

BURY ST EDMUNDS TOWN COUNCIL
LONE WORKER POLICY
December 2023

This policy document outlines how Bury St Edmunds Town Council seeks to ensure the wellbeing of members of staff and volunteers who are deployed as lone workers. Bury St Edmunds Town Council recognises that staff and volunteers are sometimes in a position of working alone inside or outside the office and recognises that there are increased risks while working alone.

Statement of intent:

Bury St Edmunds Town Council strives to meet its statutory obligations and safeguards as far as is practicable regarding the health, safety and welfare of its staff and volunteers when they are deployed as lone workers.

How the policy will be applied:

Bury St Edmunds Town Council intends to meet its obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (as amended), which requires every employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees, and to conduct its undertaking so that persons in its employment are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. Lone workers should not be more at risk than other employees.

The principle of this policy is that the organisation will assess lone working practices and take steps to prevent or control risk where necessary.

The Town Council will:

- Encourage staff and volunteers to work responsibly in lone worker situations
- Apply an assessment of risk for its staff lone worker situations
- Apply an assessment of risk for any other premises or location used for Town Council activities or events towards identification, reduction and elimination of risk
- Ensure the testing of all portable electrical appliances owned and/or used by the Town Council
- Nominate a person within the workplace who has received appropriate training in first aid
- Have identified procedures for dealing with sick or injured persons
- Follow statutory guidelines for the reporting of accidents or injuries
- Ensure that substances that may present a hazard to health are identified and safeguards are in place
- Publish arrangements for fire safety and emergency evacuation of premises
- Have in place procedures for the opening of suspect mail
- Provide guidance to its staff on the operation of computer equipment, maintenance of buildings and equipment
- Make provision in its annual budget for identified or projected health and safety needs including training

How policy will be reviewed:

The Full Town Council will have responsibility for the review and update, as appropriate and at least annually, of this policy and its effectiveness.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers employed by the organisation who work alone.

Risk Assessment

Current staffing levels and nature of work undertaken dictate that there is a need for employees to work alone both inside and outside of the office. Lone workers are clearly in a vulnerable position from a number of hazards such as violent persons, falling ill, fall/injury. Additional considerations may be necessary to ensure the wellbeing of workers who may have sensory or physical impairment, or in situations of pregnancy. Risk assessment is essential to good risk management. Assessments shall be carried out for and by all staff whose working practice makes them vulnerable.

Responsibilities

The Town Clerk shall:

- Assess the need for lone working in all cases
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the policy
- Provide appropriate alternative arrangements where it is considered unsafe for staff to work alone
- Ensure that, when it is considered essential that work has to be carried out by a lone worker, a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been carried out and all steps possible have been taken to ensure that employee's safety
- Ensure that the safe working systems in relation to lone working are in place and that systems are regularly checked

Lone workers must:

- Ensure that they are aware of the policy and procedures relating to lone working and comply with them
- Take reasonable care to protect themselves and others affected by their actions
- Discuss with the Town Clerk any concerns about their safety during any particular spell of lone working
- Report any incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others.

Arrangements when working alone in the office:

- The office door to be locked if alone in the office. Visitors can ring the bell, and it is up to the member of staff to open the door to them if they feel safe doing so..
- No access to the office is to be given if a member of staff is in any doubt about the visitor. If there are any concerns about the visitor - where appropriate arrange an appointment for a date and time when another colleague will be present.
- A lone worker getting abuse from a member of the general public will ask that person to leave and to arrange for a specific appointment at a time and date suitable to all parties.
- The safety of staff is paramount and must always be the primary consideration. Staff must not put themselves at unnecessary risk.
- If violence is threatened or you feel uncomfortable withdraw from the situation as soon as possible.
- Should an incident occur, summon public assistance if possible. If assistance is immediately required (e.g. incapacity following a fall, or a violence situation is in progress) contact the ambulance or police service immediately using the 999 system. If an incident requiring police investigation has ceased (e.g. a person issuing threats has left the premises), report the matter to a member of the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- Regarding visits to the allotments:-

Staff will carry a mobile phone (the number of which will be known to the other members of staff) and a personal alarm with them at all times when carrying out these visits.

No visits will be made to the allotments if there are no other members of staff present at the office at that time. If the Allotments and Administrative Assistant is finishing their working day with the visit they will confirm that they have left the allotment.

When working alone outside the office:

- Make sure someone knows where you are going and roughly how long you expect to be out. Take a phone and ensure the office has your number.
- If there is a change of plan, or you are significantly delayed, let the office know details.
- A personal alarm device is available which can be utilised by the lone worker in the case of an emergency.
- Employees using personal mobile phones as a means of communication if there is no other alternative whilst out of the office will be reimbursed for the cost of the calls (via the Council's Expenses Policy).

Working out of hours

At the Council's office premises

At the end of an evening meeting one Councillor must be nominated to remain with the lone worker until they have completely left the premises.

Other than at the Council's office premises

It is unlikely that this will occur but if it is necessary the Town Clerk must ensure that adequate arrangements are in place.

Action to be taken in the event of not being able to contact the Lone Worker

Staff and employers must appreciate the potential seriousness where loss of contact is established and that it is in everyone's interests to ensure the wellbeing of workers. Where difficulty is experienced in contacting a lone worker the following action will be taken without delay:

- (a) An attempt should be made to contact the worker via their mobile phone
- (b) Telephone contact with the person/location being visited
- (c) Sensitive enquiry at the worker's home number – care should be taken not to create unnecessary alarm or fear
- (d) Contact the Police to report the person missing
- (e) Notify the Town Clerk, the Chairman/Mayor or Vice Chairman/Deputy Mayor of the Council,

If several attempts to contact the lone worker have failed, a number of measures can be taken depending on the particular circumstances, including leaving a message on their mobile phone, contacting their home, visiting their last known whereabouts, calling the police, anything else felt appropriate. The Town Clerk, the Chairman and Vice Chairman (Mayor/Deputy Mayor) of the Council, should be informed.

Incident Reporting

In order to maintain appropriate record of incidents involving lone workers, it is essential that all incidents be reported to the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity.

Staff should ensure that all incidents where they felt threatened or unsafe are reported even if this was not a tangible event/experience.

If felt appropriate contact the police on 999.

First Aid/Emergencies/Vehicle Breakdown

If you have an accident, feel unwell or there is any other emergency:

- Contact the office as soon as possible with details
- Use items from the first aid box for minor ailments or ring the police/ambulance for more serious accidents, ailments or emergencies.

Training

Staff and volunteers should know that their safety comes first and should be aware of how to deal with situations when they feel they are at risk or unsafe. Staff should also be able to recognise how their own actions can influence or even trigger an aggressive response.