

# H&S Guidance Sheet: Lone Working

## This guidance is for:

- Managers with responsibility for staff and volunteers who work alone at any time
- Staff who work alone at any time
- H&S representatives

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| Written: January 2021                                                                                                                          | Last reviewed: |
| For all queries please contact the Catch22 Health & Safety Team by emailing <a href="mailto:safety@catch-22.org.uk">safety@catch-22.org.uk</a> |                |

## Introduction

Lone working is defined as being when individuals are knowingly and foreseeably placed in circumstances in which they undertake work activities without continual direct or close supervision. In practical terms, persons are considered to be working alone if they have neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon assistance in the event of an accident or illness.

Lone working is undertaken by a range of Catch22 employees, either by virtue of their role, working hours or methods of working. Examples of lone workers within the organisation include caseworkers, out-of-hours/on-call workers, managers, homeworkers, site managers, centre managers and cleaning and maintenance staff.

Potential hazards that lone workers may encounter include but are not limited to:

- Fall during a maintenance procedure
- Sudden onset of illness
- Physical/verbal assault from members of the general public or service users
- Hazards in home, e.g. pets, clutter, blocked exits
- Road traffic collision (RTC)

## Who has the duty to assess and manage the risk?

In this guidance, all references to 'the service' applies to Catch22 schools, colleges and services.

Line managers of lone workers are responsible for ensuring that all necessary arrangements are in place to reduce the risk from lone working. If there are multiple line managers within a service, the manager responsible for the service must ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments and a lone working procedure are in place.

Employees also have a responsibility to take care of their own safety and co-operate with Catch22 procedures. Employees should not knowingly place themselves in situations which expose them to additional risk by working alone.

Contractors and sub-contractors working in unoccupied Catch22 premises or when commissioned to complete out-of-hours working are required to take responsibility for their own lone working procedures.

## What are the regulations?

There is no general legal prohibition on working alone. However, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers have legal duties to assess all risks to health and safety, including the risk of lone working.

Section 37 of HASAWA places a duty on directors and senior managers to ensure compliance with safety procedures. It is vital that managers monitor adherence to the risk assessment and service-specific lone worker procedure and address any non-compliance.

Section 7 of HASAWA places a duty on employees to take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

## How to comply with the regulations and control risks

### Risk assessment

To satisfy the legislative requirements, it is necessary for the risks associated with lone working to be assessed. A lone working risk assessment is required for all Catch22 services where staff undertake lone working. This risk assessment must be carried out in consultation with staff and be recorded onto a Catch22 risk assessment template. The date of the last review must be recorded on the risk assessment register.

In addition to the above, lone working situations with students and service users must also be risk assessed. These should take into consideration the specific risks and safe ways to work with that individual, and this may form part of the individual's service delivery plan. These risk assessments must be regularly reviewed and updated, and the information made available to any staff that may cover the work in times of the usual worker's absence.

Any higher-risk activities, such as premises maintenance and cleaning, must also have a specific risk assessment.

## Lone worker procedure

A lone worker procedure sets out the process for deciding, arranging, risk assessing and carrying out lone working. It must be specific to the Catch22 service. It is a line manager's duty to ensure all their staff are aware of the lone worker procedure and adhere to it.

The procedure must include:

- How lone working is arranged, e.g. in agreement with line manager, following initial assessment of risk including joint home visit
- How lone working is carried out, e.g. any restrictions on times and activities that can be undertaken
- How lone worker safety is monitored, e.g. lone worker device
- Arrangements for emergencies, including how alarm for assistance would be raised, who would respond and how. This may include the use of a lone worker device or app

## Basic principles and tips to consider when lone working in the community, including home visits

- **Always let people know where you are.** This is perhaps the most important thing you can do as a lone worker. You should phone or message your manager or a colleague on your arrival at and departure from your destination. Have a code word – something that would not seem out of the ordinary to a service user or potential assailant – that can be used as a distress signal to alert your team if a situation becomes difficult.
- **Be observant.** Know what is going on around you. Observe the environment and the people you are with and take note of their behaviour. Learn warning signs and triggers, such as a change in atmosphere, body language or tone of voice.
- **Always have an exit strategy.** If you enter a house, look for your nearest exit. If possible, position yourself as close as you can to that exit point. Make note of any items which could potentially be used as weapons against you. Try to sit or stand in places that don't leave you vulnerable.
- **Don't make yourself a target.** Simply being present in certain situations may put you at risk, but that risk can still be managed. Monitor your own behaviour and attitude. For example, don't respond angrily if a situation becomes tense, because this could antagonise the other person. It may prove to be difficult, but try to remain calm, focussed and in control, and try to diffuse the situation.
- **Trust your intuition.** Many people who have fallen victim to a violent incident will tell you that, in hindsight, the warning signs were there. Don't be scared to act on your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable with a person or in a situation, then remove yourself, and if you are very worried raise an alarm. It's always better to be safe than sorry.
- **Carry a panic alarm or lone worker alert device.** It's a good idea to carry a panic alarm or lone worker alert device. Traditional panic alarms will emit a loud noise, distracting your assailant and giving you time to escape. A lone worker device will also distract an attacker while summoning help, which could come from a colleague, a member of the public or even the emergency services.

### Basic principles and tips to consider when lone working on a Catch22 site

- Do not undertake any high-risk activities, e.g. working at height or in a confined space
- Ensure someone knows when you have left site safely and what to do in the event of not hearing from you or being able to make contact
- Consider how you will raise an alert for assistance if injured or taken ill
- Ensure you have access to a suitable first aid kit for the work you are undertaking
- Ensure you have considered fire safety precautions and exit routes

### Incidents and near-miss reporting

All incidents of injury, verbal abuse, threatening behaviour or near-miss events that occur while lone working on or off site must be reported to the H&S Team following the Incident & Near Miss Reporting procedure.

### Lone worker devices and apps

If the risk assessment identifies a device or app as a safety measure, this must be considered in line with data protection requirements and suitability for use on Catch22 devices (if app). The effectiveness of the device or app must be kept under review and any non-compliance of use addressed.

### Who do you contact?

Contact your usual adviser in the H&S Team if you need any assistance with undertaking a risk assessment. Contact the Catch22 Data Protection Officer [DPO@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:DPO@catch-22.org.uk) before entering into any arrangement with a lone worker device or app.

### Compliance

Lone working risk assessments and procedures are reviewed during H&S audits, spot checks on risk assessment registers and other internal audit processes. Incidents and near-miss reports are reviewed by the H&S Team and leadership teams. Serious incidents are reported to the Board of Trustees.

### Associated documents

Further information on lone worker safety can be found at [indg73.pdf \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Lone working procedure template

Lone working risk assessment template