# Lone Working Policy



## Policy Statement

Zenith Care Recruitment works on the principle that lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees.

We understand lone workers to be those who work without close or direct supervision or company for substantial periods of time. This includes most domiciliary care staff who visit and care for service users in their own homes. Zenith Care Recruitment recognizes that the practice of lone working can be a threat to the safety and wellbeing of service users and workers, and seeks to minimise the possible hazards associated with working alone.

In this context we understands it’s our legal duties as an employer, to assess any risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control those risks where necessary. Unavoidable situations of working alone must be assessed for risk before the situation arises. Where lone-working will occur due to unforeseen circumstances, an informal dynamic risk assessment must be done at the time (e.g. without the formal procedure used for anticipated situations), and a formal assessment of risk completed as soon as possible after the fact and presented to the appropriate line manager. This policy aims to identify as many situations and risk management strategies as possible. Zenith Care Recruitment recognizes that all potential lone working situations cannot be anticipated, and so this policy will be reviewed and updated with any new circumstances that have arisen, or at least annually

Zenith Care Recruitment recognises that staff working alone in potentially isolated conditions has no immediate backup or support and so are at a greater risk of injury through aggression or violence directed towards them from service users, relatives, carers or the general public. We also recognise that staff working alone need to rely on their own judgment and initiative and may be at a greater risk of making mistakes or errors.

Zenith Care Recruitment recognises that training is particularly important for lone workers and research shows that adequate training is the single most critical factor in avoiding panic reactions in unusual situations. In particular lone workers need to be deemed competent to work alone, to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions needed fully. It is our duty as an employer to ensure employees are competent to deal not only with the day-to-day facets of their work but with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training, for example, if threatened with aggression and violence.

**WHAT IS LONE WORKING?**

In the absence of a standard definition, Zenith Care Recruitment has adopted the following definition for the purposes of this policy:

 ***"Lone Workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision."***

Zenith Care Recruitment recognises that this broadly affects two categories of staff, i.e. those who:

1. **Regularly work alone.**

 For this group Zenith Care Recruitment expects written procedures to be developed and regularly reviewed covering the nature and frequency of risk assessments and response arrangements available for all lone working individuals.

2. **Occasionally or potentially working alone.**

 For staff that falls within this category Zenith Care Recruitment expects written risk assessments to be undertaken and response arrangements made for occasions when they are required.

For staff working in an isolated situation Zenith Care Recruitment recognises that they may not always be working alone. It therefore uses the following definition of an isolated situation as:

Where one or more staff is engaged in regular or occasional work where there are no other people who could reasonably be expected to come to their immediate aid or contact help on their behalf in the event of an incident or emergency.

**Implementation of the Policy**

Within Zenith Care Recruitment it is expected that the Registered Manager will implement this policy by:

* Identifying through a risk assessment approach, the staff that fall within the definitions of category 1 of staff working alone and those that work in isolated situations. The risk assessment will need to take account of both physical and emotional factors that are likely to arise.
* Ensuring that (and in particular for all staff in category 1 of the definition above) written policies and procedures are available at all times.
* Ensuring staff in category 2 are aware of the arrangements they must make for themselves or for staff under their day to day supervision to fit the particular circumstances that arise. Such arrangements should ideally be recorded at the time they are made.
* Ensuring that all their staff are properly trained in the Health and Safety requirements about working alone or in isolated situations as they relate to their particular job.
* Reminding individual staff (especially those newly employed by Zenith Care Recruitment) of their personal responsibility under Health and Safety Legislation and their duty of care to others.
* Ensuring that response arrangements are clear, workable and that out of hours arrangements comply with any other Zenith Care Recruitment Policies and Procedures.

**MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE FOR STAFF WHO WORK ALONE**

The following aims to provide practical guidance for a Registered Manager who has members of staff who work alone or in isolated situations.

**1. Activities that Carry Risk**

1.1 The following are examples of some of the activities carried out by lone workers in Zenith Care Recruitment that could expose them to risk.

* Staff working alone
* Called out after hours to deal with emergency situations
* Staff handling/carrying cash.
* Staff undertaking home visits.
* Visits or meetings terminating late in the evening.
* Travelling on foot particularly after dark.
* Areas lacking good public transport.
* Parking restrictions which prevent parking close to intended destinations.
* Staff working alone with hazardous machinery.

This is not an exhaustive list and other examples will vary.

**2. Risk Assessments**

2.1. Workers working alone must be and feel safe. The responsibility for this lies with Zenith Care Recruitment and with the worker; Zenith Care Recruitment has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1994 (MHSW) to undertake and review regular risk assessments and to implement necessary actions, and the worker has a responsibility to their own and service users’ safety and must not by any act of omission jeopardise this.

2.2 Register Manager is required to follow up any hazards identified through risk assessments with arrangements to ensure that risks are either eliminated or at least minimised. When it is not possible to make arrangements for the work to be done safely by one person, alternative arrangements providing help or back-up have to be arranged.

2.3 Staff who works alone should also look at their own ways of working. Many people do their jobs the way they have always done them without thinking about whether they are putting themselves at unnecessary risk. Some of the things to consider when examining possible risks to staff are:

* Does anyone know where they are?
* If they change their plans, do they inform you?
* Do they check or vet people they are going to meet alone?
* Can they be contacted?
* Is there a check-in system and do they use it?
* Do they think about where they park - is it safe?
* Do they use the quickest route or the safest?
* Do they carry money or valuables?
* Do they carry an alarm, and do they know how to use it?
* Is it safe for them to use a particular item of equipment alone?
* Are they sufficiently competent to use the equipment alone?
* Has their induction procedure covered this area of working?
* Can they complete a dynamic risk assessment if the situation was to change?
* Are they currently medically fit to work alone?

**3. Staff Working Arrangements**

3.1 Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees. The Registered Manager need to recognise the existing law and standards that apply to their work, and then assess if the requirements can be met safely by people working alone. If not, appropriate arrangements must be made.

3.2 Lone workers face particular problems and some of the issues which need to be addressed when planning safe working environments are identified in the following paragraphs.

 Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly more risks than employees who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness, violent incidents and accidents. Registered Managers of staff should identify all the circumstances where their staff work alone and ask:

* Does the activity present a special risk to the lone worker?
* Are staff aware of emergency procedures out of hours?
* Can one person safely handle all of the circumstances which are likely to arise?
* Can all of the equipment, substances and processes involved in the work be safely handled by one person? The work may involve lifting objects and people who are too difficult for one person to manage alone or without special equipment.
* Will cash be handled?
* Will there be a risk of violence?
* How will the person be supervised?

3.3 Although lone workers cannot be subjected to constant supervision, it is still the Manager’s duty to provide appropriate controls of the work. Supervision complements information, instruction and training, and helps to ensure that staff members understand the risks associated with their work, and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty, e.g. when disgruntled or aggrieved visitors could arrive unannounced.

3.4 The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved, and the ability and experience of staff members to identify and handle safety issues. Employees new to the job, undergoing training, doing a job which presents special risks or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied. The extent of supervision required is a management decision, and it should not be left to individuals to decide they require assistance.

3.5 Lone workers should also be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations wherever they are e.g. by using outside telephone line and emergency exits. Emergency procedures should be established where necessary, and staff members trained to implement them.

3.6 Suitable systems, where relevant, should be devised to monitor the locations of lone workers, and include a check at the end of the working period to confirm that all is well. In addition, it is desirable to consider:

* Procedures where regular contact occurs between the lone worker and the office or on call person.
* A reporting back procedure must be considered in conjunction with recording the whereabouts of staff particularly where visits are long, or completed at the end of the day, in the evening or over the weekend. Knowing that a staff member will be making a telephone call to a colleague following the visit will remove the fear that they have been held against their will, or are unable to leave because they have been harmed. Appropriate relatives of workers should be provided with a telephone contact to call if the worker fails to return home.

**4. Handling Money and Valuables**

4.1 The duty of Managers to provide their members of staff with safe systems of work covers all risks that are foreseeable and not just those such as industrial accidents and diseases etc. that arise directly from the work itself.

 **Any staff members carrying or dealing with money or valuables are clearly at risk and they must be protected.**

 They should provide protective equipment, training and safe systems of work that diminish or avoid the risk of violence. It must be clear that if members of staff fail to follow instructions and procedures designed to protect their safety, this could be a disciplinary matter as they will have contributed to their injury and any compensation claims for damages or unfair dismissal may be reduced accordingly.

4.2 Managers need to assess the risks affecting the safety of staff and devise measures which will either eliminate or reduce them to an acceptable level. This process should be carried out with the participation and co-operation of the staff members concerned and their trade union representative. Measures which may be considered could include:

* Consideration of alternative banking systems that negate the need for staff to handle or carry money.
* The need to double-up on staff that is required to handle and collect cash and valuables.
* Changing from coin-operated pay telephones to card-operated phones.
* The security of the environment in which cash is received and handled.
* Common sense precautions, such as not collecting cash on the same day and same time each week.
	+ 1. It is important for Managers to be aware that under the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, employees can refuse to carry out work where there is a serious and imminent risk of danger. They also can advise others to do the same without being dismissed as a result.
		2. Consequently, where acts of violence are preventable, employers may have to pay for injury damages for breach of contract and may also be liable to fines imposed by the Criminal Courts for breaches in health and safety law.

**5. Working alone with Equipment**

5.1 A number of working environments are equipped with machines which have the potential to cause serious accident and injuries including entrapment of parts of the body, such as shredders. Such machines should not be used by persons working alone in buildings or otherwise out of immediate emergency contact with other people.

5.2 Where hoists of any kind are used, individual service user risk assessments and guidelines will be in place. This will include if the equipment can be used by one or two staff members. Training must have taken place before this equipment is used.

**6. Violence to staff**

6.1 Serious acts of violence towards employees who work alone are very infrequent at Zenith Care Recruitment. Nevertheless, violence and aggressive incidents in the course of work should be considered when looking at safe practices. Men as well as women are at risk and violence occurs in any community.

6.2 Most people tend to operate from a basis of expectations and assumptions that other people will behave within certain norms. When situations are or become violent the initial feelings generally include surprise and shock because the violent behaviour is unexpected. In retrospect, many victims of violence can identify signs or signals that led up to the outburst. Hindsight is all very well but knowing how to recognise the danger beforehand and acting on the recognition is what is really useful in keeping safe.

6.3 What is interpreted as violent behaviour by one person may not be seen in the same way by another. For example, you may find swearing offensive but your colleague may not. For this reason the definition used is as follows:

 “*Violent behaviour is that which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally in other people”*

This includes not only physical violence but also verbal abuse, threatening behaviour and harassment which should never be overlooked when defining violence.

6.4 Zenith Care Recruitment does not work with any service users who are considered to be violent. However, Zenith Care Recruitment does work with some people whose behaviour may be seen as challenging and manifest itself as physical or verbal aggression. All staff members working with these service users will receive a full induction, complete the relevant training and have read the persons guidelines, risk assessments and positive behaviour support plan. Where there is any potential risk to staff, this will be flagged as a risk. It is important for service users to not be labelled by their behaviour and referring to service users that we support as violent is not appropriate.

6.5 Where assessment visits or support requires staff to go to the family home for the first time and a risk assessment is not in place, a check must be completed with the families team to see if there are any risks associated with home visits on their database. If the family is not flagged and 2 staff members cannot attend for the initial visit, the visit must take place in day light hours and a member of the team must be contacted before and after the visit to ensure the safety of the staff member.

6.6 **Reporting violent or potentially violent incidents**

All staff are reminded of the Positive behaviour support policy, dealing with emergencies, reporting incidents and accidents and the Health and Safety policy at Zenith Care Recruitment.

**7. Reducing the likelihood of violence**

The following notes give further information on how to reduce the likelihood of encountering aggressive incidents and what to do if violence occurs.

7.1 **Safety on home visits**

To minimise the risk of violence it is essential that Zenith Care Recruitment has consistent practice for dealing with visits outside the office. The following are points to be observed.

 **Joint visits**

7.1.1 Staff must never visit service users or families who are known to be violent alone. If it is suspected that violence is likely to occur during a visit, staff should go with a colleague and/or the Police/Social worker.

7.1.2 If staff members are accompanied by the Police, their respective roles should be clear, i.e. the staff member will complete the task and the Police are there to keep the peace. It is possible that consideration will have to be given to the effects on the client of arriving with a Police Officer. This can be worked through at the time, or at a later date. Remember that if there is a high risk of violence and there is no alternative to a home visit, then that risk is reduced if you involve the Police.

7.1.3 Visits to be attended by two or more members of staff need to be thought through beforehand in regard to their respective roles. Is the accompanying colleague expected to act as a bodyguard? Will they be attending as co-worker? Who does what during the interview should aggression occur? If an assault takes place? If threats are made? What is the expectation on the supporting staff member?

7.2 **Service user information**

7.2.1 When meeting someone for the first time staff should ascertain whether it is suitable or possible to arrange the first meeting in the office. If this is not possible they should ask for a telephone number of the person to be visited and ring them back to confirm the arrangement. They should make sure that they know as much as possible about the identity of the person they are going to see. They should read the service user/family file if one exists, and find out whether colleagues have had previous contact. If so, it is important for them to talk to those colleagues.

7.2.2 They should also make appropriate phone calls to gain as much information as possible, e.g. hospitals and other agencies.

7.3 **Before the visit**

7.3.1 Staff should take a personal alarm with them on home visits and make sure that it is readily accessible. Although it may not bring people to their assistance, the noise may distract the aggressor long enough to enable an escape to be made.

7.3.2 Staff should wear suitable clothing that will not hinder their movement if they need to run.

7.3.3 They should not wear valuable jewellery etc.

7.4 **Time of visits**

7.4.1 Staff should try to arrange visits during daylight hours. Daylight often gives a feeling of greater security both to the staff member and client.

7.4.2 Where possible, visits should be completed during working hours when it is easier to obtain assistance (e.g. being accompanied by another member of staff or reporting back etc.).

7.4.3 If staff needs to attend an evening meeting at a service users/families house, they should try to go there and back with a colleague. It may be best for them to use an independent rendezvous and then to proceed together to the venue. They should leave complete details of the visit with their manager (or an appointed Officer) including name, address and approximate time of completion. If staff is attending an evening meeting, they must ensure they follow safe working procedures. The planning to the location of meetings should consider staff safety.

7.4.4 Avoid walking in poorly lit areas after dark.

7.4.5 When the visit has been completed staff should inform their Contact person (this may be a manager, partner or colleague).

7.4.6 If the Contact person receives no communication from the staff member and cannot contact the visiting officer within one hour of the agreed time, then on call should be notified and appropriate action taken.

7.5 **Home visits**

7.5.1 Do not be late for an appointment. If lateness is unavoidable contact the person to be visited. Carry your ID card with you at all times and show this on arrival.

7.5.2 Check empty properties before entering. Preferably go with a second person. Shout and look for signs of occupation, if in doubt don’t go in.

7.5.3 After knocking at the door, do not peer through the letterbox - fingers and eyes may be injured if someone, intent on causing harm, is on the other side of the door.

7.5.4 If you feel uneasy do not enter a property or particular room.

7.5.5 Make a mental note of escape when entering a property. Where possible, close the door and follow the person inside. Stay nearest to the exit.

7.5.6 Once in a room ensure the way to the exit is clear.

7.5.7 Be aware of someone’s personal territory. It can be threatening when someone in authority makes a visit, particularly if you appear judgmental or officious and do not respect the person’s privacy. At all times act as a guest in the person’s home.

7.5.8 Be aware of any dogs in the household and if necessary request they be put in a separate room. If you get bitten get an anti-tetanus jab as soon as possible.

7.5.9 If a violent incident occurs attract attention by shouting and/or throwing something through a window. You should take reasonable steps to protect yourself.

7.5.10 Avoid walking in poorly lit areas after dark.

**8. Recording movements**

8.1 It is imperative that an adequate record is kept of the whereabouts of all staff. Good practice dictates that people in the office have these details in order to pass on appropriate information in an emergency.

8.2 Ensure that trips out by staff, whether or not visiting a member of the public, are recorded clearly on the database. If visiting arrangements change, staff must ensure that base records are kept up to date.

8.3 Where possible staff should advise colleagues how long they intend to be away from the office. If going straight home following a visit they should telephone the office to let someone know.

8.4 If staff are on a visit and it is clear that they are going to be back in the office later than originally planned, they should ring the office to provide a new estimate of their anticipated absence.

**9. Safety at Zenith Care Recruitment**

9.1 Carry your ID card at all times. Show this on all initial visits and subsequent visits if this is the preference of the service user/family.

9.2 Be aware of anyone following you into the building if they are not wearing an ID or unknown to you. Report anyone who looks suspicious immediately.

9.3 If you are working late on your own at Zenith Care Recruitment ensure the last staff member to leave before you, locks the doors correctly and that there are no ground floor windows or doors open so the building is secure.

9.4 Unless you are expecting a visitor to the building, do not answer the door unless you feel safe to do so. Check though the intercom who the person is first before buzzing anyone into the building.

**10. Mobile phones**

10.1 If working late or in remote areas, whilst talking on a mobile might provide reassurance, it might also be a temptation for someone else, so be alert when making any phone calls and do not use headphones or out up your hood which could isolate your vision and hearing from your surroundings.

## Lone Worker Supervision Policy

By definition lone workers are those who work without constant supervision throughout their working day, therefore procedures must be put in place to monitor lone workers to ensure they remain safe and to provide supervision on a regular basis. This includes supervisors periodically visiting and observing those working alone and regular contact between the lone worker and supervision by telephone.

Zenith Care Recruitment believes that supervision helps to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues.

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## Lone Worker Security Policy

When a member of staff visits a service user in their own home he or she may be at risk through health and safety hazards in and around service users’ homes and of physical or verbal assaults and hostility from service users, relatives and the general public. Recent evidence suggests that such incidents may be on the increase and home visiting protocols should take this into account, particularly in high risk areas such as high crime rate areas.

In this organisation:

1. the assessment of all new referrals should include a risk assessment which includes threats from health and safety hazards and from aggression and violence and other threats to lone working
2. lone workers should carry panic alarms and mobile phones so that they can summon help quickly, all phones should include an emergency number which will be attended at all times that staff are working
3. lone workers should call in at regular intervals to report that they are safe, including at the end of a shift
4. administration staff in the central office should log and keep details of all home visits as well as having access to the names, addresses and telephone numbers of service users
5. administration staff in the central office should contact the duty manager in the event of any emergency situations
6. in a situation where a lone worker feels under immediate threat of their physical safety they should contact the police directly or inform the duty administrator who should contact the police for them; the administrator should be careful to take all appropriate information from the lone worker, such as location and telephone number, and to pass this on to the police, after the incident the lone worker should fill in an incident for.

It is strongly advised that staff carry in their cars the absolute minimum amount of equipment and that they always park their car in a well lit, public place if at all possible. Thefts from cars are a major area of concern and muggings of care staff are a real threat, especially in high crime areas. If on foot then care staff should avoid dark, unlit, isolated routes to work.

In cases where care is to be provided in a high crime area or to a service user with a known history of aggression or violence associated with them, then a full risk assessment should be completed by the supervisor/manager. Where there is significant risk then the care plan should be altered accordingly, either by reviewing the case with the relevant case manager or by arranging for care workers to attend in pairs.

## Untoward Incidents

Untoward incidents, including all incidents which involve the use or threat of aggression or violence, should be regularly reviewed and audited.

## Training

Managers with responsibility for health and safety must ensure their staff receives lone working/personal safety awareness training as part of **standard induction procedures**. As part of this, staff should be coached on dynamic risk assessing for different types of situations. For staff who requires more in depth training, training should be sought from an external provider

All staff must read this policy and be trained in personal security procedures. Security training is included in the induction training for all new staff and in-house training sessions on security will be conducted at least annually and all relevant staff will attend. As part of the induction process supervisors must satisfy themselves that each member of staff is competent and safe to work alone and that they are clear about how to act in ways that will maximise their own safety and about what to do in an emergency situation.

**Monitor and review**

The implementation of this policy and its procedures should be regularly monitored by the Registered Manager responsible for Health and Safety. Following any incident, Risk Assessments should be reviewed and updated if necessary, with any findings used to inform change to procedures and working practices.

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| Signed: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Kechi Anyanwu\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
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