

## **Lone Working Policy and Procedures**

### **Introduction**

Healthwatch Luton (HWL) has a duty of care to employees and volunteers and is required by law and so as is reasonably practicable, to protect employees and volunteers from risks to their health and safety.

Employees and volunteers may be required to be on their own and unsupervised away from our premises (Basepoint) or they may be working alone in an office or other building.

Solitary working exposes employees and others to certain hazards. HWL objective is either to entirely remove the risks from these hazards or, where complete elimination is not possible, to reduce them to a minimal level. Measures will also be adopted to protect anyone else affected by solitary working.

### **Arrangements for securing the health and safety of workers**

Assessments of the risks of working alone carried out under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 will confirm whether the work can actually be done safely by one unaccompanied person. This will include the identification of hazards from, for example, means of access and/or egress, plant, machinery, goods, substances and environment, etc. Particular consideration will be given to:

- the remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- any problems of communication
- the possibility of interference, such as violence or criminal activity from other persons
- the nature of injury or damage to health and anticipated "worst case" scenario.

### **Information and training**

Employees and others will be given all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and

appreciate the risks involved with working alone. Employees will be required to follow the safe working procedures as devised. Information will include the provision of first aid, communication procedures and awareness of emergency procedures. All employees are required to cooperate with these efforts to ensure safe working and to report any concerns to management.

### Defined working limits

The Company will establish clear procedures to set limits of what can and what cannot be done while working alone. The general precautionary principle of not carrying out work if in doubt is advocated and employees should contact their supervisor for instruction.

### Summary

Working alone can bring additional risks to a work activity. The Company has developed policies and procedures to control the risks and protect employees, and employees should comply with them. Apart from employees being competent in doing the job on their own, the three most important things to be certain of are that:

- the lone worker has full knowledge of the potential hazards and risks to which he or she is being exposed
- the lone worker knows what the task entails and what to do if something goes wrong
- a suitable person knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and what he or she is doing.

### Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for the Health and safety of employees and volunteers of HWL rests with the HWL Board of Directors, who will ensure that adequate policies and procedures are in place and take all reasonable steps to ensure that risks are where possible, eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

The operational responsibility rests with the CEO who will ensure that the HWL Board are kept up to date with changes in legislation and that adequate procedures are in place.

It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers to be mindful of their safety, to follow the HWL procedures (listed below) for working alone and to report any concerns to their manager at the first opportunity.

HWL does not expect that volunteers will be required to work alone and unsupervised; however, should this situation arise then the procedures outlined below (for staff and volunteers) will apply.

It is not anticipated that any HWL staff or volunteer will need to undertake home visits. If this need arises the staff member or volunteer should discuss this with HWL's CEO, who will decide upon a course of action.

Procedure for working alone in office or other venue: (NOT Home working):

Wherever possible, avoid working alone in a building either during or after work hours. However, where this cannot be avoided – the following procedure should be followed.

1. Ensure that there is no unauthorised person present in the building
2. Lock external doors, ensuring you can escape in an emergency but not leave the key in the lock
3. Do not admit members of the public to HWL office after normal working hours
4. Alert a colleague, friend or family member that you are working alone Whilst HWL are based in Basepoint, follow Basepoint procedures for entering and exiting the office.

During Work Hours:

1. Meet with members of the public in communal areas only
2. Only bring to HWL office people who are employed by HWL, Volunteers or other health and social care professional
3. Follow Basepoint procedures in booking a meeting room for confidential discussions

Out of Working Hours:

1. Email the CEO each time you are working outside of working hours and will be in the office on your own

2. Do not allow any member of the public into the building (following Basepoint opening and closing times) or into HWL offices
3. Alert the CEO if you feel uncomfortable at any point and leave the office or building. If you are in the office and feel unsafe, contact the CEO to assist you to leave. If the CEO is unavailable, contact the Chair of the Board.
4. Alert the CEO when you have left the office when you are working alone  
Please refer to our Safeguarding policy for more information. For our Safeguarding procedure for working alone see page 6.

#### Procedure for Home Visits or Visits outside of the Building:

HWL do not conduct home visits, under any circumstances. Meeting members of the public to gather feedback should take place in a public space, whether from an individual or from a group setting.

HWL will not support any member of staff or volunteer who conducts HWL work on a one to one basis or other in someone's home setting.

Risks for home visits are mitigated by:

1. Ensure all efforts are made to obtain as much information as possible about each situation and the people or person involved
2. Where a visit is being made to someone who causes concern, the time and place of the visit and the name of the person should be informed to the administrator or one other member of staff. The other member of staff should be advised when the visit is ended, and the CEO will stand in if no other staff member is available.

It is imperative that any staff or volunteer should inform the CEO prior to any home visit and be guided by the CEO decisions on whether this procedure will be followed.

#### Procedure for Targeted Engagement / General Engagement / Events

HWL's strategy focused on developing relationships with community organisation and gathering feedback from individuals in group settings out in the community. All feedback gathered is the property of Healthwatch Luton. Both staff and volunteers assist with gathering this feedback, and the following procedure should be followed:

#### Targeted Engagement:

1. A full engagement calendar will be produced each year, highlighting which organisation and demographics of feedback will be gathered. This calendar should be circulated internally monthly, and to volunteers for them to choose to provide support.
2. Contact should be made with the organisation by the Engagement Officer prior to a visit, including details of taking the manager's name and contact number, and details of a named rep on the day to assist from the provider organisation.
3. Confirmation of engagement should provoke any training requirements for the volunteers or staff and will be initiated and planned by the Engagement Officer (for example, if attending a local MIND community group, mental health awareness training will be provided for all those taking part in targeted engagement). All training should be completed prior to engagement commencing.
4. A full risk assessment should take place each day the Engagement Officer and the volunteers are engaging at each setting and should be recorded and held back at HWL offices.
5. Following the providers policy and procedures, HWL staff and volunteers should refer to these and attest to have read them prior to commencing engagement.
6. If the risk assessment highlights any risks the Engagement Officer should discuss these in full prior to commencing any Engagement. To mitigate against these risks the CEO may conclude to cease the targeted engagement.
7. All targeted engagement should take place with at least two members of the HWL team. This could be one staff and one volunteer, or two volunteers. Under no circumstances in any instance should targeted engagement take place with only one HWL rep, and if it is deemed to have taken place, will result in disciplinary action. This is to safeguard our staff and volunteers accordingly.
8. If any concerns arise during the targeted engagement, any volunteer or staff member should in the first instance raise this with the Engagement Officer. Where the Engagement Officer is not present (for instance, should Champions be conducting engagement on behalf of HWL without the Engagement Officer) they should inform the providers named manager on the risk assessment. They should also inform the HWL CEO.

9. If at any point the volunteers or staff members feel uncomfortable, concerned or unhappy with the setting, building, or conduct they should leave the facility immediately, report to the provider named manager and inform the CEO.

10. If a Safeguarding is raised during the targeted engagement, all should leave the vicinity and inform the providers named manager and the HWL CEO.

11. All feedbacks should be returned to HWL offices and stored under HWL procedures within 24 hours of conducting the feedback to ensure HWL procedures of GDPR and data protection are followed.

#### General Engagement:

1. Steps 1-11 should be followed from Targeted Engagement procedure for any general engagement HWL commence

2. Any events should be led by the Event Risk Assessment policy – but HWL should also conduct their own Risk Assessment, led by the Engagement Officer. For all PR and Public Events, follow the General and Targeted Engagement Procedures.

#### Working from Home:

1. Lone working consists of working alone in the office or buildings and working from home alone.

2. All working from home will be discussed and agreed with the CEO. No officer can work from home without discussion and planning with the CEO to ensure the team at HWL can run the office without a presence.

3. Working from home is the employee's choice and is agreed to assist with a work/life balance of an employee.

4. A full guide can be found at IOSH website:

file:///C:/Users/Lucy/Downloads/Home%20office%20mobile%20office%20(1).pdf

5. General health and safety hazards need to be considered by both the employer and the worker because employers have little direct control over the home workplace.

6. Laptops are provided by HWL and any cases needed to carry work equipment will be provided or paid for by HWL.

7. There should be suitable access to the work room and the employee needs to ensure good standards of housekeeping, including adequate lighting, removing trailing leads and not using the floor or high shelves for storage.

8. Home or Remote workers must make sure they use equipment correctly and take reasonable care of their own health and safety. They must also be aware of the risks their work poses to other people, such as family members (including children).

HWL are unable to accommodate home working on a long-term basis. Being part of a small team means working from home should be conducted and planned on a weekly/monthly basis in agreement with the CEO or Chair.

Procedure for working alone in HWL Offices (Safeguarding)

Working in the HWL offices alone, please refer to page 3. It is recognised that sometimes HWL deal with, support and interact with vulnerable people, including those with mental health or other needs beyond HWL employees' skills and experience. All HWL will have a full induction and are prompted to take part in continuing training and development to ensure they feel comfortable dealing with vulnerable adults.

Healthwatch Luton are a signposting, information and advice service. We do not have the clinical or other knowledge to deal with, ongoing, vulnerable adults, and should always in the first instance signpost the VA to a more experienced and accommodating and appropriate organisation.

1. Ensure that as an HWL representative you are always safe when interacting with a vulnerable adult (VA). All communication and interactions should be done out of the office of HWL and in the communal area for discussions. Private discussions in a meeting room should not be sanctioned with a VA unless two employees are present.
2. If you are alone when a VA presents, you may speak with them in a communal area. If the VA is known, it is best to inform that the 'case worker' (person with most interaction) is not available and to call in advance before attending HWL offices.
3. If you are alone when VA presents, and you are the case worker, you must only meet with the VA in the communal Basepoint area. You are not allowed to, nor will it be deemed acceptable to bring them up to the safety of the HWL offices.
4. All interactions with a VA must be recorded in full and inputted within 24 hours onto the LHM system.



5. If there is more than one person present in the office, and you do not feel comfortable interacting with the VA, you should meet with the VA with another employee.
6. You must signpost the VA on to a service that could support them, or ask them to call back when the Project Officer or CEO is in.
7. If you are not happy with interacting with the VA, and you are alone, you must inform the reception desk at Basepoint and ask them to ask the VA to leave.
8. If the VA will not leave the premises after your interaction, you will need to discuss with Basepoint reception a course of action. Below are various places you can ask for support and information. Refer to these for more information\*.
9. If the VA becomes aggressive, or makes you feel intimidated in any way, you will need to call the police on 999 and inform Basepoint reception.
10. Under all circumstances you must log your interactions and inform the CEO of each interaction on email for an update for every VA interaction.
11. If you meet the VA outside of the office unexpectedly, you must inform the police either through 999 or via MASH and remove yourselves from them. Interacting with the VA should only take place appropriately in work hours on work premises.
12. Any queries regarding interacting with a VA should be discussed and emailed to the CEO as a record of discussion.

#### \*Contacts

- a. MASH: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (ADULTS): 01582 547 653  
adultsafeguarding@luton.gov.uk
  - b. MASH: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (CHILDREN): 01582 547 653  
initialassessment@luton.gov.uk
  - c. Adult Social Care: 01582 546 000  
accessandassessment@luton.gov.uk
- This policy and procedure are written to ensure HWL staff and volunteers are kept safe when working alone in or out of work hours, on or off work premises. Any amendments to this policy will be ratified by the HWL Board.

HWL Ratification October 2025