



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

# **Estyn policy on lone working safety**

**April 2020**

## Information sheet

### Version control

Version	Author	Date of issue	Comments
1.0	HR manager	24 September 2009	Final version following consultation with staff and TUS.
2.0	Lead Officer: Health safety and wellbeing	August 2013	Review and revision of 2009 Policy. Impact assessment carried out.
3.0	Health safety and wellbeing	November 2014	General re-wording to improve clarity; removed reference to supply of first aid kits and personal alarms to reflect actual practice; removed outdated Suzy Lamplugh advice.
4.0	Phil Sweeney	April 2020	General rewording. Additions: Section 2, para 3.23, 3.24, Appendix 1

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- A business rationale assessment has been carried out and this policy contributes to Estyn's strategic objectives and delivery principles.
  - An equality impact assessment has been carried out and this policy is not deemed to adversely impact on any people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
  - **This policy and its associated procedures are agreed by Estyn's management and Trades Unions**
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## Section 1: Introduction

### Policy statement

- 1.1 Estyn is committed to ensuring the safety of its employees who are exposed to risks arising from lone working activities both within and away from a recognised workplace or base.
- 1.2 We have a statutory duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to identify work hazards, assess the risks involved and implement suitable and sufficient measures to avoid or control the risks, which include the risks associated with lone working.
- 1.3 Therefore, the aim of the policy and the guidelines within is to eliminate the potential risks associated with lone working or, where this is not possible, minimise the risk to the lowest possible level so far as is reasonably practicable. We are committed to providing a safe working environment in which:
  - a. risks are assessed and controlled
  - b. equipment is provided to staff to help them to work safely and effectively
  - c. staff receive sufficient relevant instruction, training and supervision to enable them to work as safely as they can
- 1.4 Staff have a personal responsibility to:
  - a. ensure that they do not put themselves or others affected by their actions at unreasonable risk when carrying out their duties
  - b. co-operate with the employer to safeguard health and safety – this includes completing appropriate training, wearing and using protective equipment provided, reporting accidents, incidents and health and safety hazards and failings, completing risk assessments and seeking advice and guidance as necessary
- 1.5 In delivering our work staff are sometimes required to work alone. In recognition of the fact that lone working inherently carries a higher degree of risk than normal office working arrangements, we have designed this policy to set out what can be reasonably done to manage and control the risks associated with lone working.
- 1.6 Clearly, this policy cannot address every situation which might arise whilst staff are working alone, but it does provide information to enable staff to:
  - a. identify the issues relating to working without direct supervision
  - b. discuss issues with line managers
  - c. ensure that effective measures are in place to minimise risks

- 1.7 All line managers have a responsibility to ensure that their team members are aware of this policy and to ensure, as far as is practicable, that it is followed in circumstances when staff may be working alone.
- 1.8 Because of the importance we attach to protecting the health and safety of all those who work for us, disciplinary or other appropriate action may be taken against individuals for breaches of this policy that result in:
  - a. harm being caused to the person concerned with the breach
  - b. harm being caused to somebody else because this policy wasn't properly adhered to
  - c. the wasting of police time

### **What is lone working?**

- 1.9 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define lone workers as 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'.
- 1.10 For the purposes of this policy, lone working is any situation where an individual works by themselves without direct supervision or immediate access to support, whether:
  - a. in the community, on inspection, at a hotel; or attending meetings, training courses at off-site venues, etc.
  - b. in Estyn's office; or
  - c. in their own home

### **To whom does this policy apply?**

- 1.11 This policy applies to all permanent employees, secondees and agency staff within Estyn. This document is also recommended as good practice to external inspectors engaged by Estyn. The policy is specifically aimed at those whose work includes elements carried out unaccompanied or without immediate access to another person for assistance; this mainly includes inspection staff who work from home and visit providers of education and training. It is essential that this policy document is covered within the induction process for all new members of staff and that the key messages are regularly communicated to staff.

## **Section 2: Duties and responsibilities**

### **Her Majesty's Chief Inspector**

- 2.1 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of those employees who work for Estyn, including the protection of lone workers. The Corporate Services Director (CSD) has been designated overall responsibility for operational aspects.

### **The Executive Board**

- 2.2 In accordance with the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, the Executive Board have overall responsibility for ensuring that the health and safety management systems relating to Lone Working are effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed.

### **Corporate Services Director:**

- is responsible for ensuring that appropriate security management provisions are made within Estyn to protect lone working staff
- should ensure that measures to protect lone workers complies with all relevant health and safety legislation
- has a general responsibility for the protection of lone workers through gaining assurance that policies, procedures and systems to protect lone workers are implemented
- is responsible for raising the profile of security matters for discussion at Board level and for getting Board support and backing for important security management strategies and initiatives
- will work with the Health, Safety, Employee Wellbeing & Engagement Group to oversee the effectiveness of risk reporting, assessment and management processes for the protection of lone workers; where there are foreseeable risks, the CSD should gain assurance that all steps have been taken to avoid or control the risks

### **The Health, Safety Employee Wellbeing & Engagement Group:**

- In accordance with the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, will ensure that the health and safety management systems relating to Lone Workers are effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed
- will update policies and procedures for the safety of lone workers
- will advise the organisation on systems, processes and procedures to improve personal safety of lone workers and make sure that proper preventative measures are in place

- will advise on appropriate and proportionate physical security, technology and support systems that improves personal safety of lone workers and meets the needs of the organisation and lone worker
- will play an active part in assisting managers to identify hazards, assess and manage risks (advise on the proper security provisions needed to mitigate the risks and protect lone workers)
- review incidents (in the event of an incident, the Lead Officer will liaise with the police and organise follow up action, including any post incident root-cause analysis, working with managers to identify any shortcomings and learning from them to implement appropriate measures to negate or mitigate future failings)

### **Managers:**

- are to identify all staff who are lone workers, based on recognised definitions
- will ensure that this policy and all other relevant policies and procedures are disseminated to staff
- will ensure that a proper risk assessment is conducted (in consultation with the relevant personnel) to ensure that all risks from lone working are identified and that proper control measures have been introduced to minimise, or mitigate the risks before staff enter a lone working situation
- will ensure that lone workers are provided with sufficient information, training, instruction and supervision before entering a lone worker situation
- will, when informed of a security incident, make sure that the employee completes an incident reporting form as soon as possible and that is reported to the Lead Officer
- will, following a reported incident, ensure that a risk assessment is carried out as soon as possible and that immediate control measures are put in place. This is prior to a formalised review of lessons learned.

### **Lone working staff members:**

- have a responsibility to do all they can to ensure their own safety and that of their colleagues and follow Estyn guidance.
- will undertake all relevant training, as directed
- are to seek advice from their line manager and follow guidance, procedures and instructions to avoid putting themselves or their colleagues at risk
- will conduct proper planning prior to a visit and utilise continual dynamic risk assessment during a visit
- must report all incidents even where they consider it to be a minor incident, including 'near misses' to enable appropriate follow up action to be taken

## Section 3: Establishing safe working practices

### Risk assessment

- 3.1 The earlier that staff are able to identify potential risks, the more likely they are to have the opportunity to avoid them. Effective preparation will help staff to consider the foreseeable hazards and take all reasonable precautions to reduce risk and ensure personal safety.
- 3.2 The risk identification process should be carried out to identify the risks to lone workers and any others who may be affected by their work. This information is needed to make decisions on how to manage those risks and ensure that the action taken is proportionate. Before any member of staff works alone, they and the line manager / inspection lead have a duty to assess and minimise the risks which the particular lone working arrangement presents.
- 3.3 Risks of lone working include, but are not limited to, issues around:
  - a. **Workplace / physical environment** hazards, e.g. remote, isolated or unlit areas, known trouble spots, laboratories, workshops, confined spaces
  - b. **Fire and other emergency procedures** -- it is particularly important that the lone worker is familiar with the procedure for evacuating any building in which they are working
  - c. **Process / Task** hazards e.g. manual handling, working with vulnerable adults or children/young people
  - d. **People** e.g. delivering unwelcome messages and dealing with the reactions to this, working with strangers, or dealing with people who may have a history of violence or aggression, dealing with acts of violence or criminal activity
  - e. **Equipment** e.g. manual handling, carrying and use of equipment, such as laptops, that make individuals a target for theft
  - f. **Person-based risks** e.g. medical conditions, injury, disabilities, female employees, expectant mothers, age, inexperience, lack of relevant training, etc.
  - g. **Work Pattern** of the lone worker and how it relates to other factors, including, timing of work (e.g. whether out of hours when fewer people are around or during darkness), location (e.g. isolation) and weather conditions, which may increase the risk to an individual.
- 3.4 The examples above may not solely relate to lone working, nor are they an exhaustive list of all the hazards that may face lone workers. Whilst effective planning can help to reduce and manage risks, it will not necessarily eliminate all the risks. If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be undertaken safely by the lone worker, other arrangements must be put in place.



3.5 Lone workers are not expected to enter into or remain in situations where they judge that their personal safety is compromised. Individual staff are expected to use their judgement in assessing risk and to exercise discretion in suspending work if they feel unsafe or at unacceptable risk. If a lone worker suspends work for reasons of safety, they must report the decision to their line manager / inspection lead as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for the work to be undertaken in a safe way. Estyn's Lead Officer should also be informed of such decisions.

3.6 When lone working, the personal safety of staff is the prime consideration.

**Working alone in the community (on inspection, attending meetings, participating in training courses etc)**

3.7 The risk assessment for staff working alone on inspection should be part of the inspection risk assessment to be completed before an inspection takes place.

3.8 Where a risk assessment identifies concerns about the safety of a lone worker, e.g. travelling in poor weather conditions, line managers / inspection leads should consider with the lone worker whether alternative approaches to completing that work would be appropriate e.g. if the task should be deferred or undertaken by two workers rather than one.

3.9 Estyn does not expect staff to document a risk assessment each time they attend a training course or meeting, but when attending such events, staff should act with reasonable care to safeguard their health and safety and act in accordance with the rules relating to notifying managers / colleagues of whereabouts as set out in subsequent paragraphs.

3.10 When working alone away from Estyn's office, staff should identify possible risks from pre-inspection enquiries / prior knowledge / experience. These risks can generally be addressed by following some simple guidelines:

- a. ensure your line manager and / or colleagues are aware of your whereabouts and plans (including programme of visits, timings and travel arrangements / driving route and when you expect to complete the activities you are undertaking)
- b. ensure that you have discussed and resolved any concerns with your line manager about:
  - i. health conditions and treatments / medications which might affect your ability to work safely without direct supervision
  - ii. the arrangements for monitoring and tracing your movements
  - iii. your training or development needs related to working without direct supervision
- c. ensure that your outlook calendar contains details of your whereabouts including:
  - i the name and address of places being visited

- ii a contact telephone number for the place or person being visited
- d. ensure that you have your mobile phone with you and that it is fully charged and operational, with relevant contact numbers (including taxi numbers) and emergency contact numbers stored
- e. if you have indicated that you will contact your line manager / inspection lead after an event, you should ensure that you do so – failure to do so could cause anxiety amongst colleagues and result in time wasted in checking up on whereabouts / making calls etc.

### **What to do if staff whereabouts are unknown**

- 3.11 From the actions outlined in earlier paragraphs, line managers / inspection leads should be aware of what work staff are undertaking on their own and when the member of staff is expected to arrive/return. Lone workers should always ensure that someone else (manager, colleague, family member) is aware of their movements. It is advisable that staff also provide a family member with a work number to contact in case of emergencies or issues of concern.
- 3.12 There may be reasons why a member of staff has not made contact or returned by a pre-arranged time, but if a line manager / colleague has not heard from a member of staff within a reasonable time (60 minutes) of the time the member of staff was expected they should:
- a. ring the member of staff to check if they are safe – if they reply but indicate that they are in trouble or sound distressed, the line manager should consider whether they feel that the member of staff is in such trouble / distress to merit calling the police
  - b. (if there is no reply from the member of staff) contact other colleagues or team members to check whether they have any information about the whereabouts of the person concerned
  - c. contact the member of staff on their home number
  - d. consider calling the police if they still cannot be traced after having exhausted all reasonable lines of enquiry to establish the whereabouts of the member of staff
- 3.13 Some inspection teams operate a buddy system, such as when inspecting work-based learning or adult community learning. Where such systems are operating, all parties have to be clear about the responsibilities they have for reporting movements and whereabouts. It is particularly important to let the Reporting Inspectors and team members know if plans change (including occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit / inspection / meeting rather than returning to the inspection base room, team hotel or one of Estyn's offices) and the procedure for reporting incidents and raising the alarm if needed – see above.

### **Working from home**

- 3.14 Staff can be designated as a homeworker or work occasionally from home with their line manager's approval. Home-workers should ensure that the information in paragraph 2.11 is provided to line managers and included in their outlook calendars as appropriate. Regular contact should be maintained between home workers and line managers as outlined in Estyn's Flexible Working Policy.
- 3.15 In order to safeguard their health and safety, home-workers should on no account invite anybody other than an Estyn colleague to their home for business meetings. For personal safety, if you are a homeworker and work alone at home frequently then it may be advisable not to reveal to people outside Estyn that you are working at home. Similarly corporate services staff should be judicious in revealing to people outside Estyn that a colleague is working at home alone.

### **Working alone in Estyn's office**

- 3.16 There may be times when an individual member of staff is the first or last person working in Estyn's office and potentially working alone for a period of time.
- 3.17 It would seem disproportionate to ask staff to document a risk assessment each time they find themselves working alone in the Estyn office. We do, however, expect staff to act with reasonable care to safeguard their health and safety when they are working alone.
- 3.18 If staff anticipate they will be working alone for a significant period of time in Estyn's office, it is important that they exercise caution and take sensible precautions to ensure their safety. In order to ensure that staff are as safe as they can be, when working alone in Estyn's office, staff should:
- a. inform their line manager and / or a colleague and security guard, where appropriate, when and for how long you will be working alone and when you are planning to leave
  - b. do not allow entry to any unknown person or unexpected visitor
  - c. ensure you are near to a phone to call for help if needed and have contact numbers nearby (e.g. security company number)
  - d. ensure you know where the first aid box is
  - e. avoid manual handling tasks to minimise the risk of accident or injury
  - f. if the fire alarm sounds then vacate the building immediately
  - g. avoid arranging meetings with external people when the office is empty
  - h. avoid using lifts if possible

- i. report accidents / incidents as soon as possible and in the case of emergency, as appropriate contact the police and / or ambulance service immediately
- j. put your personal safety first if you are threatened by anybody, as this is more important than possessions

### **Reporting accidents, emergencies, illness etc**

- 3.19 Should a member staff be involved in an accident, some type of emergency or become ill whilst lone working, where possible they should inform their line manager / inspection lead at the earliest possible opportunity to enable Estyn to provide support where appropriate to do so, e.g. to provide a lift home, to seek medical advice/treatment, to make alternative arrangements for any outstanding work to be undertaken etc.
- 3.20 Where appropriate to do so<sup>1</sup>, staff involved in road traffic accidents should report any accidents they have been involved in to the police. Similarly, if you have witnessed an accident, you should report it to the police.
- 3.21 Staff involved in an **accident or near miss**, whether an injury is sustained or not, should report the matter to the Lead Officer as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.
- 3.22 If an incident causes more than three consecutive days' absence from work, there is a legal requirement for it to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995.

### **Post-incident support**

- 3.23 Incidents that occur in lone working situations, whether they are accidents or involve assaults on staff, theft or criminal damage, can have a serious impact on individuals. Managers should consider support that it would be appropriate to provide or offer the individual, e.g. counselling services via Estyn's Employee Support Service.

### **Post-incident review**

- 3.24 Post-incident review will enable all available information to be used to ensure that lessons can be learned and the risk of future incidents minimised. The key to post-incident review, risk assessment and follow-up action is to gain an understanding of how and why incidents occur in lone working situations and apply learning from that understanding. In order to achieve this, the following factors should be considered:
  - type of incident (for example, physical assault/theft of property or equipment)
  - severity of incident

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<sup>1</sup> The law requires that if you have been the driver of a motor vehicle on a road involved in an accident resulting in injury or damage to another person's property or involving some types of animals, you, the driver, must stop and if required by any person having reasonable grounds, provide your name and address, insurance company and name and address of the owner of the vehicle you are driving and its registration mark.

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- likelihood of incident recurring
- cost to Estyn (human and financial)
- individuals and staff groups involved
- weaknesses or failures that have allowed these incidents to take place (for example, procedural, systematic or technological)
- analysis of training needs of staff
- review of measures in place to manage and reduce identified risks
- review of the effectiveness of support measures for the staff involved
- technology in place to protect lone workers.

## **Section 4: Training and safety equipment**

- 4.1 All lone workers will be provided with training, instruction and information to ensure that they understand the hazards and the risks associated with working alone. In particular, staff will receive training on:
- a. health and safety matters and manual handling as part of their induction
  - b. driver development training within the first six months of joining for those staff who drive regularly as part of official duties
  - c. personal safety training delivered by experienced mentors within the first six months of starting work in Estyn
  - d. working safely if they are home based

### **Mobile phones**

- 4.2 Mobile phones are provided for all staff who regularly work away from Estyn's office. A mobile phone should never be relied on as the only means of communication.
- 4.3 Lone workers should tell their manager or a colleague about any visit in advance, including its location and nature, and when they expect to arrive and leave. Afterwards, they should let their manager or colleague know that they are safe.
- 4.4 Always check the signal strength before entering a lone working situation and keep the phone as fully charged as possible.
- 4.5 The lone worker should ensure they can use the mobile phone properly, by familiarising themselves with the handset and instruction manual.
- 4.6 Emergency contacts should be kept on speed dial.
- 4.7 The phone should be kept nearby and never left unattended.
- 4.8 A mobile phone could also be a target for thieves. Care should be taken to use it as discreetly as possible, while remaining aware of risks and keeping it within reach at all times.
- 4.9 Staff members are reminded that it is against the law to use a mobile phone whilst driving.

## Section 5: Travelling

- 5.1 Staff working alone may be particularly vulnerable when travelling and should follow these simple guidelines to help safeguard themselves. Always plan your route.

### Driving

- 5.2 [Estyn's Policy for Driving as Part of Official Duties](#) sets out our approach for staff who drive regularly for their role.

### Public transport

- 5.3 When using public transport:
- a. let someone know your travel arrangements and expected departure and arrival times
  - b. (after dark) try to wait in well-lit areas and near any emergency alarms or CCTV cameras
  - c. avoid empty upper decks on buses or empty train compartments and try to sit in an aisle seat
  - d. if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable act upon your instincts straight away e.g. move seats

### When using taxis:

- a. book in advance whenever possible, using a reputable company (sharing the taxi with a colleague if possible)
- b. ask for driver and / or car details and confirm these when the cab arrives to ensure you are getting into the right vehicle
- c. do not give personal details to the driver unnecessarily

### Walking

- 5.4 If you are walking to a meeting / course etc:
- a. do not to carry too much luggage / equipment and aim to keep at least one hand free whenever possible
  - b. carry your personal alarm (if you have one)
  - c. wear sensible clothes and comfortable shoes that you can move easily in
  - d. remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times – a confident appearance will make you look less vulnerable

- e. stay in the centre of the footpath facing oncoming traffic (i.e. on the right hand pavement wherever possible)
- f. carry a torch if walking in the dark
- g. avoid danger rather than confront it; walking away from a confrontation can be an effective way to prevent an incident
- h. keep to well-lit or busy streets and avoid known danger spots as far as possible - avoiding short cuts unless you know they are as safe as the longer route
- i. in the event of a situation where you are concerned for your safety head for the nearest public area (shop, petrol station, police station, etc.). If possible look out for street CCTV cameras and try to remain in view of these.

### **Overnight stays**

- 5.5 When hotels are being booked, the booking (Finance) team and/or the individual should try to ensure:
- a. there is a secure car park at the hotel
  - b. the room being allocated is safe and suitable e.g. there might be a need for greater caution if staying in a ground floor room because of the increased security (break-in) risk
  - c. lifts are available to minimise the risks associated with carrying materials
  - d. rooms have phones
  - e. that the hotel will retain the room if the person using it is late arriving
  - f. there is a dining facility in the hotel or there is somewhere to eat nearby that is easily and safely accessible



## **Section 6: Personal safety and dealing with conflict or aggression**

- 6.1 In any situation where conflict or a confrontation arises or is foreseeable, personal safety is always the foremost consideration. Staff should not put themselves unnecessarily at risk by attempting to manage violent situations. Where they can, staff should withdraw from such situations as quickly as possible.
- 6.2 If threatened staff should be prepared to give up their bag, briefcase or other valuables. If property is stolen, do not attempt to recover it yourself; contact the police and report the incident to your line manager.

## Appendix 1: Checklist for managers and training sessions

### Are staff:

- *issued* with all relevant policies and procedures relating to lone working staff?
- *trained* in appropriate strategies and processes?
- *issued* with appropriate safety equipment and the procedures for maintaining such equipment?
- *aware of* how to report an incident/near miss and of the need to report these when they occur?
- *issued* with the necessary contacts for post-incident support?
- *aware* of the importance of doing proper planning before a visit, being aware of the risks and doing all they can to ensure their own safety in advance of a visit?
- *aware* of the importance of leaving an itinerary of movements with their line manager, colleagues or family member?
- *aware* of the need to keep in regular contact with appropriate colleagues and, where relevant, their nominated 'buddy'?
- *aware* of the need to carry out continual dynamic risk assessments during a visit and take an appropriate course of action?
- *aware* of how to obtain support and advice from management in and outside of normal working hours?
- *appreciate* that they have their own responsibilities for their own safety?
- *aware* that they should never put themselves or colleagues in any danger and if they feel threatened should withdraw immediately?