



# STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

(including STOKESLEY TOWN HALL TRUST  
and STOKESLEY MANORIAL LANDS TRUST<sup>1</sup>)

## LONE WORKING AND VIOLENCE AT WORK POLICY



13 October 2020

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<sup>1</sup> Any reference to 'Stokesley Town Council', 'the Town Council' or 'the Council' includes both the trusts.

## Document Version Control

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## 1 Introduction

Stokesley Town Council (the 'Council') recognises that some members of staff may be required to work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct supervision either in the Town Hall or externally both within and out of normal working hours. The purpose of this policy is to protect staff, so far as is reasonably practicable, from the risks of both lone working and violence.

The Council acknowledges that there are processes already in place to minimise the risks of lone working. This policy is designed to support and strengthen those arrangements. The Council recognises it has an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), for the health, safety and welfare at work of all of its staff. These responsibilities apply equally to those staff that may, for whatever reason, work alone. They require the Council to identify hazards, assess the risks and put measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

## 2 Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout this policy:

**Violence** - Any incident, in which an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising in the course of his / her employment. Whilst the HSE's definition of violence and this policy are particularly concerned with violence towards staff, it should also be read to include Incidents involving violence towards other persons and incidents involving damage to property.

**Violent incidents** - All incidents involving physical contact resulting in either fatality, major or minor injury, no injury, or emotional shock. It includes all incidents involving serious or persistent threats, or verbal abuse including threats of physical violence, threats with a weapon, verbal abuse causing emotional stress / shock, telephone abuse, persistent bullying, and racial or sexual harassment.

**Staff** - All employees of the Council.

**Visitors** - All visitors to the Council's premises.

**Lone Worker** - An employee who is engaged on Council business without a colleague nearby; or someone working out of sight or earshot of another colleague. Lone working may be a constituent part of a person's usual job or it could occur on an infrequent basis, as and when circumstances dictate.

**Physical Assault** - is the intentional use of force by one person against another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort. The Council does not tolerate any form of assault or abuse against any of its staff, irrespective of the degree used or injury caused.

**Non-physical Assault** - is the use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress and / or constituting harassment. Examples include offensive language, unwanted or abusive remarks, racially aggravated remarks, intimidation, and any other non-physical words or actions which cause distress or constitute harassment (or are likely or intended to do so). This list is not exhaustive and it is a subjective test as to whether a person feels threatened, alarmed, distressed or harassed.

**HSE** - Health and Safety Executive

**Contractors** – Any contractor engaged by the Council to provide a service, or any person employed by a contractor. It also includes volunteer staff working on the Council’s premises for the benefit of the Council.

### 3 The Hazards of Working Alone

Members of staff who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other workers. However, for lone workers, the risk of harm may be greater.

In practice, the lone worker aspect of this policy will apply to staff especially when they are working in isolated locations and / or when carrying out known high-risk activities. Such activities include:

- Undertaking work within isolated areas
- Undertaking work within known high-risk areas
- Working alone in the Town Hall
- Handling cash and / or banking

### 4 Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- Ensure that the risk of working alone is assessed in a systematic and on-going manner, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to eliminate risks to staff working alone or to reduce those risks to the lowest practicable level
- Ensure that appropriate training is available to staff in all areas, that equips them to recognise risk and provide practical advice on safety when working alone
- Ensure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all accidents / incidents relating to lone working
- Reduce the number of incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working
- Ensure that the Council takes action against those people who harass, abuse or assault its staff
- Ensure that the Council complies with relevant health and safety legislation and best practice

### 5 Responsibilities

Councillors are responsible for:

- Promoting and supporting the aims and objectives of this policy
- Ensuring there are arrangements in place
  - for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working and violence at work
  - for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and violence at work
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the policy

The Town Clerk is responsible for:

- The operational management of health and safety
- Promoting and supporting aims and objectives of this policy
- Ensuring each member of staff are aware of the policy and of the risks of lone working
- Identifying each member of staff who is a lone worker
- Ensuring risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly
- Assessing the need for working alone
- Ensuring arrangements / protocols in place to reduce risks to lone workers

- Putting procedures, devices and / or safe systems of work in to practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone
- Ensuring individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident reported
- Ensuring any lone working incident is recorded and investigated, and recommendations are agreed and implemented to prevent recurrence
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place to account for, and trace, the whereabouts of lone working employees and that these systems are regularly checked.

Each member of staff is responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of himself / herself and other people who may be affected by their actions
- Familiarising himself / herself with relevant health and safety policies and procedures
- Co-operating by following rules and procedures designed for safe working
- Considering and assessing potential risks to his / her health and safety
- Reporting all incidents, difficulties or risks arising from lone working, however minor they may be, to the Clerk, even if he / she does not wish any further action to be taken as failure to report an incident may put others at risk
- Attending all training designed to meet the requirements of the policy
- Reporting any dangers that he / she identifies or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone or the safe working arrangements
- Not interfering or misusing anything provided for his / her, or others, safety.
- Being certain that he / she has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he / she is exposed; that he / she knows what to do if something goes wrong and that someone knows his / her whereabouts, activities and planned return time

The Health and Safety Committee is responsible for

- Ensuring relevant policies are in place to protect the health and safety of staff
- Monitoring the number of incidents relating to lone workers
- Ensuring that lessons learned from incidents are communicated throughout the Council

The Employment Committee is responsible for:

- Considering sickness statistics and recommending action in relation to health and safety
- Monitoring training statistics and feedback.

## 6 Assessing and Managing Risk

The assessment of risk is a careful examination of anything that may cause harm to staff or others by the activities of the Council. A risk assessment is the first step in deciding what prevention or control measures need to be taken to protect staff and others from harm. Lone workers should not be at greater risk than other Council staff. However, extra measures may need to be put in place to control specific risks.

If the initial risk assessment indicates unacceptably high levels of risk then the work should not be undertaken until further safe working arrangements are implemented, e.g. two people working together. Risk assessments will be carried out in all areas of lone working where there is an actual or potential risk to staff.

The record of the risk assessment should include:

- The extent and nature of the risks
- Factors that contribute to the risk, including job content, specific tasks and activities
- Safe systems of work to be followed to eliminate or reduce the risk
- Staff and others affected by the activity
- Any changes, recommendations, training, policy and procedural reviews necessary
- Identification of who is responsible for ensuring the identified actions in the risk assessment are completed

The risks that lone workers face should be reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level. Each type of lone working situation will be assessed. Arrangements for managing risk include:

- Guidance for lone workers on assessing risk
- Details of when to stop and get advice
- The safe working arrangements for logging in and out with base so that staff can be traced and located when working alone either in the Town Hall or in the community
- Procedures to be followed in the event of an incident or emergency.

## 7 Mobile Phones

The Council provides a mobile phone for staff who are working alone in external locations. Additionally, a land line phone with a cordless handset is provided for use by the steward working in the Town Hall.

Each member of staff is required to ensure that he / she is provided with a mobile phone (or a cordless handset of a land line phone if working in the Town Hall) and that he / she carries that phone at all times when working alone.

Using a mobile phone can itself create hazards and those members of staff who have mobile phones must use them in a manner that does not endanger themselves or others, e.g. not using a mobile phone when driving.

Staff should discretely make calls if using a mobile phone, so as to not draw attention to themselves or the phone, thereby mitigating the risk of theft or mugging.

## 8 Immediate Action in Response to a Violent Incident

In the event that any member of staff is faced with a hostile situation that he / she is unable to manage he / she should:

- Remove himself / herself, and others if possible, from the threat
- Call the Police
- Ensure safety of others
- Take appropriate action if any medical assistance is required, e.g. call for ambulance, go to Accident & Emergency Department of a local hospital or visit a GP
- Report the incident to the Town Clerk, or in the case if the staff member is the Town Clerk to the Chair of the Employment Committee

It is not advisable to make any attempt to detain the offender(s). However, the Council supports the right of all employees to defend themselves reasonably and proportionally.

The Council will seek to take legal action in all cases of physical violence and in cases of significant verbal violence. The victim of the assault will be kept informed of the investigation's progress and offered such support as is necessary.

## **9 Immediate Support Following a Violent Incident**

In the event of an incident involving a lone worker, violence or aggression, the Town Clerk, or in his / her absence the Assistant Clerk, should immediately ensure that the employee receives any necessary medical treatment and / or advice and inform the Chair of the Employment Committee. The clerk and all Councillors should be sensitive to the employee's need to talk about the incident and offer any assistance possible. The importance of colleague and Councillor support should not be underestimated; they may be seen as primary emotional support. Staff will be offered confidential counselling where appropriate.

## **10 Debriefing**

After an incident of violence against a member of staff (whatever the severity, from verbal abuse to physical assault), it is important that there should be an opportunity for the staff member to discuss the incident with the Town Clerk, or if the victim is the Town Clerk with the Chair of the Employment Committee, as soon as possible after the incident. The purpose of the debriefing is to

- Discuss the incident in order to support the member of staff
- Discuss the need for expert / further counselling for the member of staff
- Ensure the 'Lone Worker, and Violence and Aggression at Work Policy' has been followed
- Examine the details of the incident and if the policy and protocols worked
- Ensure any protective factors or actions needed are implemented as soon as possible following the incident to protect staff or property
- Learn lessons from the incident to prevent recurrence, and ensure that the learning is spread throughout the Council
- Identify and implement any revisions to Risk Assessments

## **11 Reporting of Violent Incidents**

All incidents of violence, including verbal abuse, are reportable. Where a member of staff is absent for more than 7 days, a RIDDOR form should be completed by the Town Clerk, or in his / her absence the Assistant Clerk.

## **12 Criminal Injury Compensation**

If a member of staff is injured in a violent incident, they should be advised by the Town Clerk that he / she may have rights to compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. Any claim for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority must be made within 2 years after the date of injury. Information is available from the Police, Citizens Advice Bureau and Victim Support.

## **13 Review**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by both the Employment Committee and the Health and Safety Committee and when any changes to current legislation are made of additional legislation is enacted.