

Oxfordshire Hospital School Lone Working Policy

Rationale

OHS fully recognises its duty of care to staff and this policy reflects the fundamental right of all staff to feel safe and protected from any form of abuse. Lone working itself is not necessarily a high risk and as part of their contracted duties, staff are often required to work alone and without direct supervision. This policy applies, therefore, where an individual member of staff is operating alone, without support which is nearby or frequent and performing an activity which itself may have risk attached. It is important to take into account the work activity, the workplace and the system of supervision.

This policy, which takes into consideration the lone working policy of Oxfordshire County Council, does not set out to identify all the situations where staff may be at risk from working alone. Instead it concentrates on describing the arrangements that must be in place to eliminate or manage the risk of lone working.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the measures that OHS considers necessary to manage the risk present when staff are required to work alone when educating pupils off-site.

Legal Responsibilities

Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees. In addition, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on the employer to consider all reasonably foreseeable hazards and to take the appropriate action to reduce the possible risk of injury to the lowest level that is practicable to achieve.

Guidance

OHS will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that:

- staff required to work alone are protected from risks to their health, safety and welfare
- the risks to a member of staff's health & safety will be identified by line managers by the Risk Assessment process of that activity before lone working is undertaken
- control methods are identified through the risk assessment and all results fully discussed with the member of staff
- lone working staff never compromise their safety (or anyone else's) by their personal actions - stopping whatever they are doing if they feel insecure in any way

Responsibilities

Managers

- should, when assessing risk, take the following factors into consideration:
 - the degree of isolation of the member of staff
 - the type of work activity carried out
 - the current system of supervision and support
 - the possibility of contact with members of the public
- must ensure that lone working staff have access to a mobile telephone and an efficient system for using it to check in/out when working off-site
- are responsible for identifying and assessing the risks of lone working both in terms of the likelihood of causing harm and also the severity of the injury
- should consider whether the activity is one that may be safely accomplished by one person or whether the presence of another team member would be advisable
- should take action to reduce the risk to the lowest level practicably achievable if it cannot be eliminated completely
- should undertake a risk assessment on all the activities of lone workers and share the recommendations with their members of staff
- will ensure that staff are not sent into lone working situations before a risk assessment has been undertaken
- should thoroughly investigate reported incidents / accidents

Staff:

- should have an enhanced CRB clearance as an employee of OCC
- should complete a county-approved Child Protection course, of at least level 2, every two years
- have responsibility for the health and safety of self and others through common sense, risk assessment and help, support and guidance from the relevant sector
- recruited for a job likely to involve lone working should be reasonably physically fit and must declare if they have any medical disability that may put them at risk whilst working alone e.g. heart disease, diabetes
- should carry a first aid kit at all times in order to apply first aid for minor injuries (self) should they be sustained
- should ensure that the Headteacher has a copy of the guardian's contact details
- adhere to any safe system of work as identified by risk assessment
- follow all information, instruction and training provided by the Head of Sector
- should immediately report all incidents, accidents or concerns that may occur whilst working alone to their Leader of Learning or a member of SLT
- should ensure that contact details are always updated with the appropriate administrator
- should be familiar with the risk assessment for each pupil, act on it and make suggestions for updates to the Leader of Learning
- ensure that when undertaking off-site work in the home or community, a responsible adult should be available throughout the teaching period
- must lone work only within normal term dates and within normal school hours.

Monitoring and Review

All risk assessments together with approved procedures will be reviewed at regular intervals or immediately whenever information is learnt from an incident or accident. Relevant staff will be informed as soon as changes are made to risk assessments. Risk assessment procedures, protocols and pro-formas will be reviewed by OHS Governors annually.

Summary and Practical Advice

The key to safe lone working is the assessment of potential risks and the measures that can be practically taken to minimize and/or alleviate these. The vast majority of staff work without any difficulties and the majority of pupils are cooperative and their parents/carers most appreciative of what staff achieve. However, preparing for the visit is essential:

Making a home visit

- stick to the timetable and complete your register within the first 15 minutes
- if visiting by car, leave the vehicle in a position where you can easily leave ie. facing the exit of a cul-de-sac
- be punctual – the parent/carer may have made special arrangements to be at home or have a pressing engagement later
- introduce yourself and have your ID badge visible
- confirm who you are speaking to
- if your reception appears unfriendly, it may be wiser to stay on the doorstep
- actively listen to the parent/carer
- request permission if you need to take notes
- be clear about arrangements and agreements made by both parties
- ensure that the parent/carer has your name and contact number
- at the end of your working hours, sign out by sending a text to the DSL to confirm you are safe and heading home

Procedures for Dealing with Incidents

The priority in dealing with any incident which may occur whilst providing off-site education is **the personal well-being and safety of staff**. Of greatest concern to OHS is the avoidance of any situation which places staff in physical danger or intimidated. If you find yourself in a situation which you find threatening or uncomfortable, consider the use of the following:

- your own body language
- strategies to diffuse the situation
- avoidance of confrontation or argument
- try to remain calm and relaxed
- speak slowly, clearly and gently
- keep your distance – do not invade personal space
- try to take action before the situation gets out of control
- trust your own instincts and know when to leave
- have an exit strategy in mind

It is of course, vital that you inform SLT of any serious incident as soon as you are able to do so for further advice. **On no account should you continue to teach the pupil without having spoken to SLT.** Clearly, any abusive or physical attack is extremely distressing and SLT will support you as necessary. Fortunately, incidents of abusive or physical attack are extremely rare.

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