



CARE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LONE WORKER POLICY

Policy Statement

Care Housing Association (Care) is committed to providing the highest standards of health and safety for all staff undertaking the association's work. Care recognises that staff may be required to work alone, unsupervised and without direct contact with colleagues whilst carrying out their regular duties.

The scope of this policy outlines the reasonable and practical steps that Care will provide to ensure safe working practices for staff and how its employees can apply them to mitigate the added risks that lone working presents.

What is a Lone Worker?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision". Most of Care's employees will work on their own at some point, this may include:

- visiting tenants, prospective tenants, professionals or properties
- travelling between work appointments
- being the only person in the office
- working from home

Responsibilities

Care has a responsibility to maintain safe working arrangements for its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and to carry out risk assessments of the hazards to which employees are exposed, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

It is the responsibility of all Care's staff to comply with this Policy, associated procedures, training and the recommendations from risk assessments. Care expects contractors working on its behalf to carry out their own risk assessments for lone working in line with general health and safety requirements.

Through the recruitment process, induction programme and ongoing training, Care will make all employees aware of safe working practices and their responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

Care will risk assess lone working activities and will put in place reasonable control measures to reduce the risk of harm or distress occurring.

Care will provide lone working employees with mobile phones. Other equipment may be considered in order to mitigate risk if deemed necessary by risk assessments.

Care will ensure that all policies and procedures relating to health and safety are available to all staff in the most current form via the shared drive.

Care will follow the Incident Reporting Policy and Procedure to record and monitor any incidents or near misses where staff feel their safety or wellbeing has been compromised as a result of lone working and this information will inform policy updates.

Care will take a zero-tolerance approach to anyone found to be responsible for abusing staff members during the conduct of their duties, including informing external agencies and taking legal action where appropriate. Where incidents of this nature occur, Care will ensure that affected staff members are offered support.

Care will encourage good working practices for all staff in relation to lone working.

This will include:

- consistent use of electronic diaries to inform colleagues of appointments off-site or in situations when lone working may be required (noting that it may be necessary when responding to an emergency for plans to change at short notice to involve lone working when it is not reasonable to update an electronic diary first)
- making information available to housing officers regarding any known or potential risks posed by tenants
- provision of mobile phones for offsite lone workers
- when visiting flats within a block, ensure support staff on site are aware that you have arrived and ask someone to accompany you if appropriate/possible
- option to attend tenant/property visits with a colleague when tenants may pose a risk and where no other professionals will be present
- discouraging staff from wearing or carrying expensive-looking accessories
- staff should be aware that their priority in any unpredictable situation is to keep themselves safe by getting assistance and securing themselves safely until help arrives

The Chief Executive should:

- promote and support the aims and objectives of this Policy
- ensure that risk assessments for lone worker situations are up to date
- ensure that employees receive information, training and supervision to enable them to perform their work safely
- ensure that employees are trained to use housing management software, including to record and find tenant risk information

Employees should:

- attend any arranged training
- work in line with Care's policies and procedures
- consult their manager with any queries or concerns about work tasks
- use common sense to carry out dynamic risk assessments of any unexpected situations (see appendix 2) and be confident to change plans if there is a perceived risk
- ensure they have access to a mobile telephone, that it is charged and that they have access to contact numbers for colleagues and staff at visiting locations
- inform their manager of any unsafe working practices that may increase risks to themselves or their colleagues

- inform their manager of any accidents, incidents or near misses arising from working alone and complete the relevant documentation
- inform their manager of any health or disability needs that may heighten a risk

Risk Assessments

Care will carry out risk assessments for all general lone worker tasks that employees face:

- Working in a remote location e.g. to inspect an unoccupied property
- Meeting a tenant, or group, who may pose a threat such as violence or false allegations
- Driving between work appointments
- Working alone in the office

For any scenarios with a heightened risk e.g. no support staff will be present or you're aware of prior incidents, a specific risk assessment should be completed by the housing officer and reviewed by their manager in advance of the activity, using the format in appendix 1.

Where risks exist, Care will take appropriate precautions to ensure the health and safety of its employees. This may consist one or a combination of the following: non-attendance to property for a period of time, working in pairs or alongside another professional, visit monitoring e.g. logging time in and out, meeting at Care's office or a neutral public location.

General risk assessments will be reviewed every three years along with this policy or following an incident, significant change in the task, individual circumstances or working environment. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to keep risk assessments up to date. Specific risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually.

Training

All employees who regularly work alone away from the office will receive lone worker training, which will be refreshed every three years. New employees may need to be accompanied until they have received training and are deemed competent to work alone.

Information sharing

Care aims to provide up-to-date information regarding customers and locations so that staff can do their job efficiently and safely. Tenant profile information, including diagnosed mental health conditions, antisocial behaviour and potential risk to others, should be disclosed at nomination stage, as requested on the nomination form, so housing officers are aware of risks posed to them when visiting. Support provider partners should inform their housing officer if they become aware of a relevant new risk. Housing officers will record and update this information on housing management software.

Where appropriate, and in line with GDPR, Care works in partnership with various stakeholders to share information. This may include Local Authorities, the Police and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

If any employee feels unsafe while carrying out their duties, it is their responsibility to report this to their manager who should carry out an investigation and review the risk assessment and policy if necessary.

Care discourages its employees from giving out personal information to tenants.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and we will not tolerate any form of discrimination.

Responsibility

The designated officer responsible for implementation and monitoring of this policy will be the Chief Executive.

Commitment and Review

Care will formally review this policy and associated risk assessments every three years or as necessary dependant on legislative changes and incidents.

Last Committee Review Date – April 2020

Appendix 1 – General Risk Assessments

Managers must assess potential hazards faced by their lone workers, and others who may be affected by their work, and check that measures are in place to mitigate such risks. Employees should be involved in this process and sign the risk assessment to confirm they have read and understood it.

When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing additional controls are to be formally agreed, put in place and recorded. Employees should be trained and competent to carry out a dynamic risk assessment if required (see appendix 2)

Risk rating = likelihood x severity. Low = fine to proceed. Medium = ok to proceed with line manager informed. High = not ok to proceed.

Likelihood: Scale of 5: highly unlikely, unlikely, possible, likely, highly likely

Potential severity (worst case): Scale of 5 for injury/distress: negligible, minor, significant, major, life-changing

Situation	Who might be harmed and what are the risks?	Likelihood	Potential Severity	Controls in Place	Risk Rating After Controls	Ongoing Actions
Lone working with tenant(s)	Housing officer Allegations Abusive language/threats Physical harm	Unlikely Likely Unlikely	Major Major Life-changing	Avoid lone working with tenants and write specific risk assessments if a property is not staffed 24/7. Regular lone worker training for housing officers.	Avoided/low	CEO to ensure individual RAs and training are up to date.
Lone working at empty property	Housing officer, surveyor Slip/trip/fall Falling objects Exposure to hazardous material	Unlikely V. unlikely Unlikely	Major Major Life-changing	Properties are well-maintained and staff trained to carry out a dynamic risk assessment before entering an empty property to identify any specific risks. Asbestos register available to all staff.	Low	
Driving between work appointments	All staff Breakdown Accident	Possible Unlikely	Minor Life-changing	If involved in a car accident or breakdown, your manager should be informed after the required services. Rearrange meetings if weather/road conditions are severe.	Low	Promote safe driving and video meetings.
Working alone in the office	All staff Fire or other incident that requires evacuation Pain from poor desk/screen set up	Unlikely Possible	Life-changing Minor	Office is within a serviced building so safety equipment is tested. Staff aware of evacuation routes and are encouraged to report any issues and look into available aids/adjustments.	Low	Staff induction to include building layout and equipment options

Appendix 2 – Dynamic Risk Assessments

A dynamic risk assessment is undertaken on the spot, or as a situation unfolds, and can be done without being written down.

The **PET** method can be used to consider:

- The **person** you're visiting – are they vulnerable, volatile or appear under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
- The **environment** you're entering – are there obstructions or trip hazards, would it be easy to escape?
- The **task** you're undertaking – is it likely to aggravate the person?

General principles:

- Listen to your instincts
- Try to gather information before the visit e.g. check housing management software notes if you are unfamiliar with the person, find out if the person has had a change in behaviour or increase in using drugs or alcohol recently, is any work being carried out at the empty property?
- Ensure the expected person is there before entering a property
- Wait to be invited in or ask to go inside before entering
- If you feel uncomfortable about the circumstances, stay and talk at the doorway so it's easier to leave if you decide this is the best option
- Only take what you need inside the property and try to keep your hands free
- If you are prevented from leaving or are threatened, stay calm and try to diffuse the situation. Try to use an excuse to go to your car
- If you feel that the situation presents a significant risk of harm or distress, leave and call for help if required