresher training as necessary;
5.4 Department / Line Managers With Responsibility for Employees Who Work Alone And / Or In Isolation: (continued)

- Investigating any concerns that staff raise related to lone working and record all any significant findings on relevant recording procedures (Datix) and undertake a post incident review in the event of a significant incident occurring;
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident and periodically review the effectiveness of preventative measures.

5.5 Employees

There is a legal requirement for employees to bring to the notice of their employers any workplace health and safety concerns or incidents (including near miss incidents). There is also a requirement for employees to co-operate with their employer to enable compliance with statutory duties. Therefore, employees where appropriate are responsible for:

- Participating in relevant training i.e. PaMoVA, Risk Assessment, Control Book, etc. and familiarising themselves with this policy and any other relevant information provided by their Department/Service;
- Familiarising themselves with any lone worker risk assessment in place for activities they are involved in;
- Co-operating by following all procedures designed for safe working;
- Planning appropriately for site visits and undertaking a continuous dynamic assessment of their work situation;
- Taking reasonable care to look after their own health and safety and that of others affected by their acts, decisions and/or omissions;
- Reviewing planned work schedules, ensuring all indicated control measures and assessments have been read and understood and where requested copies and/or access to work schedules i.e. Outlook diary and relevant contact information (telephone contact) has been provided;
- Being aware of responsibility for the safety of themselves and/or others who may be affected by their actions;
- Ensuring work mobile telephones are fully charged and switched on during working hours and are easily accessible;
- Where audible alarms are issued, ensure it is switched on and is easily accessible;
- Ensuring where appropriate that vehicle details have been submitted to their line manager, central point of contact or ‘buddy’ and that the vehicle is legal and roadworthy and has sufficient fuel for the planned work activity;
- Where indicated in lone working procedures, ensure appropriate security arrangements all doors and windows are securely locked;
- Updating central point of contact/ Buddy of any cancellations or delays or if not returning to ‘base’ for breaks or before going home;
- Awareness of first aid arrangements on NHS Lanarkshire sites and other means of seeking First Aid assistance when working on or away from NHS Lanarkshire premises and/or away from their normal area of operations;
5.5 **Employees** (continued)

- Ensuring all machinery and equipment has been visually inspected prior to use;
- Where appropriate, seek assistance and/or withdraw from a situation where they feel unsafe;
- If an incident occurs, even if considered minor, the incident should be reported to their line manager so that it can be reviewed and further action taken where appropriate i.e. recorded on Datix.

5.6 **Salus Health and Safety Section**

The Head of Health and Safety provides competent support and manages a professional team to lead on all health and safety matters. The Health and Safety Section is responsible for:

- Reviewing this policy and associated arrangements at specified intervals (not exceeding 3 years) and/or in the case of a serious incident/near miss being reported/change in legislation/HSE Guidance where an earlier review may be required;
- Reviewing and updating, as necessary, the guidance available in the Health and Safety Control Book for Managers on assessing the risk of lone working and communicating relevant updates to Control Book Holders;
- On request, providing guidance and advice on implementation of this policy, lone working risk assessment process and/or development of local safe working procedures.

6. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 **Financial Considerations**

6.1.1 The cost of providing additional controls identified through the risk assessment process. (I.e. additional staff cover, implementation of alert/alarm and communication systems, etc.).

6.2 **Staff Considerations**

6.2.1 Time and support of managers/control book holders and/or identified responsible persons to undertake the risk assessment process and develop safe systems of work;
6.2.2 Time and support of departmental/speciality staff in the implementation of lone working procedures and where indicated alert/alarm response procedures;
6.2.3 Following a reported incident, time for participating in recording the incident on Datix and where appropriate time involved in conducting and/or participating in a local investigation of the incident;
6.2.4 Time for staff to attend training (including refresher training).
7. **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

It is recognised that communication is important therefore it is proposed:

7.1 The Policy and process will be communicated via the All Staff through posting on the NHS Lanarkshire Public Web Site under HR Policies https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/corporate-policies/human-resources-policy/. Where appropriate, articles referring to the Policy will be featured in the Pulse and/or through the weekly Staff Briefing.

7.2 Significant changes to the Policy will be communicated by the Health & Safety Admin support, by email to all identified Health and Safety Control Book holder, requesting that Control Book holders bring the Policy to the attention of their staff and requesting that staff familiarise themselves with its content.

8. **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – MONITORING AND REVIEW**

8.1 **Policy Review**

The Policy will be reviewed every 3 years and submitted to the Joint Policy Forum (JPF) and Human resources Forum (HRF).

8.2 **Control Book Audit**

The Salus Health & Safety Section will undertake periodic and planned control book audits which will include a review of lone worker arrangements and the quality and suitability of risk assessments highlighting areas of good practice and areas for improvement where appropriate.

9. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This policy meets NHS Lanarkshire’s EDIA.
LONE WORKING AND WORKING IN ISOLATION POLICY

10. REFERENCES

10.1 This policy will assist the Organisation to meet its legislative responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety of employees, so far as is reasonably practicable and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires a proactive process of risk assessment which will include lone working activities and implementation of safe working procedures to ensure staff safety when lone working/working in isolation. Risk assessments require to be reviewed periodically (at a minimum annually).

10.2 Scottish Government Partnership Information Network (PIN) Guideline, Managing Health at Work “Guideline 5, Protecting the health, safety and welfare of people working alone”. This policy complements the Scottish Government Partnership Information Network (PIN) Guideline, Managing Health at Work, “Guideline 5, Protecting the health, safety and welfare of people working alone”.
