

East Cumbria Family Support Association

Lone Worker Policy

This document explains how ECFSA will protect their staff and volunteers as far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working. The Health and Safety Executive states that working alone is not in itself against the law and it will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers to consider carefully, and then deal with any health and safety risks for people working alone.

Purpose

ECFSA is committed to providing a safe working environment as far as reasonably practical, that meets the needs of its staff and volunteers. Consideration shall therefore be given to the health and safety implications in respect of lone working.

Policy

All staff and volunteers should be made aware of this policy. Anyone who is or who potentially may be a lone worker shall receive information, instruction and relevant training in respect of all identified hazards and the risks involved and all associated risks eg violence and aggression and vehicles/driving.

- It is the responsibility of Family Support Coordinators to coordinate the risk assessment for lone workers in consultation with the Chief Executive;
- Anyone who is lone working shall be provided with the telephone numbers of the ECFSA office and out of hours, the home telephone numbers of all staff. This is what is known as the YELLOWCARD
- Anyone who is lone working shall be given the opportunity to carry a personal alarm;
- Lone workers shall follow all instructions contained in the procedures below;
- It is the responsibility of the CEO to regularly re-assess risks, reporting the time and dates of monitoring and any changes to the Trustees;
- It is the responsibility of the CEO to ensure that workers do not suffer from undue stress as a consequence of lone working;
- It is recognised that some workers are required to work alone for significant periods of time without direct supervision and in these situations (see Lone Worker Situations defined below) ECFSA will ensure that adequate support is provided.

Definition of lone working

Individuals are alone at work when they are on their own, they cannot be seen or heard by another worker, cannot expect a visit from another worker for some time and/or where assistance is not readily available when needed. Therefore, lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

Lone worker situations at ECFSA

- Staff member visiting a prospective volunteer or family.
- Staff travelling to appointments
- Sole worker in the office
- Working from home.
- Staff member or Volunteer visiting a family
- Staff member or Volunteer going outside the family home with any members of the family eg medical appointments, going to the park etc.
- Transporting any member of a family.
- Staff member or Volunteer seeing a child on their own.
- Other such situations considered to be lone working.

Aims of the policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase awareness of safety issues relating to lone working;
- Ensure that the risks of lone working are assessed regularly and that systems are put in place to minimise the risk as far as is practical;
- Ensure that appropriate training is available to staff and volunteers that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone;
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working and reduce the number of incidents/injuries relating to lone working.

Risk assessment

Risk assessments must be carried out for and by all individuals whose working practice makes them vulnerable and recommendations should be made to eliminate or reduce the risk as far as possible. Where individuals work alone in buildings or carry out home visits, managers should complete the relevant risk assessment. Refer to Health and Safety Policy.

Procedure

Individuals will receive information, instruction and supervision in respect of the hazards and risks associated with lone working. All individuals are to take relevant and sensible precautionary measures whilst lone working. If a member of staff feels that they are putting themselves at risk through lone working, they must discuss the situation with their line manager who must devise plans to eliminate or reduce hazards starting with a process of reassessment of the task.

Risks of lone working

Risk assessments for site based lone workers must include:

- Safe entry and exit
- Location, eg remoteness, transport, parking
- Risk of violence eg history of violence from the public or the client
- Safety of equipment for individual use
- Channels of communication in an emergency

- Site security
- Security arrangements ie alarm systems and response to personal alarms
- Level and adequacy of on/off site supervision

Risk assessments for mobile lone workers must include:

- Premises risk assessment where applicable
- Arrangements for home visits including consideration of alternatives
- Travelling between appointments
- Reporting and recording arrangements
- Communication and traceability
- Personal safety and security

Following completion of risk assessment, consideration must be given to any appropriate action that is required.

Office based work

Whenever staff or volunteers work within the office they should try to ensure that:

- The client does not sit between them and the door and that they have clear access to leave via the door. It is also advisable to tell someone they are meeting with a client on their own.
- If there are concerns about a client, they should be seen in a large office with someone else present.
- If this is not possible, make sure that the door is left open.
- If a member of staff is seeing a client in the office when no one else is around, check someone else is in the building and make sure the office door is left open.

Staff visits - Buddy System

All staff members are required to:

- Record all details of any visits on their weekly diary sheet which must be made available to all staff on the shared data, including estimated time of leaving the visit.
- Complete the white board in the office
- Inform their manager of any change to their planned movements.

If a member of staff has not arrived by the stated time, a phone call will be made to contact that member of staff.

All staff members working out of office hours, on a visit that may be difficult or on the last visit of the day will use the Buddy system which requires them to:

- Contact a colleague and leave the following information before attending the visit:
 - Name and address of person being visited
 - Vehicle make and registration
 - Contact telephone number
 - Time they expect to leave the visit and will phone the buddy

- On leaving the visit, contact their designated colleague to confirm they have completed the visit.
- The process will then recommence until such time as the lone worker completes all visits and has arrived safely home. The procedure ensures that someone is aware of the staff member's movements during their working hours.
- If a call is not made at the pre-arranged time, the Buddy will telephone the lone worker on their mobile or, if there is no signal, the land line of the person being visited.
- The Buddy will ask "Is everything OK?". If the answer is 'yes' the Buddy will wait for the worker to end the visit and telephone to confirm safety within 10 minutes. If the answer is 'no' the Buddy will ask "Should I call the police?". If the answer is 'yes' the Buddy will immediately call the police and give them all known information about the visit. If the answer is 'no' the Buddy will wait for the worker to end the visit and telephone to confirm safety within 10 minutes.
- If a member of staff feels in danger at any time during a visit they should make an excuse to phone the office and ask for something to be looked up in the Purple Folder. The member of staff answering the phone should then ask "Should I call the police?"
- It is assumed that the lone worker will say 'yes' when asked if the police are to be called, if there are any safety issues.
- If a member of staff feels uncomfortable at any time about continuing a visit they should make an excuse to leave.

Volunteers providing Home Based Support.

All volunteers will follow these procedures for working alone.

- Always let someone know where you are going.
- Volunteers will leave a sealed envelope with a family member to let them know the name and address of the person they are visiting and what time they expect to leave the visit, together with a YELLOWCARD for use in case of emergency.
- If a volunteer does not return home or call at the pre-arranged time the family member will contact a member of ECFSA staff using the information on the YELLOWCARD and the staff member will then follow the Buddy system set out below.
- If a family member is not available a volunteer will contact a member of staff to let them know their plans and the Buddy system will be followed.
- If a volunteer feels uncomfortable at any time about continuing a visit they should make an excuse to leave and call the office to discuss the situation with a member of staff.

General Support for Staff and Volunteers

All new staff and volunteers to ECFSA should receive an induction, including reference to the lone worker policy.

Staff and volunteers working for ECFSA should know that their safety comes first. They should be aware of how to deal with situations in which they feel at risk or unsafe. They should also be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response. Managers must therefore ensure that all lone workers' training needs are assessed and that they receive appropriate training.