Lone Working Policy

Date Adopted: October 2020
Reviewed on: November 2022
Author/owner: Board of Trustees

NB. 'Trustees' means the Directors referred to in the Trust's Articles of Association

History of most recent policy changes

Version	Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, Change in legislation
V1.0	October 2020		New policy introduced for the Tarka Learning Partnership Central Trust Team and Schools within the Trust	Requirement for central policy to mitigate risks of lone working
V2.0	October 2022		Review of the policy to ensure it is current and complies with Health and Safety law – minor addition regarding wellbeing and mental health	

Contents

1.0   Policy Statement

The Tarka Learning Partnership (TLP) recognises that there may be an increased risk to the health and safety of employees when working alone. This policy has been established to identify risks and manage them accordingly.

The Trust has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees.

2.0   Definition

Within this policy, 'lone working' refers to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition of lone working: "Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."

This includes situations where staff, in the course of their duties, work alone in the school and are physically isolated from colleagues, possibly without immediate access to assistance. It is possible for a staff member to be 'lone working' when there are other staff members in the building due to the nature of the building creating isolated areas.

Where associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and the Tarka Learning Partnership have a duty of care to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

3.0   Scope – identifying lone workers

This policy covers all employees, agency staff and volunteers engaged to work with the Tarka Learning Partnership and its schools who may be defined as a lone worker.

A lone worker is someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision, either employees who work separately from others in an establishment, or mobile workers who work away from a fixed base are classed as lone workers.

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.

Examples of employees who may be classed as lone workers include:

- Staff with responsibility for opening up and closing buildings;

- Staff working outside normal working hours, i.e. between 16.00 – 08.00;

- School and Trust Central Team staff working during holiday periods;

- Staff working in an isolated part of the building;

- Staff working in an isolated environment away from the school.

(This list is by no means exhaustive)

Consideration therefore needs to be given to the potential risks faced by lone workers, as follows:

- commitment to supporting staff both in establishing and maintaining safe working practices;

- recognising and reducing risk by adopting a systematic approach to undertaking regular risk assessments extending to regular reviews;

- a commitment to the provision of appropriate support for staff;

- a clear understanding of responsibilities;

- the priority placed on the safety of the individual;

- a commitment to providing appropriate training for staff;

- provision of equipment such as mobile phones, personal alarms, etc.

4.0   Roles and responsibilities

As the employer, the Trust has ultimate responsibility for the Health and Safety of all employees.

The Tarka Learning Partnership Board of Trustees has responsibility under the relevant legislation for ensuring that there is due regard to matters of health, safety and environmental matters within the Trust and its schools.

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of the Lone Working Policy and for encouraging staff to implement lone working arrangements. The Head Teacher has primary responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the objectives set out in this policy.

Employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers. They also have responsibility for the health and safety of any contractors or self-employed people working for them. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to any other person, including those people who work alone.

Employees and workers have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

5.0   Risk Assessments

As the employer, the Tarka Learning Partnership has a duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. The TLP Risk Assessment must be completed for the Central Team and each school and lone working identified as part of the assessment.

The risk assessment must be completed and the resultant controls implemented, which must then be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

This must include:

- involving workers when considering potential risks and measures to control them;

- taking steps to ensure risks are removed where possible, or putting in place control measures, e.g. carefully selecting work equipment to ensure the worker is able to perform the required tasks in safety;

- instruction, training and supervision;

- reviewing risk assessments periodically or when there has been a significant change in working practice.

Personal safety is very important, points to consider in a risk assessment are:

- who knows where employees are and whom they are with? Identify a designated member of staff to inform i.e. Line Manager.

- are there suitable lines of communication between the lone worker and a designated person? Ensure regular contact/communication during the time period of lone working; or at an agreed point of time.

- are there procedures in place if contact with the lone worker cannot be established, as required. Regular communication networks should ensure appropriate contact and wellbeing of the lone worker.

- can employees in isolated areas summon help or raise an alarm? Ensure employee has direct access to either a departmental phone, radio or mobile phone.

- ensure the Caretaker is informed when staff leave the premises to avoid the situation of staff being locked in school at the end of the day. Staff should be aware of any fixed closure times. Similarly where more than one employee is using a building but working separately and leaving at different times, ensure the building is locked behind each arriving and departing person to prevent any unauthorised people from being able to access the building.

- staff should 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 and the Caretaker if appropriate when leaving the building, ensuring it is locked behind them on arrival and exit.

- lone working can only be undertaken following authorisation from an employee's Line Manager.

- it is the responsibility of the individual concerned to ensure all necessary precautions and methods are adhered to at all times.

- a robust system is in place for signing in and out within the main office, and staff should follow these procedures.

- where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, procedures should be in place for regular contact between staff, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

- consideration should be given for wellbeing and the effect of lone working on mental health.

- where staff are issued with mobile phones; they are responsible for ensuring that the phone is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining. Personal alarms may also be considered.

- any person who becomes aware of circumstances involving lone working, where the existing control measures may not be fully effective, must inform their line manager or Head Teacher as soon as possible.

6.0 Control Measures

In order to manage the risks identified, the Tarka Learning Partnership has introduced the following control measures:

Risk of violence/medical incident/allegation

- staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

- lone workers should not undertake any tasks which are hazardous or have a heightened risk of injury such as; working at height, using toxic or corrosive chemicals, using high risk wood sawing machinery.

- staff should not to arrange meetings with parents or members of the public when lone working.

- all meetings should be arranged during main school occupancy times or when there is more than one member of staff on site for the duration of that meeting.

- staff are required not to handle cash when lone working.

- late meetings must be arranged to finish promptly and not to leave one member of staff alone on site.

- working alone on site will be avoided in the hours of darkness.

- staff are required not to approach or let into buildings unauthorised persons when lone working.

- deliveries must not be accepted when lone working.

- staff must ensure they are not exposed to allegations when lone working with pupils, particularly those that are vulnerable or have challenging additional needs.

Communication

- staff are first required to avoid lone working wherever possible by arranging to work in pairs or as a group.

- the Estates Team must be informed of staff working patterns and when a member of staff may be lone working.

- staff must always sign in and out.

- the Estates Team must check that all staff are signed out before they lock up for the day to ensure no one is left in the building.

- the Estates Team must periodically walk the corridors in order to monitor lone workers.

- two-way radios should be used for caretaking staff who regularly work in isolation.

Lone working away from work base

- details of intended visits are recorded and known by another person

- there is a known emergency procedure for lone workers who are late for an arranged meeting

- there is a known procedure for checking the lone worker has finished working remotely and has arrived back at a safe place

- up to date contact information is held on personnel working away from their work base

7.0 Incidents

Should an incident occur the lone worker must report this to their Line Manager and a de-briefing should follow any incident and contact with any authorities made, such as the police if necessary.

Any incidents or concerns in relation to lone working should be reported to the person responsible for Health and Safety. Staff should ensure they are aware of who this person is as part of induction.

8.0   Monitoring and Review

Having undertaken appropriate risk assessments and implemented all necessary controls, it is important that all lone working situations are monitored and continually reviewed.

The person responsible for Health and Safety in the Central Trust team or each school is responsible for monitoring the risk assessments and following any incidents or concerns.

Staff with a concern should ensure the issue is discussed with their Line Manager.

Lone working incidents should be reported to the Tarka Learning Partnership Board of Trustees.

Appendix 1 – Procedure for Lone Working

- The lone worker must have approval from their line manager to work alone

- Lone working arrangements must be agreed, i.e. the venue, dates and times or pattern of lone working

- Communication channels must be agreed, including frequency of communication between line manager and the lone worker

- Lone workers must provide emergency contact details, which can be used when the line manager is unable to contact the lone worker as agreed

- Lone workers must have the means to raise an alarm; office phone, mobile phone or radio

- Where appropriate, ensure the Caretaker or Estates team are informed of lone workers; who they are, when they arrive and leave the building and location of where they will be working

- Procedures for signing in and out of the building, as necessary, are understood by the Estates team and lone worker

- Lone workers must ensure doors are secured behind them on entering and exiting the building to prevent unauthorised people accessing the building

- Lone workers must ensure their mobile phone is charged and has sufficient credit in order to make contact with their line manager or raise an alarm

- Lone workers can request a personal alarm if they would like one due to the nature of their work or the environment that they are working in

- Lone workers must be fully aware of site fire and evacuation procedures

- If lone working staff are responsible for unlocking and locking a building, they must be appropriately trained and confident to set alarms and follow the security procedures

- Lone working employees must understand how to report an incident as necessary

Appendix 2 – Checklist for lone workers who are working away from normal work base

This check list is not exhaustive but provides examples of the types of actions which contribute towards a safe working environment.

Before setting out:

- Before setting out be aware of the weather forecast and do not risk being caught up in bad weather conditions;

- Ensure that your vehicle has sufficient petrol and is well maintained;

- Allow yourself sufficient time for your journey so that you are not rushing;

- Make sure that you have all equipment required for the treatment or procedures that you are to carry out;

- Drive with any bags, records and equipment hidden so that you are not seen hiding them as you park;

- Maintain a weekly diary at base of all proposed visits;

- Ensure that colleagues can make contact with you if there are concerns. (It is essential that if you change your programme you notify a colleague);

- Make sure that any personal safety alarms, mobile phones are in working order and that you have your base number (or other as is appropriate) set up so that it can be rung by pressing one button;

- ALWAYS inform other colleagues of possible dangers;

- Ensure that a friend, relative or colleague is aware of the diary/log book held at their base.

Whilst travelling:

- Lock your door whilst driving

- Do not use mobile phone

Home visits:

- Park as near as possible to the address to be visited;

- At night, park in a lighted area;

- Avoid as far as possible waste ground, isolated pathways and subways, especially when it is dark;

- Assess the situation as you approach. If you are unhappy be prepared to abandon or postpone the visit. Do not compromise your own safety;

- Do not enter the house if the person answering the door gives any cause for alarm i.e. if the service user is not there, if a potentially dangerous relative is present, if they are drunk;

- Always follow the occupants into a building;

- Treat pupils and families courteously, remembering that you are a visitor in their home;

- If possible do not schedule a home visit for the last session of the day.

If an incident occurs:

- Put your own safety first. Leave a situation if you feel unsafe. No one is required to jeopardise their own safety: it is better to leave and find an alternative way of providing support to the;

- If the pupil is aggressive, but the aggression is not directed at you personally, allow them to 'let off steam', then calm them and help them to think of ways resolving their problems;

- Do not be confrontational;

- Apply what you have learnt from any training. This will help you to handle difficult and threatening situations;

- Use a panic alarm only in situations where there is a clear escape route, and for surprise only;

- Call for assistance from the police or your team, as appropriate. Head Teachers and managers must ensure that local procedures/guidelines, appropriate to the nature of the workforce, are put in place for responding to incidents.

After the incident has occurred:

- Contact your manager and return to base;

- Allow yourself time to recover and if necessary seek practical support from colleagues;

- Even after minor incidents your feelings might be difficult to control. This is a perfectly natural reaction. If necessary – take time off;

- Contact police if appropriate;

- Ask for debriefing and for further counselling if the post-trauma condition continues;

- Share information with others who might visit;

- Report the incident through the organisation's reporting procedures.

Your manager may wish to investigate the incident further: may also wish to modify safety procedures for you and other staff in the future. It is also necessary to record any incident, so that you have a more secure basis for any legal redress relating to the incident.