LONE WORKER POLICY

Date Adopted : Full Council 19.9.23
Review Cycle : Every three years, or earlier in the event of legislative changes

LONE WORKER POLICY

1.   PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

1.1   Downham Market Town Council (the Council) recognises that some of its employees work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This policy:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues.
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone.
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk.
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers and encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working, so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

2.   SCOPE OF THE POLICY

2.1   It applies to all employees, whether full time, part time or temporary workers.

3.   POLICY

3.1   The Council will protect employees from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the Council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone.

4.   DEFINITION

4.1   'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside of normal working hours. Examples include:

- An employee who opens and closes a hall either early in the morning or late at night.
- An employee tending to green space.
- Office workers who work alone in the premises.
- Homeworkers.
- One employee is visiting another premises or meeting venue.
- One employee is making a home visit to an individual.

4.2   Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own.

5.   RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1   All employees have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

5.2   **The Council is responsible for:**

.   Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing
     risk associated with lone working.
.   Ensuring that the employee is competent to work alone.
.   Providing resources for putting the policy into action.
.   Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone
     working and that they regularly review the effectiveness of this policy.
.   Ensuring that all employees are aware of this policy.
.   Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly, putting
     procedures and safe systems into practice, which are designed to eliminate
     or reduce risks associated with working alone.
.   Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system
     of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.
.   Ensuring that appropriate support and equipment is given to staff involved in
     any incident.

5.3   **Employees are responsible for:**

.   Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions,
     following guidance and procedures designed for safe working.
.   Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or
     others and asking for guidance as appropriate.
.   Taking part in any training designed to meet the requirements of the policy.
.   Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they
     might have in respect of working alone.
.   Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a backup plan is sufficient.
     The priority is to plan for a reduction in risk.

6.   **GUIDANCE FOR RISK ASSESSMENT OF WORKING ALONE**

6.1   Is the employee fit and suitable to work alone?
.   Are there adequate channels of communication?
.   Does the workplace or task present as a special risk to the lone worker?
.   Is there a risk of violence?

6.2.   **Travelling to site or meetings**

.   What procedures are in place?
.   Is the equipment safe for individual use?

6.3   Employees who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as
       those doing similar roles/tasks. However, there may be additional encounter
       hazards such as:

.   sudden illness
.   faulty equipment
.   travelling alone
.   remote locations
.   abuse from members of the public
.   animal attacks

6.4   Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in each situation, consideration should be given to sending a second employee or making arrangements to complete the task.

7.   BUILDING PROCEDURES

7.1   Security of Buildings

The Town Clerk and employees must ensure that:

.   Appropriate steps are taken to control access to a building and that emergency exits are accessible.
.   Alarm systems are tested regularly.
.   External doors are locked to avoid unwanted visitors if working alone and/or the internal doors to the Grand Hall, Clock Room and Assembly Room are locked, when not in use.
.   When working alone, staff are familiar with exits and alarms.
.   There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.
.   If applicable, key codes for access should be changed from time to time and when a member of staff or sub-contractor that knows the code leaves, and as a matter of course if a breach of security is suspected.
.   If there is any indication that the building has been broken into, to call for assistance before entering.

8.   WAYS IN WHICH LONE WORKING RISKS CAN BE REDUCED

8.1   Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the Council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the need and risks that are identified from the risk assessment. The plan for an employee lone working with machinery will be more detailed than an administrator working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant employees and where appropriate, Councillors. Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk must make provision for regular contact, to monitor and to counter the effect of working in isolation.

8.2   Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined):

.   Signing-in and out book.
.   Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up to date with meeting/visit/lone working details.
.   Buddy scheme.

8.3   BUDDY SCHEME

The following information should be written down and kept by the lone worker and their buddy, next of kin and the Town Clerk:-

. Name and contact details of the lone worker.
. Name, relationship and contact details of the buddy.
. Name, relationship and contact detail's of the lone worker's next of kin.
. Name, relationship and contact details of the Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk).
. Any 'code word' that would indicate that the lone worker needs assistance.
. NOTE: all these details must be kept securely in line with data protection legislation.

If an employee changes contact details, they must let their buddy and the Town Clerk know.

In circumstances where a buddy system is appropriate as a way of reducing the risks identified in the risk assessment, the buddy must have relevant details about the lone working, which may include:

. Where the employee is going (address or area if there is no address).
. Details of the purpose (e.g. preparing the hall, attending a meeting).
. Contact details of the person meeting.
. Mode of travelling transport.
. Expected time of return.

The buddy must know what to do if the employee does not return or make contact at the anticipated/agreed time. If an employee does not report as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on their situation and then to respond as appropriate, using emergency contact information, if necessary.

9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

9.1 In order to ensure the personal safety of an employee, it is important that details are shared with the Town Clerk or specified Councillor, of any aspects of the employee's health that could lead to risk. This includes pregnancy. A joint plan can then be made to mitigate any potential risks caused by these circumstances. This information will be treated on a strict 'need to know' basis with confidentially of the utmost importance.

10. REPORTING INCIDENTS

10.1 Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

. A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved.
. For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence, and,
. In either instance, this might include recording details of any circumstances that might have contributed to the incident e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information would then support the Council to review its risk assessment process and see if any additional measures are needed.

10.2   If an employee feels unsafe, unwell, or becomes injured they must call the emergency services if immediate assistance is required. If possible, call theTown Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk, buddy or colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do this). All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to the police and will be supported by the Council throughout the process. Except in the case of emergency, employees should inform the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk of any incident immediately. They will thereafter take responsibility for contact with the police to report details of the incident.

10.3   If working alone, the employee must call the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk if plans change because of feeling unwell, or there is an unexpected domestic emergency to deal with.

This is a non-contractural procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

END