Health and Safety Services

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH
Part of London and South East University Group

Code of Practice for Lone Working

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1. Overview

Lone working is generally considered to be work that may last some time and is intended to be carried out alone or without immediate access to another person for supervision or assistance. Lone workers may be considered to be at higher risk than other workers by virtue of the fact that assistance is not immediately at hand should the need arise, therefore some additional risk control measures are necessary.

Lone working could be during normal hours, at a remote location within the normal workplace, or when working outside normal hours. A person who is outside the line of sight or shouting distance of any other would be considered to be working alone. For some people this is a routine part of their normal work, for others it may be an occasional but planned occurrence. Lone working may come about due to starting work earlier than other people or because all other people leave the workplace, for example, towards the end of the working day. New lone working situations may arise where arrangement to reduce the number of people in a work area at any one time are introduced, including campus attendance rotas and working from home. There is no general legal prohibition on lone working, but some specific high-risk activities may have a legal requirement for at least one other person to be present and for certain procedures to be followed, for example, confined space working, fumigation, and live electrical work.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a consistent approach to managing lone working in compliance with relevant legislation. It is intended to assist all parties in understanding their responsibilities and ensuring safe working practices are in place, which minimise possible adverse effects, when individuals are working alone.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Univesity must manage the risk to lone workers and are required to identify the hazards related to all work activities, ensure the risk involved with the activity are assessed, and measures are put in place to avoid or control the risks.

Precautions should take account of the normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g., fire, equipment failure, illness, and accidents. Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees and thus may require extra risk control measures.

In most cases, any additional risks posed by lone working are due to possible delays in seeking or receiving assistance in the event of emergencies. However, for some tasks, the work environment, equipment, or materials may be unsuitable for use by one person or for the person undertaking the task. Additionally, the HSE note lone workers may be at risk of attack and from stress and mental health or wellbeing concerns.

3. Scope

This code of practice applies to all University staff, contractors and students while undertaking work on or off campus. (Under no circumstances may undergraduate students work alone in scientific laboratories or machinery workshops at any time.)

The University will:

- Avoid or minimise lone working where there are reasonable, practicable alternatives.
- Include lone working in all risk assessments where it is planned or foreseeable that lone working will occur. Risk assessments must be recorded and reviewed at least annually.
- Clearly define which activities can and cannot be carried out by lone workers, based on the findings of the risk assessments.
- Introduce suitable safe lone working arrangements, including communications and access to assistance, for both normal working and foreseeable emergencies, such as the use of SafeZone* and/or a check-in or buddy arrangement.
- Assess the suitability of people for lone working, taking account of their competence, experience and any health conditions which may place them at additional risk, particularly in emergencies.
- Provide all people undertaking lone working with suitable information and training in the safe arrangements for the work, including permitted activities, approved working procedures, communication* or monitoring arrangements, and emergency procedures.
- Provide appropriate monitoring and supervision, based on the findings of the risk assessment.

4. Definitions

"High-Risk Area" - Environments involving hazardous substances, equipment, or activities such as chemical laboratories or workshops.

"Lone Worker" - An individual who works by themselves without close or direct supervision.

"Lone Working" - Situations where employees, students, or contractors work alone, either during or outside of normal working hours. (out of sight or shouting distance of others, in a remote location or outside normal hours)

"Safe Zone" – University of Greenwich personal safety application.

"V-Alert" – A wearable personal alarm / device which connects to safezone via Bluetooth.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Senior Leadership

Senior leaders (e.g. Faculty Operating Officers, Directors / Heads of School, Directorate, Institute or Service) are responsible for ensuring lone working risks are identified and managed within their areas, and that appropriate resources are made available to implement this code of practice.

5.2. Managers, Principal Investigators and Supervisors

All individuals with management responsibility must identify lone working activities within the teams / activities under their control, ensure that risk assessments are carried out, and implement suitable control measures. They are also responsible for making sure that lone workers are competent and informed about the local procedures and emergency arrangements.

5.3. Health and Safety Managers

Health and Safety Managers are responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of lone working procedures across the university. They provide professional advice to managers and departments, support the development and review of risk assessments and local codes of practice, monitor compliance with relevant legal and university requirements and assist in the investigation of any incidents involving lone workers.

5.4. Health and Safety Local Officers

Health and Safety Local Officers support departments by helping to identify lone working activities, assisting with risk assessments, and ensuring control measures are implemented at a local level.

5.5. All staff

All staff must comply with this procedure when undertaking lone working. They are responsible for following safe systems of work, reporting incidents or concerns, and participating in relevant training.

5.6. Students

Postgraduate research students must follow the lone working procedure, including any local codes of practice, and must not undertake lone working unless risk assessments and approvals are in place. Undergraduate students are not permitted to work alone in high-risk areas.

5.7. Approved Visiting Academics

Approved visiting academics must comply with the lone working arrangements of their host department, including risk assessments and local procedures, and should not engage in lone working unless authorised, competent, and trained to do so.

6. Procedure

It is important that every Faculty/Directorate/School/Department consider the risks associated with lone working within the workplace.

6.1. Undertaking Lone Working Risk Assessments

A risk assessment must be completed for tasks that do or may require lone working (out of sight or shouting distance of others, in a remote location or outside normal hours).

When undertaking risk assessments you must consider:

- What are the usual hazards of the task?
- What additional harm could come to a lone worker?
- Can a lone worker follow the correct procedures for the task and operate equipment alone?
- Would they be able to ask for help, get first aid or raise the alarm if necessary?
- What are the normal hours for the area and campus (e.g. normal leaving time; end of lecturing; closure of libraries/computer labs nearby; end of security presence)?
- Could the work be done in a different place, nearer to other people?
- Could the work be done at another time to avoid lone working?

6.1.1. Identify control measures

When determining different procedures or additional control measures needed for safe lone working, some examples to consider are (but not limited to):

- Move vehicles close to the building earlier in the day if planning to work late into the evening
- Check 'phones, alarms and/or radios are operational before starting lone working
- Inform colleagues or Security before lone working starts and when it should be completed. E.g by sharing your calendar or checking-in on the SafeZone app
- Turn off unnecessary equipment and services
- Secure the area, e.g. lock doors, if lone working outside normal hours
- Ask Security to accompany across campus if leaving late in the evening

6.1.2. Deciding when lone working is permitted

When deciding which work activities, and if necessary which people, are permitted for lone working, the following should be considered:

- Can arrangements be made so that lone workers are at no greater risk than other workers?
- Does the particular person have the training and experience to do the work alone?
- Will the lone worker also be competent to deal with emergencies that may arise?
- Do they have any special needs or medical conditions that might need to be considered?

*(Note that Undergraduate students are **not allowed** to work alone at any time in high-risk areas, e.g. chemical laboratories, machinery workshops.)*

6.1.3. Local codes of practice

If, after completing the risk assessment, you have identified that the risk of lone working is tolerable, you should draw up a 'local code of practice' setting out the arrangements that your lone workers should follow.

Don't forget to:

- Ask the lone workers for their input into the local code, based on their experience.
- Distribute the code to everyone who may carry out lone working

- Review the risk assessment and code of practice if there are any significant changes to the work or problems with arrangements.
- Carry out an annual review to ensure arrangements remain effective.
- Update and re-issue the code when changes are made.

6.2. Medway Campus – Working Out of Hours

To ensure that out-of-hours work is safely and effectively managed in high-risk areas of the Medway Campus, such as laboratories and other hazardous environments, a dedicated Out of Hours Policy has been established.

This policy outlines the procedures for obtaining authorisation and must be strictly followed. It provides clear guidance on when and how to request permission for out-of-hours access to ensure the safety of all personnel and the security of the facilities.

7. Further Guidance

7.1. Related Legislation:

In addition to the general duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, other, more specific sets of Regulations and guidance may apply.

Links to these and further general guidance on Lone Working can be found on HSE web pages; Lone working: Protect those working alone - HSE & Lone workers - your health and safety - HSE.

7.2. Related University documents:

- Medway Campus Out of Hours Working | Documents | University of Greenwich
- Risk Management and Assessments

8. Document History

Details of previous reviews are as follows:

Review Date	Reviewer	Summary of Review
08-January-2004	H&S Unit	Original version (V.2004)
12-May-2016	H&S Unit	First revised version. (V.2016)
16-Jul-2025	Anastasia Liasides / Michelle Owusua Appiah-Agyekum Health and Safety Advisor	Combined Lone working CoP & General guidance for lone working documents together. Transferred to new template and checked for web accessibility. First revision of combined document - v25.1
29-10-2026	Chantelle Marriott H&S Advisor	Updated with LASE Logo

This document will be reviewed at least annually.