

LONE WORKING POLICY

Introduction

1. The aim of this policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that Healthwatch staff and volunteers who work alone are not exposed to risks to their health and safety and to outline the steps to reduce and improve personal safety to staff and volunteers who work alone.
2. A lone worker is anyone who works in isolation from other Healthwatch staff and volunteers without close or direct supervision or contact with another Healthwatch staff member or volunteer.

Objectives

3. The objectives of this Policy are to ensure:
 - Lone workers are identified
 - That risks inherent in lone worker situations are assessed and suitable precautionary measures taken
 - There is a local safe system of work which records the whereabouts and tracks the movement of lone workers and identifies when lone working is no longer appropriate.

Legal Requirements

4. Healthwatch has an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and volunteers. The Act also requires staff and volunteers to take reasonable care for their own health and safety.
5. This policy ensures that such persons do not take short cuts or employ dangerous practices but that they are instructed to consider and identify potential hazards and to implement a form of risk assessment to ensure the safety of themselves and any of other persons they may be working with. The Policy should be read alongside the Healthwatch Health and Safety Policy.

Working Outside Normal Hours

6. Where a person is required to work outside normal office working hours (9.00 am to 5.00 pm) and alone, it is necessary to identify the degree of risk in assessing whether or not this is a safe practice. Board Directors/staff/volunteers should assess the level of risk this may involve. If they have serious concerns they should discuss this with the

Healthwatch Chair or Delivery Manager and if necessary carry out a formal risk assessment .

Risk Assessment

7. Risk assessment is the overall process of performing a systematic written risk analysis and risk evaluation in order to identify methods to control the severity of the risk. Risks to be assessed during the process include:

- Potential for violence and aggression
- Isolated areas/ difficult terrain
- Sudden illness
- Vehicle breakdowns
- Weather hazards.

This list is not exhaustive and other risks may be identified during the assessment process.

8. From the risk assessment a safe system of work should be designed to reduce the need for lone working where possible. If this is not possible, safe work practices should be implemented, in line with the findings of the risk assessment, to avoid or minimise risk.

Responsibilities

9. The Healthwatch Board will have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Policy and update it as necessary.

10. The Healthwatch Delivery Manager will:

- Maintain a log of the locations of staff and volunteers considered to be lone workers
- Assess the risks that such lone working presents and decide whether lone working is reasonable or not in these situations
- If lone working is considered reasonable, to ensure that suitable precautions are in place, such as for example: mobile telephones, team working, reporting in procedures
- Ensure systems are in place to take action to contact / locate staff and volunteers that have failed to make contact or return at the expected time, and raise the appropriate level of alarm if staff and volunteers cannot be contacted / located within after the expected time of contact or return
- Report to the Board on the effectiveness of this policy.

11. Staff and Volunteers will:

- Identify any activity carried out by them which will involve them working alone for more than one hour

- Comply with any precautionary measures laid down by the Healthwatch Delivery Manager
- Provide information that may be needed to set up a safe system of work for example: Working alone times and locations, Emergency contact details, Detail of the make and registration number of any vehicle being used, Informing key contact person when lone working has ended
- Reporting any unsafe or potentially unsafe situations
- Take reasonable care for their own safety and not expose themselves to unnecessary risk
- Attend any training provided.

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Appendix 1 Guidance on Home Visits

Before the Visit

Home visits may be due to a number of factors including poor mobility, or health related issues. Home visit should **only** occur if a person is unable to visit our offices or meet in a public place and staff/volunteers should ascertain that a home visit is absolutely necessary before arranging one. This will also need the prior approval of the Healthwatch Delivery Manager.

Make sure that the Healthwatch Manager knows where you are when undertaking a home visit. It is essential that the customer's name, address, telephone number and anticipated time frame are logged before leaving for the visit. Also make sure that the Healthwatch Manager has your correct mobile number and emergency contact details. The Manager will then set up reporting arrangements and a designated contact for you.

During the Visit

If you have any personal safety concerns when you arrive for the appointment, do not proceed; apologise and leave. A new appointment can be re-arranged.

Always leave your mobile phone switched on and on silent mode.

If during the visit you become uneasy or uncomfortable with your surroundings, perhaps due to the arrival of another person, make an excuse (such as you've just received an urgent telephone message from the office that you've only just noticed on your mobile, or you need to put more money on the parking meter), apologise and leave. A new appointment can be re-arranged.

If you have any problems during a home visit that causes you to require assistance then phone your designated contact and request information from the 'big brown book'. This will alert whoever takes the call that you are in difficulty and appropriate action will be taken. Only use this in emergencies and as a last resort if you are unable to exit the property.

If the customer attempts to leave you alone in the property regardless of the length of time, explain that Healthwatch policy does not allow staff to remain in a customer's home alone. Leave immediately.

If the visit takes longer than anticipated, then you must telephone your designated contact and let them know how long you expect the visit to last.

Completing the Visit

Once a home visit has been completed, you should telephone your designated contact to report that the visit has ended. It is your responsibility to inform your contact when you have finished your visit.

If you have not rang your designated contact by the expected finish time to say that they have completed the visit, then the designated contact will try and make contact with you on your mobile or home number. If contact cannot be made, then the contact will contact your emergency contact and if your safety or whereabouts cannot be confirmed then the police will be informed.