

Merton Mencap

**Lone Working
Policy & Procedure**

Last reviewed
January 2025

Next review
January 2027

**This policy and procedure has been adopted by Merton Mencap
through its Executive Committee which remains responsible for its review**

Aim & Scope

At Merton Mencap, we recognise our duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff during their work for our charity.

This policy informs staff who may spend time working alone (ie lone workers) of any risks, identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation and describe procedures which will minimise such risks.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as those who work by themselves for some time without close or direct supervision. For example, they may be people who:

- are working separately from others in a building
- work outside 'normal' hours
- work away from their fixed base without colleagues
- work at home other than in low risk, office-type work

The definition covers situations with varying degrees and types of risk. Merton Mencap will identify any risks associated with each role.

Supervision

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. We will ensure that staff lone working understand the risks associated with their work, along with relevant safety precautions.

Potential hazards

People who work alone may face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks however they may additionally encounter:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses when no-one is present to help
- Fire
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building, eg danger of being accidentally locked in
- Attempting tasks which would not normally be done by one person.

Risk Assessment

Line managers are responsible for conducting a risk assessment of the role(s) they manage, including an assessment of risks associated with any lone working.

Risk assessments will include considerations such as:

- Does the workplace present an increased risk to lone workers?
- Is there a safe way in and out of the premises for one person?
- Can staff carry equipment necessary to perform the role, or are objects too heavy?
- Is any Personal Protective Equipment needed?
- Is there any risk of violence?
- Are women at risk if working alone?
- Are younger workers at risk if working alone?

The relevant manager will ensure any risks are communicated to the lone worker and the risk assessment showing the identified hazards and control measures is provided.

The relevant manager will ensure lone workers are suitably fit and healthy to work alone and, in doing so, may seek guidance from an occupational health professional.

Measures to reduce the risk of lone working

To reduce the risk for people working alone we carry out a risk assessment of the following issues, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations
- Any other special circumstances

All available information will be considered and risk assessments will be reviewed at least every two years, and updated where necessary.

In any situation where staff are operating alone and feel unsafe, they must remove themselves from that situation immediately and report the incident to their line manager.

Staff must report any incidents relating to lone working to their line manager as soon as possible. An incident is any situation where health and safety is compromised and may include an accident, fire, violence or threat of violence (this list is not exhaustive).

Accidents & Emergencies

Staff operating alone will be made aware of the process for responding correctly to emergencies.

All accidents and incidents, including those which occur while lone working, must be reported to their line manager, or in their absence, the Chief Executive, using the appropriate reporting procedure.

Home visits

If possible and as appropriate, meetings should take place at the Merton Mencap office or other neutral venue rather than undertaking a home visit.

If a home visit meeting is regarded necessary, the staff member managing this should

- ✓ liaise with other relevant parties (eg referrer) to enquire about any known risks, which staff should discuss with their line manager beforehand so control measures can be put in place (eg 2 members of staff attending, cancel the home visit altogether)
- ✓ obtain the name, address and telephone number of the person they are visiting which is entered onto the staff calendar at the date and time of the home visit
- ✓ obtain information about all parties expected to be present; staff may request that only relevant parties should attend
- ✓ enquire whether the person being visited is well, eg no flu-like illness, 48-hour symptom-free from gastro-type illness
- ✓ request pets are isolated during the home visit
- ✓ establish safe travel arrangements, eg avoiding walking alone in deserted areas
- ✓ arrange the meeting during daylight hours

Staff conducting home visits should message their line manager on arrival and afterwards to confirm safety, eg via text message.

If staff are meeting service users at home (eg to collect them for travel training), they should avoid entering the premises, if possible.

In case of an emergency, staff should use the key phrase ***'please cancel my appointment with the chair of trustees'*** to initiate an immediate response from colleagues without raising the alarm. All staff must be aware that this key phrase means that a lone worker may be in trouble.

Any member of staff receiving this call should notify the Chief Executive or, in their absence, the Chair of Trustees, immediately. Once the whereabouts of the lone worker is established, the police may be contacted, by dialling 999.

Staff responsibilities

All staff have a general duty to take care of themselves, and others, while at work and must familiarise themselves with this document and provided risk assessments associated with the work they do.

Staff are responsible for adhering to security and fire regulations at any locations they are working and must take the time to familiarise themselves with them on arrival.

Lone workers who have been provided with a Merton Mencap mobile phone and the basic first aid kit will be required to carry them with them when working. They must also ensure that they properly maintained so they are fit for purpose should there ever be a need to use them.

Staff must inform their line manager of any changes to their working practice which may require a review of the risk assessment of their role.

Audit Guidance

Check	Evidence
Is a risk assessment conducted for each role within the charity and updated every 2 years?	Ask for Risk Assessments for 'Roles'. Check whether an assessment of lone working has been included in each Risk Assessment and, in these cases, whether measures have been taken to keep staff safe
In cases where a member of staff working alone has a health condition/disability, have actions been taken to secure their safety?	Check what action has been taken. Has Occupational Health had input and, if so, do records exist which show the situation is being managed sufficiently?
Are the procedures (outlined above) being followed by staff? Do all staff know key phrase to be used in an emergency?	Speak to staff about these procedures. Check whether these are being adhered to. Ask staff whether they know the key phrase. Check what action staff would take in this eventuality.