

Turtle Dove Cambridge Community Interest Company

Lone Working Policy

Reviewed: May 2025

Review due: May 2026

Scope

This policy applies to all staff who may be working alone, at any time, in any of the situations described in the definition below.

Volunteers would not normally be expected to work alone at Turtle Dove Cambridge (TDC) events and workshops, but this policy does apply to them when working at home, travelling alone and travelling alone with young women (service users).

Definition of Lone Workers

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as people who work by themselves, without close or direct supervision. Examples include, working alone in TDC premises or venues, working alone in other buildings, working alone with young women, travelling alone and travelling alone with young women, one person working in isolation from other workers in the same building, workers in remote locations, or staff working out of hours or returning to a locked and empty building.

Purpose

The purpose of a lone working policy is to reduce the risks of lone working as far as is reasonably practicable.

Such a policy provides guidance to staff, making sure that there are systems in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of lone workers. There is no general prohibition in health and safety law of working alone, but employers have a general duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act and must comply with the 'Secretary of State directions' 2003 & 2004 amended 2006. When determining a safe system of work, it is likely that there will be a need for additional controls to be put in place. These controls will be identified once a risk assessment has been undertaken.

Objectives

This policy sets out a number of objectives that TDC states in relation to lone workers and these objectives include a commitment to:

- supporting staff and managers both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices;
- protecting staff from the risk associated with working alone whether they are on TDC premises, at other buildings, travelling alone on work duties or working in an isolated setting;
- ensuring that staff understand that TDC as an employer does not expect staff to expose themselves to unnecessary risks in the course of their work duties and that TDC will support a member of staff if they leave a situation in which they feel at risk;

- recognising and reducing risk;
- the provision of appropriate support for staff;
- establishing a clear understanding of responsibilities;
- ensuring priority continues to be placed on the safety of the individual over property.

Assessment of risk

In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations
- Any other special circumstances

All available information should be considered and checked or updated as necessary.

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

Planning

Whenever TDC is planning any event or activity they will ensure that:

- staff safety is considered when choosing locations for courses etc;
- staff are fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself;
- communication, checking-in and fall-back arrangements are in place;
- a responsible person is always aware of any member of staff's movements and expected return time;
- Line Managers are responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the staff member.

Working alone in TDC premises /venues

Having one person working alone in TDC premises or venues is undesirable. However, as it is not practical to always ensure that two people are present then the emphasis of this policy is to reduce risk. When there is more than one person in the premises, there is still need for vigilance. In the TDC office, we need to be aware of external hirers in the other areas of the building.

Security of buildings

Whoever we are leasing office space, we will make sure that they are committed to ensuring that:

- all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building and that emergency exits are accessible;
- alarm systems are tested regularly – both fire and intruder;
- all staff members are familiar with exits and alarms;
- there is access to a telephone and first aid kit;
- if there is any indication that the building has been broken into, that staff can call for assistance before entering;
- external doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone;
- that the building and contents are as would be expect and if any staff member has any concerns that they can leave the premises and contact a responsible person;
- that there is the ability to check the identity of any visitor before opening a door;
- on departure that staff can easily ensure all doors are locked.

Working alone at another building/location/events

Line Managers and their employees must ensure that:

- all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building/room and that emergency exits are accessible;
- they are familiar with the fire and, if applicable, intruder alarm procedure and know the location of both exits and alarms;
- when making a booking at a venue there will be somebody else present in the building (i.e. Building Manager or Caretaker) and that this person can be contacted in the event of an emergency;
- there is access to a telephone and first aid kit;
- if there is any indication that the building has been broken into, they can call for assistance before entering;
- staff are familiar with the no-smoking rules and procedures;
- whenever possible that staff can park in a well-lit and busy area;
- sign in and sign out procedures are followed.
- For any staff working remotely in an international location, we require an emergency contact in their country of residence.

Personal safety

Personal safety is important to TDC for all staff and therefore we expect the following principles to be followed:

- Staff should avoid working alone if not necessary and where possible the final two people should leave together;
- Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk;
- Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances;
- Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Line Manager;

- Where required, staff must ensure that they sign in and out of building registers;
- Staff must inform their Line Manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following an external commitment rather than returning to TDC premises;
- If a member of staff does not report in as expected an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate using emergency contact information if necessary;
- Arrangements for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to consider include: staffing levels and availability, the identified risks and measures in place to reduce those risks;
- Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation;
- Staff working away from the office should ensure that they have access to a mobile phone at all times. Staff are responsible for checking that the mobile phone is charged, in working order and with sufficient credit.

Please see Appendix 1: Personal Safety, for further guidance.

Staff working at home

Working from home is a common pattern of work at TDC and therefore the following principles should be considered when working at home:

- Staff working from their own homes should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential;
- Staff working from home should be in regular contact with their Line Manager or other designated person if working at home for extended periods;
- Managers should be particularly aware of the importance of such arrangements for staff that live alone;
- Staff working from home should be aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on Caller Display and can be retrieved on 1471. To prevent the person you call accessing your number dial 141 before their number, or check the instructions for your mobile phone.

Travelling alone

Travelling alone holds the same risks whether or not you are travelling for work purposes or pleasure. However, it is far more likely that during working time you will be travelling in unfamiliar areas and therefore the planning of the travel is far more important.

Reasonable precautions might include:

- Checking directions for the destination
- Ensuring your car, if used, is road-worthy and has break-down cover
- Ensuring someone knows where you are and when are expected home
- Avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas

Escorting young women (service users)

Before a decision is taken to escort a service user, a checklist risk assessment should be gone through. This should consider the safeguards that need to be in place before and during the escorting process.

Staff who escort service users using a contracted taxi service should still be considered lone workers and the necessary precautions taken. If there is a need for a lone worker to escort a service user, they should always seat the service user behind the front passenger seat and ensure that their seat belt is fastened. This will enable the lone worker to operate the vehicle safely.

Lone workers should not escort a service user by car if there are any doubts about their safety in doing so and alternative arrangements should be made.

If a conflict arises (or a service user becomes aggressive), the lone worker should pull over into a safe place and exit the vehicle – if possible, ensuring that the keys are removed. They should follow procedures, which may involve calling the police, their manager, a colleague or their buddy.

Appropriate planning and provision should be made for the safe return of a lone worker to a familiar place, once the service user has been dropped off. This is particularly important if the lone worker has to return from an unfamiliar place late at night and travel to their place of work alone.

Lone working and taxis

Whenever possible, a taxi should be booked in advance from a reputable company and the driver's name and call sign obtained. If a taxi has not been booked, the lone worker should use the number of a reputable cab company – ideally saved on fast dial in their mobile phone – and find a safe place to wait. As a last resort, they should go to a taxi rank to hail a cab

Lone workers should never use a minicab, unless it is licensed or a registered hackney carriage.

When travelling, they should sit in the back, behind the front passenger seat and should be aware of child locks and central locking (although most black cabs will have locked doors while in transit) in the taxi.

Lone workers should not give out personal or sensitive information to the driver.

Lone working and travelling by foot

Planning before a journey should include determining the safest route for lone workers, highlighting known areas of concern, including any crime hotspots. Planning should include the actions lone workers should take if they require assistance, how to safely carry personal possessions and equipment and what to do in the event of a theft. The following principles should be considered:

- When setting off, lone workers should walk briskly, if possible, and not stop in areas that are unknown to them (for example, to look at a map or ask for directions). If they require assistance, they should go into a safe establishment, such as a police station, petrol station or reputable shop and ask for directions or, if necessary, to call for assistance from their line manager or colleague;
- They should avoid using mobile phones overtly in any area and, if carrying equipment, should ensure that this is done using bags that do not advertise what they are carrying.;
- Lone workers should stay in the centre of pavements, facing oncoming traffic;
- They should remain alert to the people and environment around them, staying on well-lit paths and areas if possible. They should avoid waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, particularly at night;
- If someone attempts to steal what they are carrying, they should relinquish the property immediately without challenge;
- If carrying a handbag or similar, they should consider carrying their house keys and mobile phone separately;
- It is important that any theft, or attempted theft, is reported both internally and to the police as soon as is practicable and safe to do so. The lone worker should make a note of the date, time and descriptions of events and attacker(s), as soon as they are in a position to do so and retain it safely until it is requested by the police.

Lone working and public transport

Before using public transport, lone workers should have a timetable for their route. They should give their manager, colleague or another contact, details of their intended route and mode of transport. If they have to vary their route or experience a significant delay, they should inform the relevant individual.

Lone workers should ideally wait for transport at a busy, well-lit stop or station. If they have to wait in areas that are not well lit and/or deserted, they should be vigilant at all times. They should always try to sit near the driver while on public transport, preferably in an aisle seat.

They should also familiarise themselves with the relevant safety procedures and sit near the emergency alarm. They should avoid empty upper decks on buses and empty train compartments (and also avoid these situations if there is only one other passenger).

If threatened by another passenger, they should alert the driver/guard as soon as possible and follow pre-planned procedures for ensuring their own safety.

In the event of an incident

Reporting

TDC encourage and support all their staff and volunteers to report all incidents of physical and non-physical assault to TDC, using the organisation's incident report form. This will enable TDC to conduct a thorough investigation and to ensure that all appropriate cases of physical assault are reported to the police as soon as possible for appropriate action to be taken.

Furthermore, through more accurate and increased reporting by staff, more will become known about the nature, scale and extent of the issues affecting lone workers. This will allow TDC to improve further the policies and procedures to minimise the risks that these staff face. It is important that TDC implements and maintains a robust reporting processes for staff to facilitate this process. Staff are supported and encouraged to report an incident to TDC, in the knowledge that it will be investigated, and appropriate action taken. Staff should also report near misses that could have resulted in a serious incident.

This will also ensure that any lessons learned can be fed back into risk management processes to make sure similar incidents do not recur. It also means that further preventive measures can be developed.

If an incident causes more than three consecutive days' absence from work, there is also 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. This must be done in addition to reporting all physical assaults to TDC.

Post-incident support

Incidents that occur in lone working situations, whether they involve assaults on staff, theft or criminal damage to TDC property, have a direct impact on both the human and financial resources of TDC.

TDC have measures in place to support any member of staff who has been subject to an abusive or violent incident. These might include a debrief following the incident, psychological support, counselling services, post-trauma support and peer support. The Managing Director, Kate Nation, will provide information about what local/internal support is available and relevant contact details.

If assaulted, the individual will also need to undergo a physical assessment and receive treatment for any injuries, so they are well enough to return to work.

Post-incident action

Following an incident or threat in a lone working situation, TDC will make sure that there are effective arrangements to ensure that incidents and risks are reported and dealt with. If the incident involves a physical assault on an TDC staff member, it must be reported and

investigated and where appropriate, it should also be reported to the police as soon as possible.

If the incident involves a non-physical assault, such as verbal abuse, it must be reported, investigated and dealt with.

For all incidents, irrespective of whether the police may be pursuing sanctions against offenders, TDC will investigate to establish the causes of the incident and whether any further action needs to be taken. This action might be aimed at creating a pro-security culture, deterrence, prevention or detection.

Where lessons can be learned, it is essential that they are used in the revision of policies and procedures. This will ensure that lone workers are given the best possible protection and minimise the risks that they face.

For incidents where violence is not a factor, such as theft or criminal damage, TDC will ensure that staff report these to the police, where appropriate, and through the local incident reporting systems. Reporting has a significant effect, as it will determine the actions and investigation undertaken by TDC. The investigation will establish, if possible, who the offenders are and whether there are any trends or patterns that can be identified to prevent a recurrence and determine the actions required to control and reduce the risk. Such information can also be used to inform action that needs to be taken to enhance pro-security culture, deterrence, prevention and detection and allow for solutions to be developed for specific problems.

Through effective investigative work TDC can identify resources lost as a direct result of an incident. This provides the information and evidence needed to attempt to recover that loss, whether through the criminal courts, by way of compensation or by seeking redress through the civil courts.

Post-incident review

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 an understanding of how and why incidents occur in lone working situations and being able to learn 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
- Likelihood of incident recurring
- Cost to TDC (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)

- Training needs analysis of staff, in relation to the prevention and management of violence, the correct use and operation of lone worker protection technology or other relevant training
- 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.
- TDC should ensure that the comprehensive and robust lone working policies and procedures developed and implemented are reviewed after an incident that exposes a fundamental weakness or failure.

Monitoring and Review

Any member of staff with a concern regarding lone working issues should ensure that it is discussed with their manager or with the whole team, as appropriate.

This policy will be annually reviewed and updated where necessary.

Appendix 1 - Personal Safety

1. Personal Safety

- There are a number of things you can do to avoid trouble in the first place. The organisation has a responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, but employees also have a duty to take reasonable care themselves.
- This is not about raising anxiety levels but about recognising potential dangers and taking positive steps to reduce risk, for yourself and for service users in your care.

2. Be aware of the environment

- Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies
- Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported /dealt with
- If your work takes you into areas which are isolated, poorly lit at night or known for high crime rates, arrange to check in with TDC when the visit is over
- If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes
- Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting in buildings you control

3. Be aware of yourself

- 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 patronising
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset

4. Be aware of other people

- Take note of their non-verbal signals
- 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