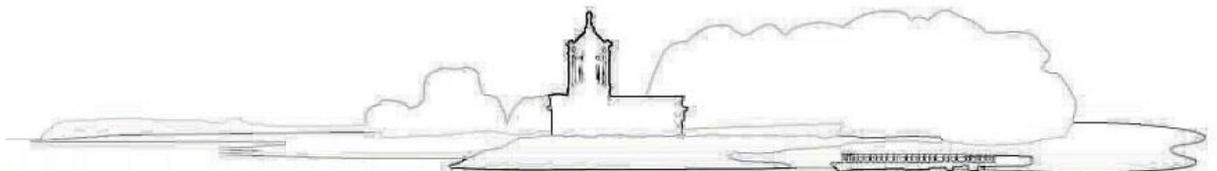


Rutland County Council

Guidance Notes – Working Alone

Version & Policy Number	Version 1.0
Guardian	Human Resources
Date Produced	October 2015
Next Review Date	October 2018



Summary of document

There are many members of staff who do, and will be expected, to work on their own. This may be because they have no fixed workplace or their role means they spend significant amounts of time away from their base. They are not, however, expected to face any greater risks as a result.

This document provides additional information to assist directorates in interpreting the requirements of the policy and ensure they have robust procedures and risk assessments in place. Checklists and systems have been provided, however it should be stressed that these are only an aid to assist managers in developing appropriate systems in their own service area.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Working Alone Policy
- Guidance Note GN031 Guidance on Lone Working
- Violence at Work Policy
- Accident/Assault Reporting Policy
- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Policy
- Corporate Potential Risk Indicator policy

These documents outline the legal position and the responsibilities of staff and managers. These are available on the Corporate Health and Safety folder on the S Drive.

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1. Legislation in practice

Whilst there is no general prohibition on working alone, there are scenarios where legislation stipulates at least two people must be involved in certain work activities and specific safe systems of work must be followed. Other legislation indicates a minimum standard of supervision is required that limits the extent employees may work alone.

Examples of this include:

- Entry into confined spaces
- Certain construction/maintenance activities
- Young people working at prescribed dangerous machinery

In addition, it is not advisable to allow staff to work unaccompanied when:

- Work involves the use of dangerous equipment eg chainsaws
- Work involves close proximity to deep water
- Criminal activity is suspected
- Manual handling activities require the presence of more than one person to carry out the lifting activity safely.

Neither of these lists are exhaustive.

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that staff are fully aware of the risks associated with the tasks they are being asked to undertake and the measures put in place for them to comply with to mitigate these. Communication is therefore key in managing risk.

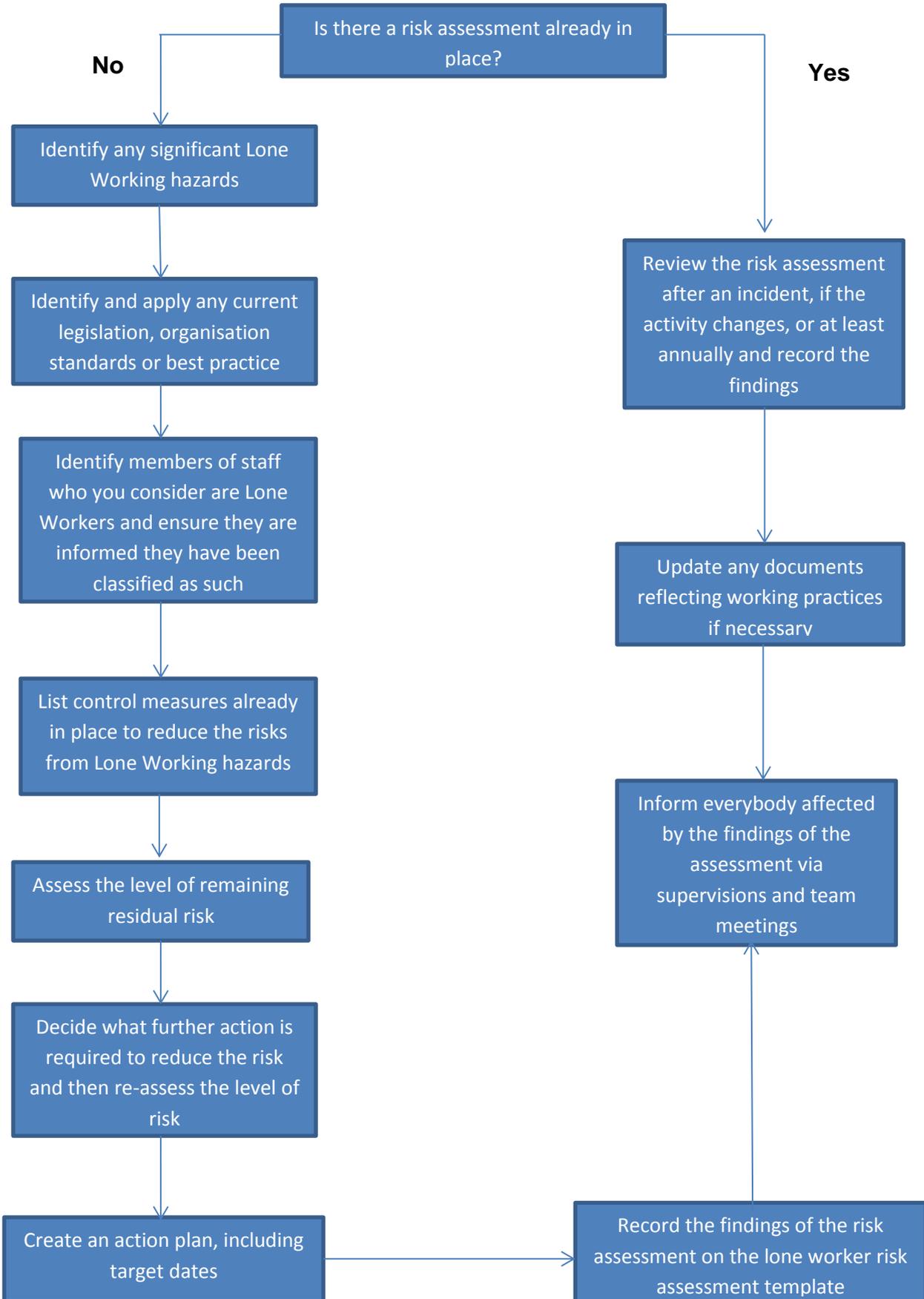
2. Risk Assessments

It is essential that a risk assessment of the tasks and hazards that may come with this, is carried out before a lone worker commences these. Through this process the organisation can demonstrate that we have done all we can both legally and morally to protect those working alone on Council duties. These need to cover both the day to day tasks and foreseeable emergencies, as well as considering the individuals being asked to carry these out.

The following sections take you through the process to follow; some key aspects to consider when assessing the hazards, and a sample form to capture this on. The aim of this process is to ideally remove the hazard altogether; if this is not reasonably practicable, you need to control the risk so that harm is unlikely.

Remember, risk assessments are living documents. As things change with service users, clients and staff, risks and hazards will change, so the risk assessment will need to be reviewed in light of this as new information becomes available.

2.1 Procedure for the Management of Lone Working Risks



2.2 10 steps to conducting a Lone Working Risk assessments

Step	Action	Guidance
1	Be aware of your accountability and responsibilities	You should understand you accountability and responsibilities regarding the management of lone working
2	Ensure risk assessments are in place for lone working	Risk assessments must be in place for work activities that involve lone working. Depending on the level of lone working involved, it may be appropriate to include it as a particular hazard within another risk assessment, or else it may be that a stand-alone lone working risk assessment is required.
3	Focus on the Lone Working issues with regard to your service area work activities	Apply your knowledge of the way work activities are carried out in your service area and identify those that would fall into the category of lone working
4	Identify the significant lone working hazards for your work activities	The risk assessment form is a starting point for you to assess possible risks faced by staff who are lone working– the likelihood and severity of each will vary depending on the service area. In order to determine risk rating, please refer to the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Policy.
5	Identify relevant best practice, organisation standards and legislation	Is there any additional guidance available from your professional body? Other useful sources of information can be found at the end of this document
6	Identify members of staff who you consider to be Lone Workers	Members of staff you identify as lone workers need to be informed they have been classified as such
7	List the control measures currently in place	Identify controls currently in place to reduce the risks and give the details in the relevant section of the risk assessment form
8	Assess the level of remaining (residual) risk and decide what further actions are needed	Having considered the current control measures in place, it may be that you can identify extra measures that can be taken to further minimise, or ideally remove, the risks.
9	Monitor and review	The effectiveness of control measures must be monitored and risk assessments reviewed regularly (at least every 12 months), or after an incident and modified if necessary. Involve staff in this process.
10	Ensure employees are properly informed, instructed, trained and supervised	You should provide employees with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training, including measures they can take to safeguard their personal safety

2.3 Management considerations for risk assessments

There are a number of questions to work through as part of your risk assessment process to help you to identify all of the risks and develop appropriate control measures. This list is not exhaustive, and should be used alongside the policy and the rest of this guidance document.

Question	Recommendations
Is the employee a new member of staff or trainee?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to lack of experience in the job, particular attention will need to be given to an appropriate level of training for the new member of staff or trainee. • Training should be designed to enable the employee to appreciate the particular risks associated with the work; understand the safety precautions and emergency arrangements; understand the importance of the communication processes; assist them in responding correctly to hazards arising during work; to diffuse potentially threatening situations. • All lone working staff should be provided with the above training, but particularly new members of staff or trainees. • Employees new to lone working, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first.
Is the employee medically fit and suitable to work alone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supervisor/manager will need to check with the lone worker that they have no personal health or medical condition that may make them unsuitable for working alone or put them at any increased risk. Both routine and foreseeable emergencies should be considered. The supervisor/manager may need to seek further medical advice etc. from the Council's Occupational Health service provider via HR. • Stress may obviously be encountered at work by all employees, but the isolation of the lone worker may give additional cause for concern. Suitable counselling facilities may be appropriate in particular circumstances for individuals who are prone to suffering from stress and whose areas of work may place additional requirements on employees in terms of their physical or mental stamina. This can be accessed via CareFirst.
Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person or are more people necessary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly more risks than employees who work together. Precautions identified will need to take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents/incidents that may occur. It will be necessary to identify all the places where people work alone and determine whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the workplace presents any significant or special risks to the lone worker. ○ there is safe access and exit from the workplace for the lone worker and whether the lone worker is instructed to check and identify their means of escape when using

	<p>premises that they are not familiar with.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the lone worker can safely handle and use (if required) any access equipment e.g. ladders, steps etc. ○ all the plant, substances, loads and goods involved in the work can be safely handled and moved by the lone worker. The work may involve lifting loads or objects too large or heavy for one person etc. ○ a lone worker can safely operate essential controls etc. for the safe use and running of equipment/machinery etc. ○ the lone worker will have to carry, transport and/or handle cash or other valuables. ○ the lone worker is likely to encounter violence/assault etc. ○ women or young workers are especially at risk
<p>Are remoteness and isolation factors for consideration?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When employees are working in remote locations the following issues must also be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ that the emergency services can approach close enough (if necessary). ○ there is a clear understanding about how long the work should take. ○ there is adequate access to first aid facilities, or provision for mobile workers to carry a portable first aid kit. ○ transport arrangements to and from the work place are adequate.
<p>How will the lone worker be supervised?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Although lone working cannot be subject to constant supervision it is still the supervisor's/manager's responsibility to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision compliments information, instruction and training and helps to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty. ● The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the employee to identify and handle safety issues. ● Employees new to lone working, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. ● The extent of supervision required is a management decision and should not be left to individuals to decide that they require assistance. The hazards and risks identified by the risk assessments process will also need to be considered when deciding what supervision is required and needed.
<p>What happens if an employee becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Local emergency and contingency procedures must be developed and implemented that address issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what the lone worker should do when a problem arises and there is nobody to ask for assistance. ○ effects upon plant or processes if they were to be left unattended due to illness or injury of the lone worker.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ whether a second person would be able to substantially contribute to preventing risk of injury. ○ any occasions when assistance would be required, such as during the manual handling of heavy, awkward or difficult load. ○ how long the lone worker would be working alone and how far away assistance/ supervision would be? ○ whether the lone worker would know how to respond correctly in the case of any emergency. ● Employees must be familiar with and trained to implement all procedures. Information about emergency procedures must be communicated to all staff and should also be extended to contract workers who visit and work on council premises. ● For employees, it is important they know the local written procedures and how to implement them, such as when an employee fails to return at the time stated and the course of action that needs to be taken to deal with that situation. ● Employees should also be advised of the out-of hours emergency contact details if they are working outside the “normal working day” and require assistance. ● In the case of illness or injury the lone worker should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ have access to adequate first aid facilities, ○ know how to raise the alarm and contact emergency services if required, ○ know where the nearest A&E unit is or have access to medical personnel. ○ In some circumstances it may be advisable for lone workers to carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. ● In addition to the emergency procedures outlined above, where the employer has decided that lone work can be carried out with a minimum of risk, it is essential to have some sort of precautionary measures to assess the individual’s safety. The measures will need to be appropriate to the task and the environment. For example, while it would be reasonable to request an employee who works from a base to telephone in on an hourly cycle to confirm their safety, it may not be reasonable to ask a grounds maintenance employee to do this. ● It is recommended that managers/supervisors devise a system to monitor the status of workers in remote locations. Such a system is likely to include, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a check-in arrangement where the worker periodically telephones a supervisor etc., or is visited at regular intervals. ○ a check-out arrangement in the workplace that incorporates such items as diaries (paper and/ or electronic) and wipe boards, etc. ○ emergency call buttons or other devices to alert a responsible person.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a surveillance system, where this can be introduced without infringing individual privacy. ● The complexity of contingency plans should be based upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the consequences of illness or injury. ○ the frequency with which unaccompanied working is carried out. ○ the duration of each working period. ○ the time that it would take to raise the alarm, and for assistance to reach the location.
<p>Are risk assessments for particular service users/clients in place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visits and interactions with new clients/service users should be risk assessed, with references made to the Corporate Potential Risk Indicator to ensure there are no known issues with that individual that would affect your assessment of the risk a lone worker may face ● Prior to visit staff undertaking these should try to obtain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previous history ○ Behaviour patterns ○ Problems with relatives ○ Use of medication/drugs/alcohol ○ Obtain information from other colleagues and agencies ○ Any other agencies working with the service user or family ie GP, Police, Probation

2.4 Lone worker risk assessment

Operations/work activities covered by this assessment	Activities involving lone working away from base
Site address/location:	Department/service/team:

Hazards considered (Step 1)	Who might be harmed and how (Step 2)	Control measures to be implemented (Step 3)	Is this in place?	Risk rating	Further measures (Step 3)	Actions (Step 4)	Risk rating
Inadequate planning and preparation	Employee, Service user, Third party Leading to injury/ill health	<p>Manager/supervisors whose staff work alone ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal procedures are in place to protect lone workers safety. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A system which identifies who lone workers are visiting, the location, the order of visits and when they have finished. Plus the contact details of the lone worker ie mobile number ➤ Arrangements to ensure cover is available to receive calls from lone workers eg office or buddy system ➤ A point of contact where out of hours working is undertaken ➤ An emergency alter procedure (including our of hours working where this takes place) eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A buddy system ✓ A system where lone workers ring into the office at set periods ✓ A system where a lone worker can ring in and give a code word if they are in difficulty so help can be summoned ✓ A person is available at the end of a phone to contact during an emergency ➤ Arrangements for unplanned/ad-hoc meetings ➤ Action to be taken in the event a lone worker fails to call in on time or is not following the schedule and cannot be traced ➤ Arrangements to be followed if the lone worker becomes ill or has an accident eg ensuring the worker receives treatment and someone covers/rearranges remaining visits • Weekend/holiday work is planned and agreed by line manager • Lone workers are 'competent' (eg appropriate experience/training) to carry out the activity • There is safe access and egress, and any temporary access equipment can be handled by one person • The work activity can be safely handled by one person 					

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are spot checked to ensure booking in/out information is completed and accurate. Staff are tackled when discrepancies arise • All accidents/incidents/near misses are investigated fully and reported correctly • Procedures are reviewed following an accidents/incidents/near miss or on an annual basis • Consideration is given to lone workers particularly at risk eg new or expectant mothers, individuals who may be medically unfit to work alone, new staff etc and lone working activities avoided as far as practicable. Adequate monitoring put in place if cannot be avoided. <p>Lone workers will be reminded to adhere to lone working systems and procedures which have been put in place and ensure they are familiar with apply lone working procedures, emergency arrangements and are aware of how to summon assistance if required</p>					
Inadequate means of communication	Employee, Service user, Third party Leading to injury/ill health	<p>Managers/Supervisors whose staff work alone ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures relating to lone working activities and the escalation process have been communicated to lone workers (on induction, and on a regular basis thereafter). • Personal contact details of the lone worker are kept e.g. phone number, home address, car registration, next of kin or person to contact in an emergency and a brief description of the employee. • Mechanisms are in place for lone workers to be made aware of relevant risk assessments (including potential aggressive behaviour from people or animals) • Where required, lone workers have access to the necessary systems to gain as much information as possible prior to meetings. • Contact information is available of appropriate external agencies to provide lone workers with information on known risks. • Information is communicated to all members of the team and shared with relevant internal and external departments as required and records kept. • Risk assessments are undertaken to identify if lone working devices are required (panic alarms/ mobile phones/lone working device) to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency. • In cases where lone workers report mobile phone signal problems e.g. in remote locations, this is explored with IT for a resolution to the problem • Arrangements are in place for lone workers to raise concerns on a day to day basis. 					

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular supervision/communication takes place between the lone worker and line manager this can be office based, via the telephone or during a joint visit. <p>Lone workers will ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal details are up to date (this includes phone number, home address, car registration, next of kin or person to contact in an emergency. ➤ They are aware of any relevant risk assessments (including potential aggressive behaviour from people or animals) ➤ They are aware of previous history as regards service users/third party involvement/other partner agencies (Ensuring that this is current and up to date) ➤ They have contact details (including telephone numbers) their line manager, Police, relevant agencies ➤ Information obtained is recorded into department systems promptly, accurately and relevant colleagues are alerted to potential risks. ➤ Mobile phones/lone working devices are fully charged before visits. ➤ They check the correct operation of the communicating device on a regular basis and report any problems immediately ➤ Team members know their whereabouts. ➤ Booking in/out system is fully and accurately completed, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Where meetings are to be held ✓ Who the meeting is with ✓ Likely return time ✓ If not returning, contact office at the end of the meeting/visit. ✓ Aware of any emergency code word. ➤ If schedules change or lone workers are delayed for any reason, the relevant person is informed. ➤ They raise any concerns including those in respect of lone working arrangements and visits with their line manager. ➤ They record any accident/near miss or incident. 					
Service User/Third Party Persons	Employee, service user, third party. Potential verbal and physical abuse resulting in	<p>In addition to the above control measures, lone workers should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are aware of any previous history as regards service users/third party user involvement - considering information from other partner agencies. • Service users are asked to secure pets in another room. • Any concerns regarding visits are raised with their line manager to ascertain if lone working can be avoided i.e. attending home visits in pairs/conducting interviews in 					

	assault.	<p><i>'controlled' locations i.e. at the place of work rather than making a home visit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>They remove themselves from any situation where they may feel that their personal safety is being compromised. They should seek additional assistance and advice from their managers or if deemed necessary involve the police.</i> 					
Travelling to/from visits	Employee	<p>Managers/Supervisors whose staff work alone ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone workers receive training on how to keep themselves safe when travelling either by foot/vehicle or public transport. Where lone workers drive vehicles on County business they should ensure the roadworthiness of these, and that they are in a fit state to undertake the task 					
Lack of counselling	Employee Stress to employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to be familiar with RCC's confidential counselling service (CareFirst). Supervisors to ensure that staff have access to both formal and informal counselling service (peer support / mentoring). 					
Lack of debriefing / feedback	Employee, other employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangements in place for debriefing / feedback by peers and supervisors. Debriefing to include feedback to review of risk assessment, lessons to be learnt and should also be communicated at team meetings. 					

There may be other activities undertaken by lone workers which should be risk assessed for foreseeable hazards e.g.

Moving and handling

Collection of medication

Contact with hazardous substances

Contact with bodily fluids

Risk of infection

Banking

Attending to call outs to buildings out of hours

These should be risk assessed separately, given consideration as to if any additional precautions are required due to the employee being a lone worker.

Consider if any additional hazards are created and control measures are required if this activity is undertaken in non-routine or emergency conditions

Review date (step 5):

Assessors signature:		Date:	Authorised by:	Date:
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2.5 Dynamic risk assessment

Whilst it is true most risks can be pre-empted, situations can change rapidly, requiring an on the spot assessment of the risk currently faced to be made. This is known as dynamic risk assessment and is something we all do all the time, often unconsciously.

Dynamic risk assessment is a process where employees have to make operational decisions based on roles which cannot necessarily be foreseen. It covers risks which, for example, may arise from a hostile dog or a person in the client's home who is under the influence of drink or drug and is abusive; when working outside, weather conditions on arrival may be more severe than could have been accounted for.

Dynamic risk assessments are not a substitute for a comprehensive risk assessment but in some cases it is not always possible to identify all hazards relating to a role where the working environment is outside the manager or supervisors control.

Where a risk assessment identified that a lone worker may have to undertake a dynamic risk assessment, they must receive proper training on what to do. They must also get management support for their decisions.

Staff should contribute to the risk assessment process and ensure they implement the control measures put in place for their safety. Continual dynamic risk assessment should be applied throughout any tasks. Risk assessments and procedures should be updated in light of new information gained through dynamic risk assessments, and the information shared.

3. Further Developments

As additional measures, the Council is currently investigating the used of lone working devices and smartphone apps as additional control measures. More details of these will be added to the guidance document as these become available. Additional training on personal safety and conflict management is also being investigated. These will not, however, replace the requirement for any of the steps outlined in this document to be put in place.

4. Additional sources of support

Should an incident occur, managers need to ensure they are available to talk through the incident with the member of staff. Whilst ensuring that accurate records are made when the incident is fresh, and any other relevant workers advised of a potential threat is important, the priority should be to make sure the person is safe, has received any medical treatment they may need and has access to immediate workplace support.

Our counselling service, CareFirst, provide a professional and extensive service either by telephone, face to face or through the range of information on their website. All calls are answered by qualified accredited counsellors. CareFirst can and will help - it is available 24/7 on the free phone number below:

0800 174 319

Or alternatively from 8am to 8pm members of staff can speak to a counsellor online at <http://www.care-first.co.uk/care-first-lifestyle/> and use the log in details below:

Username: **rcc001**

Password: **ncil1234**

It is possible for managers to make a referral to the service – please speak to HR about this.

Additional information can also be found in the Violence at Work policy and guidance.

Your own professional bodies are likely to have specific guidance on lone working within your specialism, but additional information can be accessed from:

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust <http://www.suzylamplugh.org/>

HSE Guidance on Working Alone <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

HSE Guidance on Violence at Work <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

HSE Guidance on Violence in Health and Social Care
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/violence/index.htm>

Stalking and Harassment, CPS guidance
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/violence/index.htm>

National Stalking Helpline <http://www.stalkinghelpline.org/>

Protection Against Stalking <http://www.protectionagainststalking.org/>

Online harassment http://www.report-it.org.uk/bullying_and_harassment

5. Generic Lone Working Procedure

This procedure is for guidance only and must be adapted to suit the individual needs of the team

This documents details the procedures which have put in place to protect lone workers safety (including arrangements for out of office/holidays and weekends where applicable). The procedure includes:

- Identifying who lone workers are visiting, the location of the visit, the order of the visits and when they have finished
- The contact details for the lone worker
- The procedure which should be followed in case of an emergency
- Action to be taken in the event a lone worker fails to call in on time or is not following the schedule and cannot be traced

Off site visits are normally carried out by staff working alone unless:

- It has been identified that staff must visit in pairs
- A member of staff has concerns about visiting alone
- It is anticipated that an individual may be abusive, angry or sexually inappropriate

Daily recording of employee whereabouts

Employees must ensure:

1. There is always an accurate up to date record of your current whereabouts in Outlook or team diary where used. Ensure you record the client/carer/meeting/training event in full, the planned location to be visited, expected time of return. Include names, addresses and phone numbers, and ensure the team have your mobile phone number.
2. If your calendar changes during the day (ie completing additional visits, or a visit has been cancelled) update Outlook if possible. If this isn't possible, contact an office based member of your team to request this is updated as soon as possible.
3. Where booking in/out boards or diaries are used, you must record when you arrive/leave the office base, where you are going, the planned location and expected time of return. If you are running late, you must notify the office, and the person receiving the call must update the board/diary.
4. Report to the office at no more than 4 hourly intervals, ie a member of staff going out at 9am should telephone/text into the office at no later than 1pm and again no later than 5pm
5. On days where you go straight to a visit from home you must contact an office based member of your team prior to the first meeting or before 10am (whichever is the earliest) and before 5pm in the evening. The team member receiving the call will ensure staff ringing in at the end of the day are ticked off on the board/diary.
6. Telephone the office once you have left your last visit if you plan to go straight home. Where this visit is expected to finish later than 5pm and the office will be unattended you should use the buddy system (arrange with the

appropriate member of the team, to telephone them). You are still required to ring in before 5pm to ensure colleagues are aware of your whereabouts.

7. If you are working on unscheduled late finishes you must advise an office based member of your team who will in turn inform the appropriate team member who will expect a call from the employee once they are on their way home
8. It is essential if you are working after 5pm you contact the appropriate person to sign off.
9. If you are attending a course or meeting you must make contact with an office based member of your team, thus ensuring that you have arrived at your destination and are not at risk. Make sure you confirm that you are on your way home/back to work at the end of the session

You must carry a mobile phone with you at all times and ensure it is always charged and switched on. You should ensure key contact numbers (including the office, line manager, buddy etc) are saved in the phone's contact list.

You should never knowingly put yourself at risk. If you are ever in any doubt with regard to your own personal safety, you should remove yourself from the situation immediately and contact your line manager.

Assess if lone working is appropriate

Employees should not be working alone if a risk assessment shows the tasks is potentially too hazardous to be carried out alone. Some visits may require employees to carry out their roles in pairs – to ascertain if this is the case consider the following:

1. Previous history – check if the person has a previous history of violence and aggression; are they on the Corporate Potential Risk Indicator database?
2. Nature of visit – some visits may give rise to violence or aggression more than others ie serving of a warrant, investigation of an offence, unwanted treatment etc
3. Is the location isolated and out of mobile phone range? What is the proximity of colleagues and location of other staff locally?
4. Have you any reason to feel unsafe ie by previous telephone conversations, medical history changing?
5. Some areas have very limited mobile phone coverage. Circumstances where it is acceptable to work alone in a non reception area would include a visit where the individual is already known or has been visited in the past without any incidents. If the individual is unknown or there is the potential of violence/aggression, you should discuss this with your line manager.
6. Try to avoid visits (especially new assessments) at the end and at the start of the day where possible; especially if a risk has been identified prior to the visit.
7. Staff visiting service users out of hours and weekends should notify the pre-arranged point of contact of their proposed activity, giving information on: Who you are visiting; location of the visit; planned time of arrival; and duration of visit

Employees are not expected to attend visits alone if they feel there is reason to doubt their safety.

Lone working in an unknown potentially hazardous environment

1. Ensure you have completed full details of the visit on Outlook or in the team diary
2. Agree a nominated buddy (generally your line manager or another member of staff) and brief them on the details of the visit. Ensure that you have both the land line and mobile phone number for the nominated buddy, and that they have the details of the vehicle you will be using.
3. Call the nominated buddy at every agreed set time to advise you are still carrying out the visit.
4. Call the nominated buddy when you are safely away from the premises. This is important in isolated areas where exits could be blocked.
5. If you feel that you are at risk and unable to leave safely (held hostage) and are able to use the phone, call the office/line manager and say 'I have been delayed will you cancel my next meeting in the red folder'. This will result in the Police being alerted.
6. Where the history indicates potential violence and aggression ie. High risk, then in addition to the above:
7. Undertake a risk assessment of the situation and carry out the visit with another employee if considered necessary
8. Call the nominated buddy before entering the premises to let them know you are about to commence the visit. Advise them when you will be calling again. This will be a prearranged frequency depending on the circumstances but should usually be between 30 to 45 minute intervals.
9. When entering the premises advise the individual as soon as possible that you will need to leave your mobile switched on at all times during the visit and you will need to answer any calls and will need to contact base of the visit extends beyond the expected time. Ensure that you have a reception and keep the mobile phone where it can be easily accessed.

Out of hours working

1. Prior approval from a Team Manager/manager in charge is needed for any out of hours working (ie outside standard office hours of 8.30am to 5pm). There must be good reasons why the visit cannot be conducted during normal office hours.
2. The employee must provide the team manager with all the details of the visit
3. The Team Manager will decide whether a lone visit is appropriate or whether the employee should be accompanied.
4. The employee must make arrangements with the Team Manager to contact them before and after the visit to ensure their safety.

Non return procedures

1. If an employee does not return to the office or make contact at the appropriate time, the following actions should be taken by the Duty Officer/admin staff (if not available, the person taking the call) should:
2. Telephone the employee on their mobile phone or at the office where they have been working or last known destination requesting contact.

3. After three unsuccessful attempts make contact with the Team Manager/manager in charge
4. Continue to try to contact the employee checking the employee's last whereabouts, checking if relevant client notes, any issues or risks. Where possible ring last known contact/whereabouts to establish how many clients were visited.
5. Team Manager/manager in charge should contact the employees home contact numbers/emergency contact persons identified on their records
6. If unsuccessful, contact the Police to inform them that an employee is missing and provide details of last known address.
7. The information the Police will require will be found on Aggress, Outlook and other records regarding the visit. The Police will need to be provided with the details of the vehicle being used, along with a description of the employee.

As an employee you must:

1. Agree a call plan of your activities with the nominated buddy who will know what to do if you do not make the call at the expected time
2. Make sure the nominated buddy and work colleagues are aware that you are doing something with increased risk such as visiting/inspecting in a remote location. Let them know where you will be and what you will be doing
3. If your Team Manager is not in eg annual leave, sick etc, make sure you are aware who is your main contact in an emergency
4. Make sure you make provisions for your own safety, it is your responsibility
5. If you have any doubt and do not feel safe then do not go. Contact your manager/supervisor to discuss alternative action to be taken to get the job done
6. Avoid situations by being aware of them – do not put yourself at risk
7. It is the responsibility of all employees to complete and keep up to date their emergency contact details and let their manager know of any changes as soon as possible. As well as keeping your Aggresso record up to date, emergency contact details will be kept in a secure folder which will be accessible by key personnel only.

What to do if something goes wrong during a visit?

1. If on arrival or during a visit an individual present becomes abusive, angry and/or threatening, you should make your excuses and leave immediately, saying you will return at a later date
2. If on arrival or during a visit a client is in an unexpected state of undress (and your role is not to assist with personal care and dressing), you should ask them to get dressed, or arrange to visit at a later date and leave
3. If something goes wrong on the visit and you are unsure what to do, you should telephone your line manager from a safe place.

In the event of any of the above occurring, on your return to the office you must make a full report your line manager. An employee accident report form must be completed, even where this is deemed to be a 'near miss', with a copy sent to the Corporate Health and Safety Adviser. Remember, a 'near miss' for you may be an incident for someone else.

The line manager and employee are required to review and update the information regarding this individual/family, ie risk assessment, procedures etc and communicate this to all concerned. The Corporate Potential Risk Indicator policy should also be reviewed in the light of the event so that an individual can be included if this is deemed to be appropriate. Any information that does not meet the criteria for inclusion in this can be recorded locally, but this must comply with the principles of the policy and the Data Protection Act.

Police can accompany staff attending potentially violent locations, where repeated and extreme threats have been made to them.

If an employee has been previously threatened, they may request another employee to visit in their place once the relevant controls have been put in place.

All missing persons must be reported to their respective Team Manager (or another Team Manager in their absence) whoever takes the call.

6. Lone Working Guidance and Personal Safety Tips

There are a number of steps we can all take as individuals to protect ourselves. This is not about raising anxiety levels but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk for yourself, colleagues and service users in your care.

Lone working within premises during office hours:

Staff working alone within a department during office hours should:

- Ensure that you are near to a telephone to call for help if needed;
- Ensure that keys are secured and not accessible to visitors;
- If you become anxious regarding your safety, you should call someone for help;
- The incident must be reported to the relevant manager as soon as practical after the event.

Lone Working outside Office Hours:

When staff are working alone within a Department outside office hours as a matter of routine they should:

- Ensure that this only takes place with the knowledge and authorisation of the relevant manager;
- Ensure all windows and doors are secured to prevent unauthorised access, especially when leaving the building;
- Look outside to check that no-one is acting suspiciously or inappropriately. If you see someone prowling or lurking outside do not go out alone to check. Stay inside and telephone the police.
- If an incident occurs, it must be reported to the relevant manager as soon as practical after the event. This may mean notifying the manager on an out of hours number if necessary.

Lone Working off Site:

Staff working alone, away from a Department must advise colleagues of the following BEFORE THEY LEAVE:

- Where they are going and nature of the appointment;

- Who they are going to see;
- A contact telephone number, if possible;
- The time of the appointment;
- The likely or estimated time of the visit;
- The time when they are expected to return to the office;
- If they are not returning to the office, the time and location of their next visit or the time when they are due to arrive home;
- If involved in a car accident or breakdown, the Line Manager should be informed as well as the Emergency Services.

In addition staff must always:

- Carry official Rutland County Council identification on every visit;
- Carry an alternative means of communication if possible e.g. mobile phone, personal alarm.

The Buddy System

When a member of staff makes a visit late in the day, not intending to return to work, or where there is no-one in the Department to check back with, they should employ the Buddy System. The “Buddy” should be provided with:

- The expected time of return;
- The telephone number of the manager to contact if the staff member fails to return;
- The telephone number to contact if the manager is not available;
- Where to find full details on the last visit made

If the manager decides to implement the Buddy System it should be set up as appropriate for the team and every individuals responsibility to use the system. It is the responsibility of the Manager to start enquiries if a staff member’s whereabouts are unknown.

Severe Weather Conditions

If weather conditions are severe and roads are unsafe, do not put yourself at unnecessary risk. Managers must be prepared to make a decision where weather conditions may render safe delivery of a service impossible, and communicate that decision to affected employees.

Personal Safety in Your Car

- keep your car in good working order, rectify any faults and ensure it is serviced regularly;
- always ensure you have adequate fuel;
- join a breakdown/rescue organisation, and carry details in the vehicle; make sure you have details for breakdown services for WeCars or rental cars;
- plan your route before setting off – when you have the choice use main roads;
- always allow contingency time when planning your journey, even if it is a relatively short trip. This reduces the likelihood of time pressures, which can lead to accidents; plan in regular breaks on longer trips
- tell someone the route you will be taking and when you expect to arrive;
- have directions and maps in the car so that you do not have to stop to ask;
- do not have valuables visible in the car when driving;

- keep the doors locked and windows closed, especially in towns where you will be stopping at junctions;
- keep handbags, briefcases and mobile phones out of reach of open windows in case of snatch thieves;
- when you leave the car, lock personal belongings in the boot; do not leave them on display;
- lock your car, even if you are only going to pay for petrol on a garage forecourt;
- park your car so that it can be driven away easily, and near other cars where possible – reverse into spaces wherever possible
- when parking in daylight, consider what the area will be like in the dark;
- at night, park in a place that is well lit and, if possible, busy. Try to avoid car parks where you and your vehicle are not clearly visible – if using a multi-storey car park, try and park on the ground floor and have the correct change ready;
- Check you have not left your lights on when leaving the vehicle
- if you think you are being followed, keep driving until you reach a busy area or a police/fire or ambulance station – or even a garage.
- If a car travels alongside you at the same speed, slow down and let them pass. If a car pulls up in front, forcing you to stop, leave the engine on to enable you to move away if you are approached.
- Be careful if someone flags you down in a quiet road – make sure it is a genuine emergency before you wind down a window or unlock your door. If you are in any doubt, drive on and call the police.
- when returning to the vehicle, have your keys in your hand so you can get straight in
- Look around your vehicle as you approach in case someone is crouching down
- Look inside before entering your vehicle to ensure no one is hiding there – even if all the doors were locked
- Always carry a torch with you

If Your Car Breaks Down

- pull into a safe place if you can;
- once stationary switch off the ignition, turn on your hazard warning lights and, if you have a mobile phone, summon assistance;
- try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car, or to get out. Take account of how isolated you are and the time of day;
- if you stay inside, consider sitting in the passenger seat to give the impression you are not alone;
- keep your doors locked and the window open no more than 1.5 inches. If someone stops to offer help, ask him or her to telephone for assistance if you haven't already done so;
- if you leave the car lock it. If it is dark, or will be soon, take a torch;
- if you have a warning triangle, place it in the direction of on-coming traffic, 30 metres from your car and on the same side of the road.

Personal Safety on Foot

- Do not wear your identification badge when walking in the street (unless your role requires this)

- Be alert, walk with purpose and confidence
- Do not overload yourself with packages or bags, and keep valuables secured
- Keep your handbag/briefcase close to your body. If someone makes a grab for your bag, it is better to let it go than to risk injury. Your personal safety is more important than your belongings.
- If you need to carry a large sum of money, divide it up between your person and your bag
- you are more likely to be able to escape danger wearing clothes you can move in easily and shoes that are comfortable, walking quickly is usually safer than trying to run;
- whenever possible, avoid walking alone at night;
- know where you are going by checking the route in advance if necessary.
- keep to busy, well-lit roads where possible – avoid alleys, subways and concealed entrances, waste ground;
- do not take short cuts, unless you know they are as safe as the longer route.
- Avoid wearing a personal stereo, or using a mobile phone, as it will reduce awareness of your surroundings
- Walk facing traffic on the street side of the pavement, away from buildings and alleys so that someone lurking in an alley has further to come to reach you
- Trust your instincts and avoid crowds or groups that may feel threatening
- If you think you are being followed, try crossing the road to confirm your suspicions. If you are still being followed make your way to the closest place where people are likely to be. As soon as you can, call the police from a safe place
- Be wary of stationary vehicles with engines running and people sitting in them. Don't take any notice of kerb crawlers – ignore them and keep walking briskly. Change direction and make a note of the vehicle registration if they persist.
- Make sure your mobile is easily accessible and consider pre-setting your emergency call number – avoid using it in the street other than in an emergency
- Consider carrying a personal attack alarm, and keep it in a handy place – check it regularly to make sure it works

Personal Safety on Bike

- Keep your bike in good working order. Repairs are best done at home rather than on the road
- Have the correct accessories such as lights in good working order. Mirrors can be helpful and a piercingly loud horn can be useful in emergencies
- Dress safely with bright clothing, helmets and luminous strips; avoid wearing a personal stereo
- Plan your route as if you were walking – keep to busy, well-lit routes and plan your route in advance
- Personal Safety on Visits
- Stay alert when approaching the property, look around the garden for obvious dangers
- After knocking/ringing, stand back and to the side of the door
- Do not stand on the edge of any steps
- Note the way in and out, type of catch/lock on the door and how to operate it

- Assess the situation and mood of the service user/client, and any others present
- If in any doubt or you feel threatened, do not enter – make an excuse and leave
- Only sit down when the service user/client does
- Where possible, sit in an upright chair (easier to stand up from and/or use as a defensive barrier). If you have to sit in an armchair or settee, sit on the edge near the arm
- Keep the exit door on your side of the room
- Be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes
- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronizing
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? What signals does it send out? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset
- Take note of other people's non-verbal signals, and be aware of their triggers
- Don't crowd people – allow them space
- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf
- Be aware of the context of your meeting – are they already angry or upset before you meet, and for what reason?
- Listen to them, and show them you are listening.
- If the situation changes and you feel threatened, make an excuse and leave
- Back out rather than turning your back on the service user/client
- Try to leave with dignity – it may help any future dealings with the service user/client

If you are unable to leave, and as the situation warrants, it may be necessary to take further action such as:

- Set off a personal attack alarm or scream/shout to attract the attention of others – this may distract the service user/client long enough to allow you to escape
- If physically threatened, try to use a barrier such as a table/chair not as a weapon, but as a defensive measure

Personal Safety in Reception/Interview areas

- When dealing with a Service User/Client, remember, what may appear to be a trivial matter to you may be perceived by them as a real crisis.
- They will be looking to you for help, assistance, advice etc, therefore try to be sympathetic, respect their feelings and show concern, it may help prevent a potentially violent situation from developing.
- Try not to keep people waiting for lengthy periods of time - if this is unavoidable, keep them informed of what is happening - ignoring them (even by accident), could lead to an escalation of the situation.
- Interview room doors should be fitted with an appropriate window, so other employees can observe in cases of emergency.

- An “Alarm System” should be provided, with agreed procedures in place, and all employees should know what to do when the alarm sounds.
- The use of a “Code Word”, which can be used to warn managers and colleagues that a situation is escalating, could be the signal for support to be provided without alerting the Service User/Client.
- Seating arrangements should be such that employees are positioned near a door - this would allow a quick escape route in an emergency.
- The provision of suitable toys for children to play with will help relieve their boredom and hopefully reduce tension while Service Users/Clients are waiting to be seen.
- Careful selection of furniture and fittings is essential; consideration should be given as to their potential to be used as a weapon against employees or other people.

To Reduce the Risk of Provocation

- Introduce yourself politely.
- Express clearly and concisely your reasons for being there and any actions you are taking.
- Avoid criticism of the person you’re talking to.
- Avoid unfriendly gestures.
- Leave yourself an alternative course of action.
- Show no fear/apprehension.
- Stay calm.
- Show sympathy (even if false).
- Keep talking (active listening - don’t look bored or look away).
 - remain engaged in conversation with the person.
 - use the ‘broken record’ technique i.e. repetition of key statements.

What to do if a Difficult Situation Occurs

- Try to defuse the situation
- Listen and acknowledge that the person is distressed.
- Perhaps something can be done to help?
- Help the person to feel in control of themselves
- Remain calm and don’t take the aggression/abuse personally.

If you feel at risk from violence:

Leave the situation IMMEDIATELY and report the occurrence.

If unable to leave protect yourself:

- Place barriers between yourself and the assailant - continue talking and tell the Service User/Client you mean them no harm
- Use reasonable force to protect yourself if absolutely necessary and only as a means of last resort.

Observe people’s behaviour closely and be aware of non-verbal communication (‘body language’)

- facial expression
- eye contact
- tone of voice

- physical touch
- appearance
- posture
- proximity
- hand and foot movement

When working alone, if you have any concerns regarding your safety, please inform your line manager.