



WORKSHOP HANDBOOK

LONE WORKING & PERSONAL SAFETY



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LONE WORKING & PERSONAL SAFETY

Establishing a healthy and safe working environment for lone workers can be different from organising the health and safety of other employees. Here we take a look at some of the key considerations in maintaining personal safety whilst engaged in lone working.

WHAT IS A LONE WORKER?

The Health & Safety Executive defines Lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, for example:

In fixed establishments

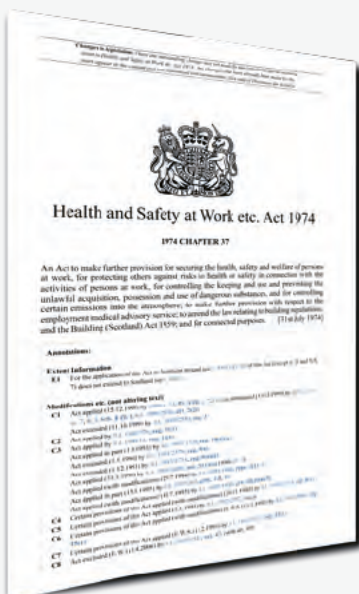
- A person working alone in a small workshop, petrol station, kiosk or shop
- People who work from home other than in low-risk, office-type work
- People working alone for long periods, e.g in factories, warehouses, leisure centres or fairgrounds
- People working on their own outside normal hours, e.g cleaners and security, maintenance or repair staff



As mobile workers working away from their fixed base

- Workers involved in construction, maintenance and repair, plant installation and cleaning work
- Agricultural and forestry workers
- Service workers, including postal staff, social and medical workers, engineers, estate agents, and sales or service representatives visiting domestic and commercial premises

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK



The two key pieces of legislation that relate to the legal duties around lone working are:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

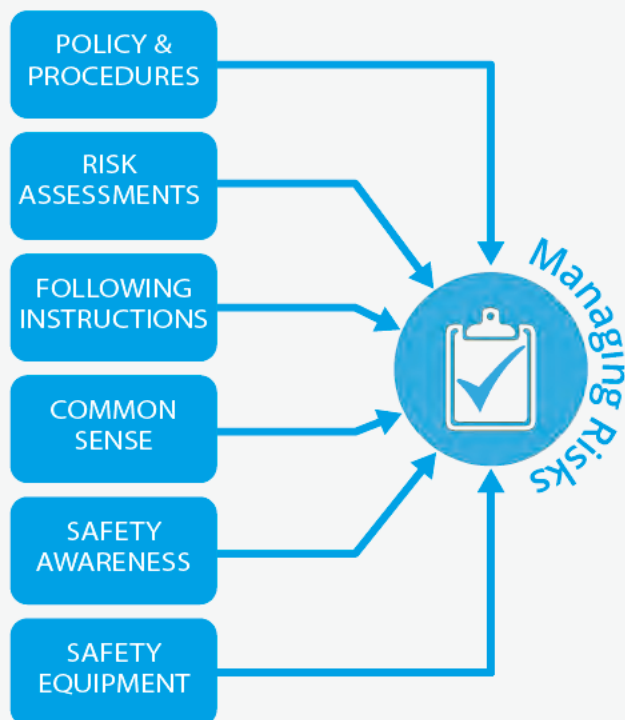
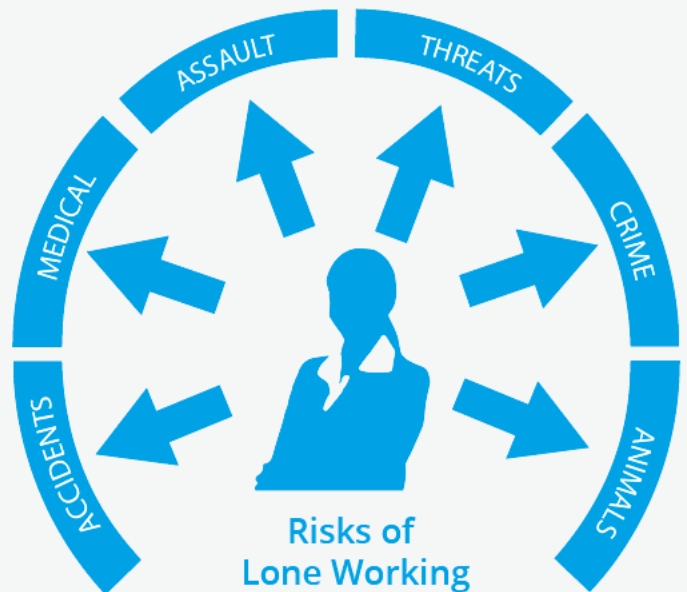
The HSE have also published health & safety guidance (INDG73) on working alone which can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg37.pdf.

Lone working is not against the law, but the law does require employers to carefully consider the risks that lone workers face and to ensure a safe system of work by avoiding or controlling such risks.

Workers themselves have a responsibility to cooperate with their employers in meeting these legal obligations. Ultimately, lone workers should not be put at more risk than other employees.

LONE WORKING RISKS

When assessing risks of working alone, we should consider the nature of the risks that change specifically because of working alone. For example the chances of falling or tripping may not change, but the potential harm could be increased because no one else would be around to call for help or offer medical assistance. The chances of being a victim of crime may increase as a worker may seem more vulnerable because they are alone. Working alone can present additional risks in a number of areas.



MANAGING LONE WORKING RISKS

When managing the risks of working alone, here are a number of approaches to consider. Whilst policy and formal risk assessments have an important role, the knowledge and skills of the lone worker must also play a part.

Policy and procedures set out the measures that an organisation requires of its workers and training can ensure that they have the right set of skills to follow them.

Personal protective equipment can also be important in reducing risks in lone working.

We will now look at the ability of lone workers to assess and manage lone working risks 'dynamically'.

NOTES:

ASSESSING & MANAGING RISK

There are three ways in which the risks of violence or aggression can be assessed:



GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Risks of violence and aggression can be considered by analysing the job role and type of activities a worker carries out. General policies and procedures can then be put in place to minimise or eliminate any risks that are identified. We will look at this type of risk assessment closer in our section on Lone Working.



RISK ASSESSMENT FOR PRE-PLANNED EVENTS

Some roles involve events and activities that are out of the ordinary or that only happen occasionally. A generic risk assessment may not cover such circumstances as it is important to assess the risk involved in a special event or activity as part of the planning process.



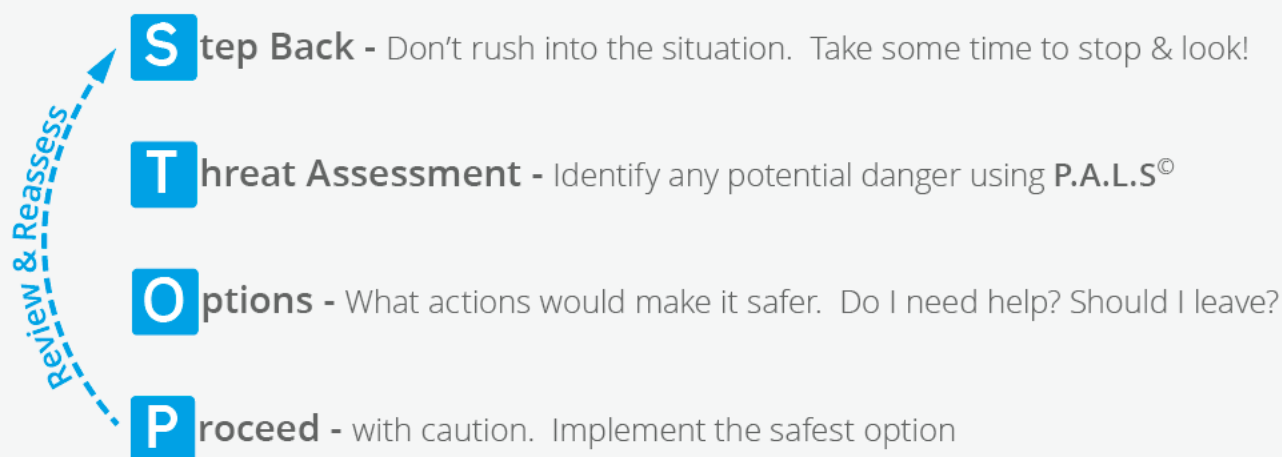
DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

There are times when workers are confronted with situations which are unique and not covered in a generic risk assessment.

'Dynamic Risk Assessment' is a process which helps an individual to effectively assess a situation from a personal safety perspective, as it unfolds in 'real time'. The worker can continuously assess the circumstances and adjust their response to meet the risk presented moment by moment.

DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Dynamic Risk Assessment is a continuous process involving the following stages:



STEPPING BACK

It is all too easy during a busy working day, to find ourselves immersed in our work to the extent that we sometimes are unaware of what is going on around us. We need to find the time throughout our day to **stop** and take a look at the situation we are in. Whether it is when we get into the car, arrive outside the premises we are visiting, when the door is opened, or when someone first walks up to the reception desk, there are many opportunities to assess the situation we are entering and notice whether any risks are there.

ASSESSING THREATS

Whilst we should always listen to our 'gut instinct' to tell us something is not right, it can be useful to have a more objective approach to identifying and evaluating threats. There are four key areas to consider:

Person

Drunk or drugs?
Mental health problem?
Are they bigger/stronger than me?
Emotional state?
Other people present?
Do you know them?
History of anger or aggression?
Known offender?

Articles

Firearms
Knives or other edged weapons
Bats or other sporting equipment
Apparently innocent articles such as scissors, cooking knives & kitchenware
Umbrellas
Walking sticks
Bags

Location

Lone working
No phone signal?
Stairs & escalators
Wet & slippery floors
Glass windows & doors
High crime area?
Routes to or from work
Poorly lit

Situation

Aggravating circumstances?
Long running disputes?
Prior threats made?
Pre incident build up?
Delivering bad news
Any other factors present?

OPTIONS

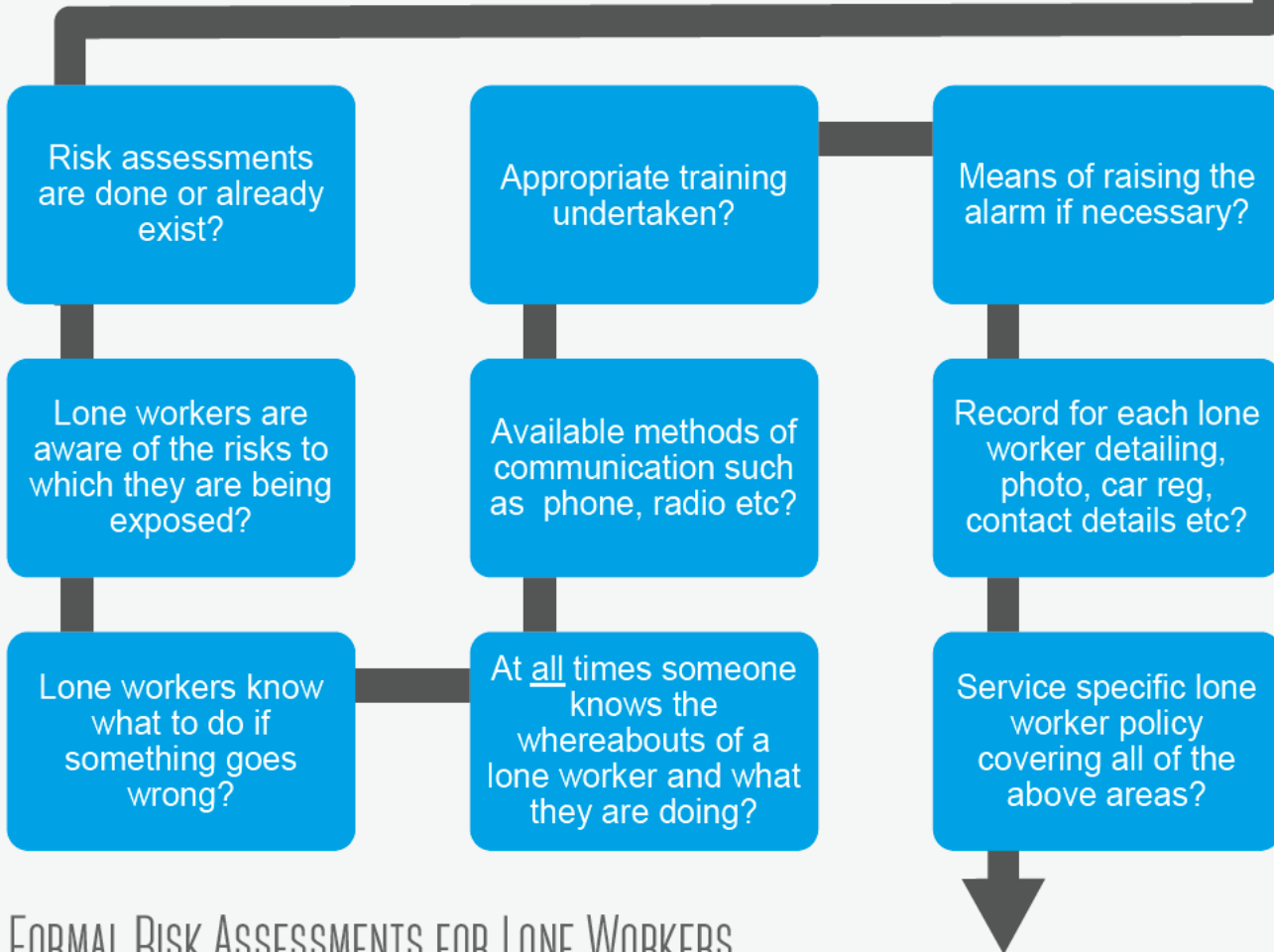
We should never feel obliged to persevere with an encounter or situation where we have identified risk is present. There are always alternative options open to us, such as making some additional checks, calling for advice or assistance from a colleague, choosing a different location, arranging the appointment for a different time or place or simply withdrawing from the situation altogether.

PROCEEDING

Only once we have identified the safest option should we proceed with our plan. We also need to continue to monitor the situation and repeat the process if the situation changes.

NOTES:

MANAGING LONE WORKING CHECKLIST



FORMAL RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR LONE WORKERS



Managers have a duty to:

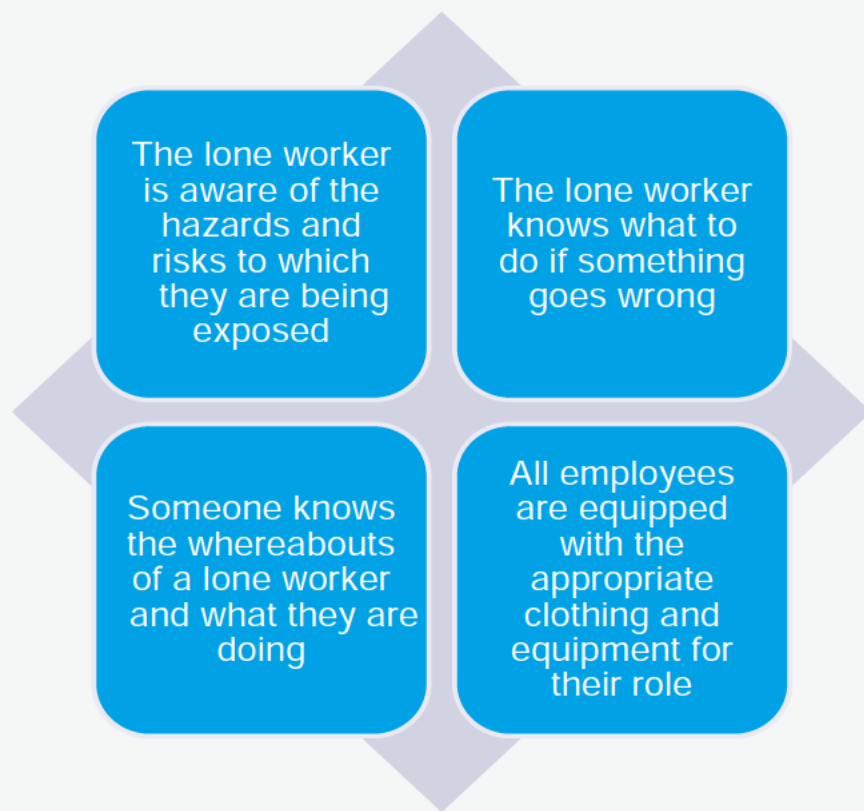
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out
- Develop strategies to minimise and/or deal with risks
- Communicate policies and procedures to any staff that may have to work alone.
- Ensure risk assessments form an integral part of the induction process to ensure that risks are identified
- Ensure that staff are aware of risks and of the actions to take at the earliest possible stage in their work



Employees have a duty to:

- Take reasonable care not to endanger themselves or anyone else by any act or omission
- Work with their manager in the identification of areas of risk associated with the performance of their duties
- Work with their manager in the elimination or reduction of these risks

LONE WORKER RISK ASSESSMENTS - FOUR KEY POINTS:



The Risk Assessment Must Take Into Account:

- The remoteness or isolation of the activity or the workplace
- Available methods of communication and back up systems in the event of a failure
- Training needs of the staff member in relation to working alone
- Medical fitness of the employee to deal with a potential situation
- Means of raising an alarm and summoning help or exiting a situation if need arises
- The possibility of violent or criminal activity from other persons
- The possible nature of risks related to injury or damage to health

NOTES:

WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

When someone is working alone away from the workplace on home visits in the community, there are a number of additional areas that need to be considered when assessing safety risks.



THE PERSON BEING VISITED

Although we would need to rely on a dynamic risk assessment to assess people that are unknown to us, we can consider in advance the type of customers that employees are likely to deal with and whether they present any increased risks. For example mental health professionals, social workers or anti-social behaviour officers are likely to encounter more individuals who present increased risks of aggression than other workers.



THE ENVIRONMENT

What type of locations are the visits taking place in? Is it isolated (see below), an area with a higher risk of a particular crime or is it known to us as a place where previous incidents have occurred? We cannot control the outside environment in the same way that we can our own premises, so we must try to anticipate and take account of any reasonably foreseeable hazards that workers may encounter.



THE TYPE OF WORK BEING CARRIED OUT

The nature of the work being carried out in the community plays a significant role in determining the level of risks being faced. Is the work itself higher risk? Are work activities themselves likely to trigger aggression, such as giving bad news or responding to complaints or acting in an enforcement role? Some roles may carry a significant and consistent elevated risk to employees and this must be carefully considered during the risk assessment process.

It is useful to draw upon the experiences of workers themselves when assessing these types of risk as they may know more than anyone the nature of the people they are dealing with, the locations they work in and the situations that they face.

Where risks are identified, we can start to evaluate what additional measures are reasonably available to eliminate or mitigate them.

The process of doing this for lone workers is no different to standard risk assessments, but often the control measures are more difficult to achieve due to the more unpredictable nature of the environment in which lone workers operate.

WORKING IN ISOLATED LOCATIONS

Some times the risks of working alone are exacerbated by also working in environments that are isolated. This raises further areas for consideration:

ISOLATED PREMISES



Is there a phone or an alarm to raise in the event of an emergency?



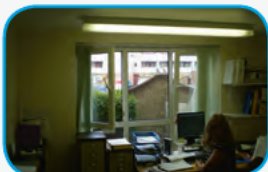
Is the location secure from outside intruders?



Does the premises have multiple access points



Are the premises a potential target?



Are staff visible from outside?



Is there a safe route out of the premises?

ISOLATED SITES



Does the area have signals for mobile phones or trackers?



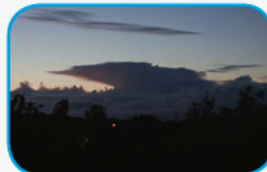
How far from other people is it - Can assistance be summoned



Can the area be reached by emergency services?



Does the site have any physical hazards?



Is lighting in the location limited or non-existent?



Is the area affected by extremes of weather - heat, cold, floods?

NOTES:

PERSONAL FACTORS IN ASSESSING LONE WORKER RISKS

We need to recognise that each employee brings with them a range of possible characteristics that require individual consideration. Some of these may include:



Medical Conditions

Some employees may have a medical condition that exposes them to increased risk of harm whilst working alone. They may require a specific medicine to be carried with them at all times as with asthma or a serious allergy. We may consider how long they can safely be out of contact or how far from medical assistance is safe.



Disabilities

An employee may have a disability that needs to be taken account of when ensuring they can safely work alone. We can work with the employee to find suitable 'reasonable adjustments' that mitigate the risk and enable them to continue working safely.



Psychological Factors

Working alone can be more challenging for some employees. There may be additional factors that employees are dealing with that can affect their ability to work alone. For example, a previous experience as a victim of crime may increase fears of working alone in certain places or at certain times.



Language

For workers that speak English as an additional language, we would need to assess whether working alone increases any risks they may face. For example, are any additional measures needed to ensure that they could call for assistance on the telephone, or could understand any unexpected safety instructions?



Culture

We need to assess whether any religious or cultural characteristic of a worker makes them more vulnerable whilst working alone. For example, is the area they are working in one where racially motivated crimes have occurred? Will the colour of their skin or any religious or cultural attire make them more vulnerable to racially aggravated abuse or assaults?



Gender

The relative risks differing genders/sexes face at work are broadly the same. However, there are some small differences in the rates of work related assaults and aggression between men and women and it may be appropriate to consider the nature of the work and whether the risks differ across varying gender identities.

An Important Note on Equality

All of the above personal factors are likely to be 'Protected Characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. It is therefore very important that, whilst we take account of these factors in assessing any risks related to them, we do not unlawfully discriminate against employees in the process. The law requires employers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to overcome or mitigate any risks that are identified in this process.

LOGGING IN & OUT PROCEDURES

As mentioned in our managing lone workers checklist, it is important that, at all times, someone knows where the lone worker is and what they are doing. This requires a system that enables monitoring of the lone worker throughout their working day.

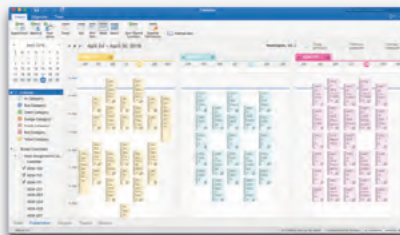
A system must be set up that:

- Records their planned whereabouts throughout the day
- Is accessible to others within the team
- Is updated to reflect their planned movements for each day
- Provides telephone contact numbers for all premises to be visited where possible

Logging in/out system could comprise of:



A simple Wipe-board or diary system



A computer based calendar such as Microsoft Outlook



A dedicated tracker system connected to a call centre

The choice of system to deploy and the level of sophistication will very much depend on the type of work being carried out and the level of risk present. Whichever system is chosen, it should be easy for employees to use in practice and it must be monitored to ensure that it is always functioning correctly.

NOTES:

Other Key Requirements

Any system to log the movement of lone workers should also have the following features:

- Records must be kept of the make, colour and registration of vehicles being used by employees away from the premises to help with tracing staff if necessary
- Agreed times to make contact with an agreed reference point
- Contact could be to an agreed central contact point or individual 'buddy' within the team
- As a minimum such contact must be made after leaving the last appointment to confirm that the member of staff is returning home and no longer working alone. If the journey home is a long one, then consideration should be given to having a final check that the employee arrived home safely

PROTOCOLS FOR LOSS OF CONTACT

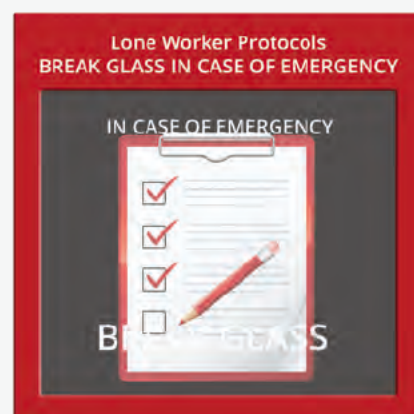
Having a good logging in/out system is one thing, but we must also have clear protocols in place so that everyone knows what steps to take should contact be lost with a lone worker. Although this sounds very straight forward, there are many different options that would need to be considered and decisions on when and in what order to do them.

In the event contact is lost, it is likely that the person dealing with this will face a degree of worry and stress at that moment which will increase with each hour that the lone worker cannot be contacted. Rather than leave these decisions to be made once someone goes missing, it would be better to have easy to follow protocols in place that can be accessed and followed by the appropriate person when they need it. Such protocols can include steps such as:

- Calling their work mobile even if this has been tried by others (repeating at regular intervals)
- Calling any personal mobile the person may have
- Checking any calendar, Wipe-board, diary etc. to note their possible locations
- Contacting lone worker tracking/monitoring centres, if in use and initiating their protocols including requesting location/tracking information
- Checking with all possible co-workers who may have seen them or be aware of their location
- Calling clients/locations where the worker was due to attend
- Deciding the right time to contact family or friends to see if they know where they are
- Informing more senior personnel within the organisation - requesting more support if it is needed
- Contacting police and reporting the worker missing, passing on any particularly important information that may highlight the seriousness of the situation

What is in your protocol and in what order the steps are actioned is a matter for each organisation or department to decide. It would also be useful to discuss the protocol with each lone worker so that they can provide important input on each step. For example, a worker who lives with a vulnerable relative may have provided specific instructions for calls made to their home address.

Once prepared, the protocol should be made available to any staff who may need to take action following the loss of contact with a lone worker.



USE WARNING MARKERS FOR PEOPLE OR PREMISES



Warning markers provide information about people or premises who may present an increased risk of harm to staff. Where a person has used or threatened violence it may be important to ensure staff are aware of this in future interactions with the person concerned (*see Clift vs Slough Borough Council*).

However, the way that such warnings are recorded, kept and disseminated requires careful thought to ensure that the use of such warnings comply with the law.

The Data Protection Act 1998 & Human Rights Act 1998

The Information Commissioner's office have provided guidance on the use of Violent Warning Markers in order to help organisations to comply with the Data Protection Act. This guidance sets out key points to consider:

- The first data protection principle requires that the processing of personal data must be fair and lawful.
- Any decision to record a warning marker must be based on a specific incident or clearly identifiable concern by a professional, rather than general opinions about that individual.
- The individual should pose a genuine risk and the decision should be based on objective and clearly defined criteria
- A senior nominated person in the organisation should be responsible for making decisions
- Decisions should be reviewed regularly and take account of:
 - *the nature of the threat*
 - *the degree of violence used or threatened*
 - *whether or not the incident indicates a credible risk of violence to staff*
- Staff should be trained to be aware of:
 - *their duty to report all violent or threatening incidents or professional expressions of concern about real or potential violence;*
 - *the name of the person they should report the incidents to; and*
 - *the senior nominated person who makes the decisions about markers.*

NOTES:

TRAVEL SAFETY FOR LONE WORKERS

Lone workers who work away from company premises will use a wide variety of methods to travel from one location to another. Here we provide a range of safety tips for the main ways of travelling.

Travelling on Foot



- Avoid danger spots like badly lit alleyways, subways or isolated car parks.
- Walk down the middle of the pavement if the street is deserted.
- If you are at all worried, try and stay near a group of people.
- Avoid passing stationary cars with engines running or people sitting in them.
- Try to keep both hands free and don't walk with your hands in your pockets.
- Always take the route you know best and try to use well lit, busy streets.
- Walk facing oncoming traffic to avoid curb crawlers.
- Keep your mind on your surroundings – remember if you are wearing headphones you will not hear trouble approaching.
- Have a mobile phone, or some spare change handy to make a phone call.
- Be careful when using cashpoint machines. Make sure nobody is hovering nearby and do not count your money in the middle of the street.
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts and take action. As confidently as you can, cross the road turning to look at who is behind you.
- If you are still being followed, keep moving and make for a busy area. Tell people what is happening - If necessary, call the police.
- If a vehicle pulls up suddenly alongside you, turn and walk in the other direction - you can turn much faster than a car.
- Beware of someone who warns you of the danger of walking alone and offers to accompany you. This is a ploy some attackers have been known to use.
- Never accept a lift with a stranger or someone you don't know very well, even if you are wet, tired or running late.
- Wear clothes you can move in easily and shoes that fit well and are comfortable.
- Try not to keep all your valuables in one place. Instead place valuables such as wallets in an inside pocket or use a money belt.
- One of the safest ways to carry things is in a small bag slung across your body under a jacket or coat. Ensure it sits close to your body.

Travelling on Public Transport



- Know where you are going and which stop you need.
- Check departure times, especially of last buses or trains.
- Have tickets, passes or change to hand so purses or wallets are out of sight.
- Otherwise, try to walk near other people with whom you feel safe, and walk purposefully to your destination.
- If possible, wait for a bus or train in a well-lit place near other people.
- Take note of where the emergency alarms are and try to sit near to them - there are alarms on every bus, in every train carriage and on every platform.
- Carry extra money in case you get stranded and need to take another bus or train or ring for a lift.
- If a bus is empty or it is after dark, it is safer to stay on the lower deck and sit near the driver or conductor.

- On trains, avoid areas with no access to corridors/other parts of the train.
- Try to sit with other people and avoid empty carriages.
- If you feel uneasy, move to another carriage or get off at the next stop if you know the area.
- If you feel threatened on public transport make as much noise as possible to attract attention of the driver or guard.
- Sound the emergency alarm and if on a station platform you can use the telephone at the Help Points. It will immediately connect you to the British Transport Police.

Travelling by Car



- Maintain your car & tyres properly to minimise any breakdowns.
- Avoid poorly lit car parks. Whenever possible, choose a manned car park and park as close as you can to the attendant. Reverse into the space.
- Note exactly where you parked your car. In cul-de-sacs, park facing the exit
- Hide all valuables and obvious possessions. Shut all windows. Lock all doors.
- If you collect a ticket on entering the car park, do not leave it in the car, as this will make it easier for a thief to steal your vehicle.
- When returning to your car, have your keys ready so that you can get in quickly.
- Before entering, scan the back seat to check no-one has climbed in.
- Doors - Lock them every time you enter or leave your car.

Travelling on a Bicycle



- Keep your bike well maintained and make sure lights are in good working order.
- Repairs are best done at home rather than on the road.
- Make sure your lights are in good working order. Always look like you know where you are going.
- Look competent and dress to be seen and to be safe. Wear a safety helmet.
- Mirrors can be helpful and a loud bell or horn is great in emergencies.
- Obey the rules of the road and make sure you are aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid short-cuts even if you are in a hurry.
- Never cycle anywhere that you would not be comfortable walking.
- Don't be afraid to pedal hard out of or around potential trouble.

NOTES:

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE & AGGRESSION

WHAT IS WORK RELATED VIOLENCE?

The Health & Safety Executive define work related violence as:



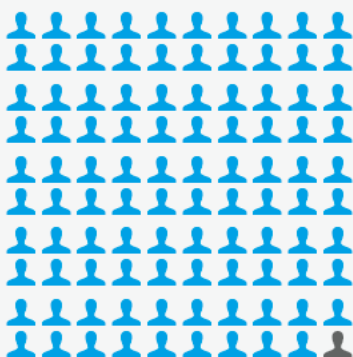
“Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”

Therefore we must look beyond physical assaults when considering the risks that workers face when confronted with aggression.

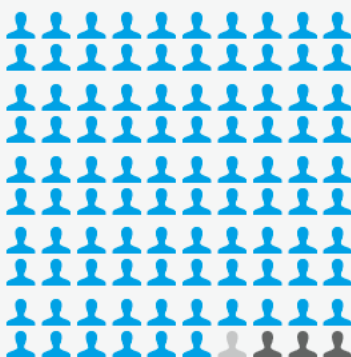
THE EXTENT OF VIOLENCE AT WORK

Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales have found that the risk of being a victim of violence (physical assault or threats) at work over the past few years is about 1.2% **in any given year**. However, this risk does vary depending on the type of work:

All Workers - 1.2%



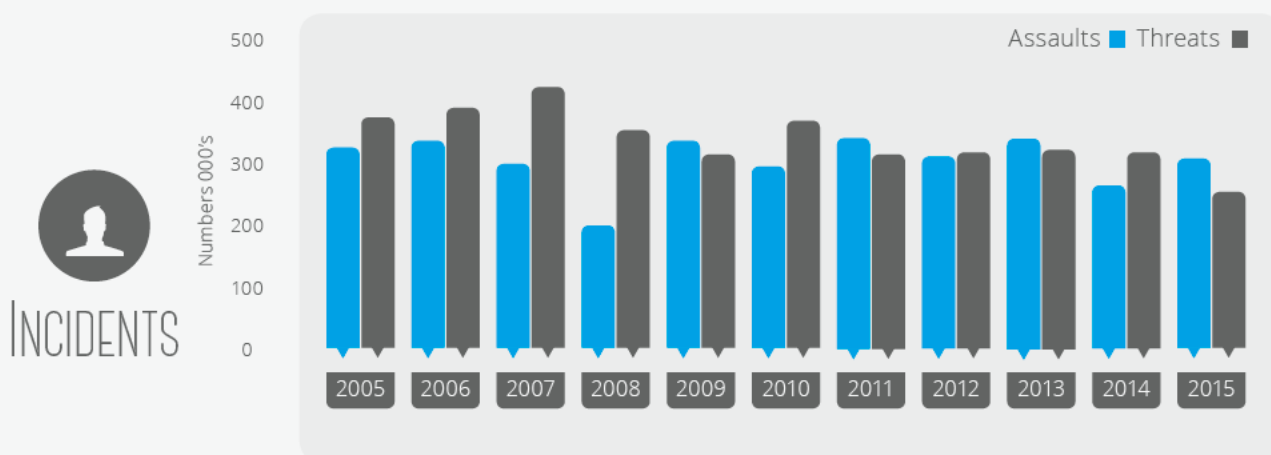
Health & Social Care - 3.4%



Protective Services - 9.6%



There has been a slow decline in incidents of work related violence over the past ten years:



KEY FACTS ABOUT WORK RELATED VIOLENCE



NUMBERS

In 2014/15 285,000 adults of working age in employment experienced work related violence including threats and physical assault. There were an estimated 569,000 incidents of violence at work according to the 2014/15 CSEW, comprising 308,000 assaults and 261,000 threats. This compares to an estimated 583,000 incidents in 2013/14.



GENDER

The 2014/15 CSEW found that 1.1% of women and 1.3% of men were victims of violence at work once or more during the year.



REPEAT VICTIMS

It is estimated that 58% of victims reported one incident of work related violence whilst 20% experienced two incidents of work related violence and 21% experienced three or more incidents in 2014/15.



RELATIONSHIP TO OFFENDER

Strangers were the offenders in 54% of cases of workplace violence. Among the 46% of incidents where the offender was known, the offenders were most likely to be clients or a member of the public known through work.



INJURIES

58% per cent of incidents resulted in no physical injury. Of the remaining 42% of cases, minor bruising or a black eye accounted for the majority of the injuries recorded. RIDDOR reported 4,810 injuries to employees including two deaths.



ALCOHOL & DRUGS

In incidents in which they experienced a threat or physical assault, workers considered the offender to be under the influence of alcohol in 36% of instances and drugs in 30% of incidents.

NOTES:



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