



Warwickshire
County Council

WORKBOOK

Personal safety / Lone worker

This lone working workbook identifies who would be classed as a 'lone worker' and explores the risks of lone working and what can be done to reduce these risks.

Let's get started ▶

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TOPIC ONE

Introduction and objectives

Who might be classed as a 'lone worker'? What will you learn in this workbook?

Introduction

Which job roles revolve around lone working?

Well for example, there's:

- A sales person
- A delivery driver
- A farm worker
- A petrol station attendant, and
- A security guard

A care worker visits people in their own homes and helps them with personal care and a social worker visits families as part of their everyday work. A lab technician sets up equipment before lessons and puts it away afterwards and a cleaner works late shifts.

All these roles involve working alone for some or all of the time, and there are plenty of other jobs you might have thought of that we haven't listed.

By its nature, lone working can come with a unique set of risks, outside of the usual workplace hazards.



Objectives

What will you be able to do by the end of this course?

- Work safely and in compliance with health and safety legislation set out in UK law
- Carry out a risk assessment as an employer or understand and participate in the process if you're an employee
- Use equipment and procedures designed to make lone working safer





TOPIC TWO

Responsibilities

Who is responsible for keeping staff safe at work — employers, or employees themselves? And what are the risks of lone working?

Employers' responsibilities

Let's begin by learning about employer's responsibilities when it comes to lone working.

Employers are responsible for ensuring that their employees are 'reasonably safe'. This means that they should not, as far as is reasonably practicable, be exposed to risks associated with the workplace.

Reasonably practicable

'Reasonably practicable' is a legal requirement for employers under health and safety legislation.

It involves the onus for employers to do what they reasonably can to ensure the health and safety of workers and others (e.g. volunteers and visitors).

Responsibility

An employer may not transfer or delegate their responsibility to anybody else, including the employee themselves.

The requirement applies to employed staff, volunteers, and contractors or anyone carrying out work on behalf of an organisation or company and is based in legislation including the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Risk assessments

Employers have a duty to complete a risk assessment for all the jobs their employees are expected to do, whether they are done by lone workers or not.

However, employers must also consider specific employees doing the job alone and ensure that the risk assessment is adapted for their needs.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) offers a range of advice and 5 step risk assessment guidance to assist organisations and services to meet their duty of care to employees.

The five step process

A hazard is something that may cause harm and risk is the likelihood of it happening.

When undertaking a risk assessment, the HSE advocates a five stage risk management process.

Employees must have read and be aware of previous risk assessments and be consulted on any new reviews or updates going forward.

Take a look at the steps here.

1

Identify hazards

↓

2

Decide who may be harmed, and how

↓

3

Evaluate the risk and decide upon precautions

↓

4

Record significant findings of risk assessments if there are five employees or more

↓

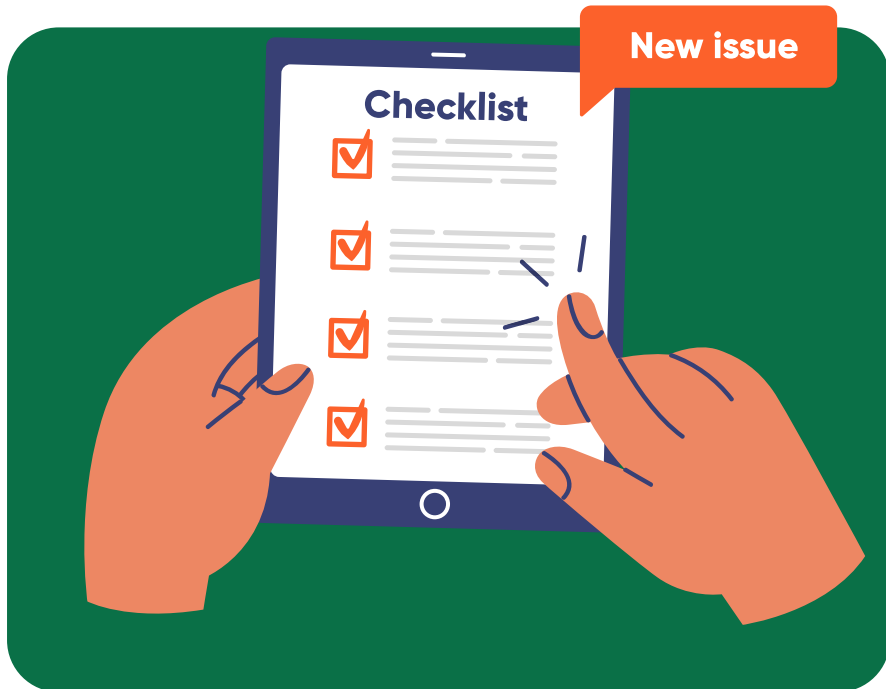
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Review and update regularly

What to consider

When assessing risk, employers must consider:

- Whether there have been any significant changes in the workplace
- Whether their policies and procedures have been effective
- Whether their lone workers have identified any other issues
- Whether any accidents or incidents have occurred
- If they identify any issues, it's important to follow steps 1 to 4 again and keep the risk assessment up to date
- If incidents have occurred, an analysis of what went wrong is essential.
- Learning from previous events is a crucial part of the risk management process.



Reporting issues

Workers also have responsibilities.

Let's consider Jayne who is short of money.

She has asked for some night shifts at the supported living home where she works. This will involve her working alone for long periods of time.

Jayne has not told her employer that she has epilepsy and sometimes has seizures, often triggered by tiredness. Her condition has never affected her work.

Do you think that Jayne needs to tell her employer about her epilepsy?

Write your thoughts in the box below.

Employees' responsibilities

Dominic is an advice worker. He visits people at home if they are unable to get to the advice centre.

Following a risk assessment, Dominic's employer put in place a list of measures, an example from which is the requirement for Dominic to call in to the advice centre at the beginning and end of each visit, so they know where he is.

Dominic thinks that these measures are unnecessary.

Can he disregard them?

Write your thoughts in the box below.





Changing circumstances

Philippa is a care worker.

She has been helping Georgina to get up and dressed every morning for several weeks, but recently Georgina has started to resist help and is becoming violent on some mornings.

There is no treatable medical condition that has caused this.

What do you think Philippa should do in this situation?

Write your thoughts in the box below.

Homeworking

Many lone workers work from home for some or all of the time — this has become increasingly normalised following the Covid-19 pandemic.

But does an employer have the same duty of care towards employees who work from home as those who are office based?

Risk assessment

The employer of a person who works from home is responsible for carrying out a risk assessment to check whether the environment, including ventilation, temperature, lighting, furniture, and space are suitable for the tasks to be carried out.

The employer is responsible for any equipment it supplies but the employee is responsible for addressing any environmental issues found during the risk assessment.

The risk assessment must specifically address equipment and materials that could cause a hazard, such as soldering irons or adhesives.

Go to the **Resources page** (31) for a link to the guide to homeworking published by ACAS.



Summary

Let's see what you have learnt during this topic.

- Employers are responsible for ensuring the safety of their employees, supplying policies and procedures and training for safe lone working, arranging risk assessments, and implementing measures to protect their employees
- Employees are also responsible for implementing their employers' measures to reduce risk, in some cases, working with their employer to carry out risk assessments, and taking steps to keep themselves safe
- A risk assessment must look at the worker who will do the job as well as the job to be done, including previous history of incidents in this workplace or with the people to be visited

Flip to page 28 to see the correct responses to the questions in this topic.

TOPIC THREE

Measures to take

Here we'll explore what measures can we take to reduce risk.

Safety concerns for lone workers

Let's now move on to look at specific issues around safety for lone workers, and the measures we can take to protect ourselves.

We'll explore:

- Travelling
- Working in empty buildings
- Visiting people in their homes
- Dealing with aggression
- Mental health and loneliness
- Useful items

Let's start with travelling.



Lone workers – travelling

Many lone workers travel, to service users, customers, and clients for example. The employer should ensure that their employee is legally allowed to drive.

What precautions should you take when travelling?



Vehicle accident / breakdown

Vehicles used by employees for work, whether provided by the employer, or the employee's own car, should be maintained carefully and serviced regularly. The driver should ensure that there is always sufficient fuel in the tank. In case of breakdown the driver should have breakdown cover. The driver should ensure that they carry a phone and that it is charged. The employee should tell someone when they leave and contact them again to say when they have arrived. They can then raise the alarm and provide essential information if an accident does occur. This advice is also relevant for bad weather, road closures, and when the employee is tired or running late.



Employee is tired / hungry / thirsty

A tired driver is more likely to have an accident. The employer has a responsibility to ensure that the employee has sufficient rest breaks. The employee must take their breaks and ensure they don't miss meals. It's a good idea to carry water and a snack with you at all times, in case of any unexpected delays.



Employee is late and so drives in an unsafe manner

The employee's appointments should be scheduled with travel time between them. The employee should have a method of contacting their next appointment to let them know if they will be late.



Vehicle parking space is insecure

Where possible, employees should have access to safe and secure car parking. The employee might need a pre-booked parking space, or sufficient cash to pay for parking in a secure car park. If the employee does not feel that they can park safely close to where their appointment is, it might be appropriate for them to have discretion to park elsewhere and take a taxi to the venue. If parking on a road, employees should position their car in the direction of leaving (not towards a dead end or cul-de-sac). In badly lit parking areas, the employee could be issued with a torch and a personal alarm.



Bad weather and / or road closures

The employer should not expect the employee to travel when people are being advised to stay at home due to bad weather. An employee who is travelling in winter should ensure that they have warm clothes, a full tank of petrol and some food, in case they are delayed or even stranded.

Travelling in general

It's not always possible or practical for an employee to have contact with their manager, therefore it's a good idea for employees to have a buddy who knows when they leave and arrive so they can raise the alarm if they don't check in.

This can be another employee or someone who knows them, e.g. a friend or family member.

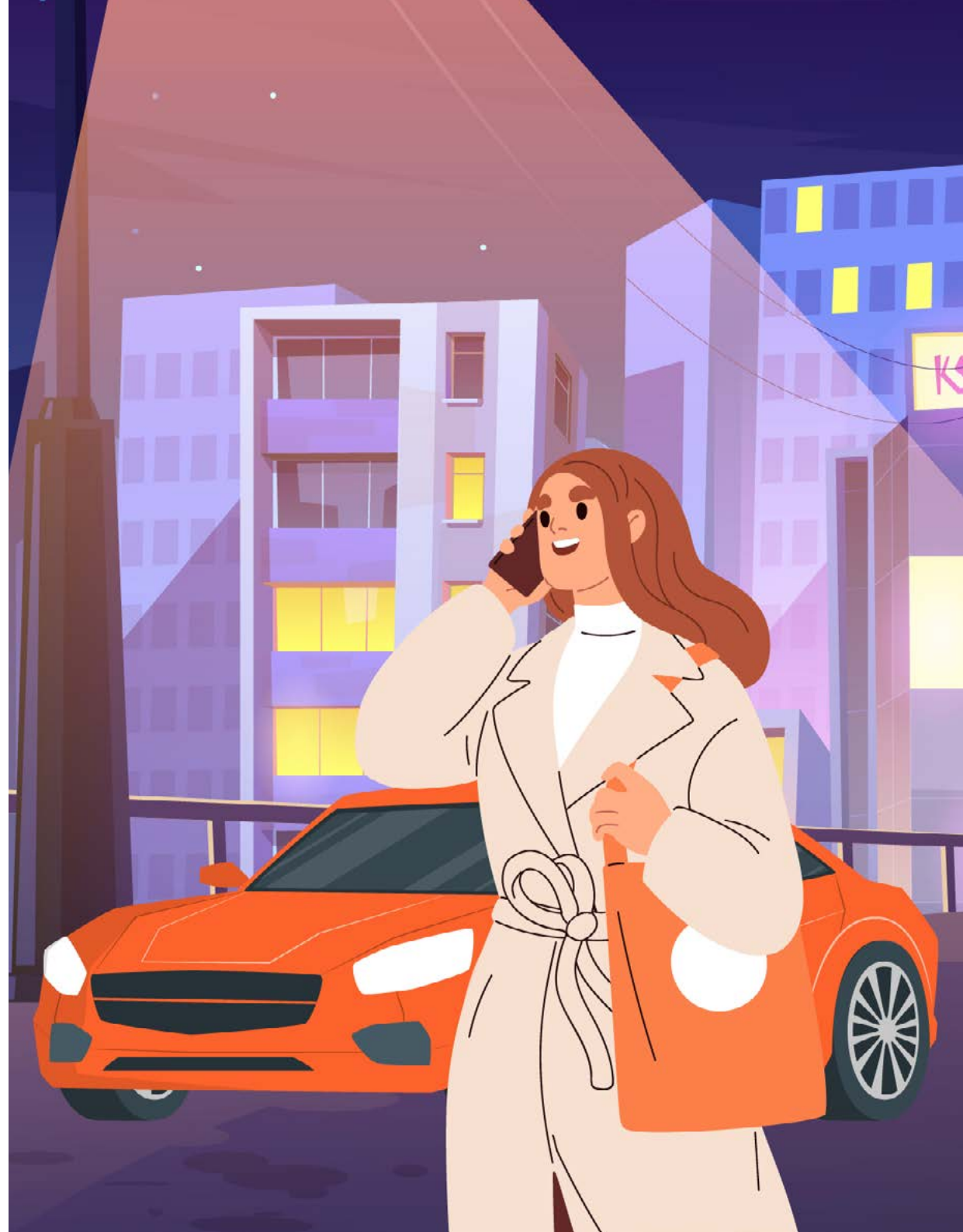
Lone workers in empty workspaces

Daryl has decided to work overtime in the office this evening. Apart from the cleaner, who has come and gone, there is nobody else there from 5:30pm until 8pm when Daryl gets ready to leave.

With nobody around, what is Daryl's risk of harm in the building?

- a) The same level as his standard working hours
- b) Lower than in the day when there's lots of people in the office
- c) Higher versus normal working hours

Write your answer below.



Steps keeping Len safe

Len is a maintenance worker and he works in various buildings in the evening and at weekends.



1

Len's employer does a risk assessment

Len has discussed his work with his employer. Together they have put in place some measures to reduce the risks to Len of working alone.



2

Len has a work schedule

Len's work schedule tells him where he will be working and what time he should aim to arrive and leave. This enables his employer to know where Len is in case of an emergency.



3

Len signs in

Len signs in with the security guard when he arrives. If the building had to be evacuated because of a fire or other threat, any rescue workers would know that Len was inside.



4

Len contacts his supervisor

Len contacts his supervisor at regular intervals throughout the day or if he has problems. He has a mobile phone for this purpose which he charges after every shift and which he keeps with him all the time while he's at work.

If Len does not contact his supervisor, and his supervisor cannot contact him, Len's work schedule will indicate where Len should be so that his supervisor can look for him.



5

Len has help

One building that Len goes to is isolated on an industrial estate. It has no security guard and the area is known as a crime hotspot. Len works there with a colleague.

Steps keeping Len safe

When travelling on foot, you can reduce the risks by avoiding higher risk areas if possible, using well-lit streets, and planning your journey ahead of time. Google street view is particularly useful for identifying landmarks in an unknown area before you set off.

What else can lone workers do to keep safe? The Suzy Lamplugh Trust's website gives a few helpful tips.

“

When alone on the street, always remain aware. Try not to keep all your valuables in one place. You could keep wallets in an inside pocket and separate a small amount of cash or a bankcard from your main purse or wallet. Be aware when using cash point machines. If there are signs of tampering or people acting suspiciously, do not use it. Carry a personal safety alarm, which can be used to shock and distract an attacker, giving you vital seconds to get away. If you think you're being followed, trust your instincts and take action. As confidently as you can, cross the road, turning to see who's behind you. If you are still being followed, keep moving. Head to a busy area and tell people what's happening. If necessary, call the police.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust's website

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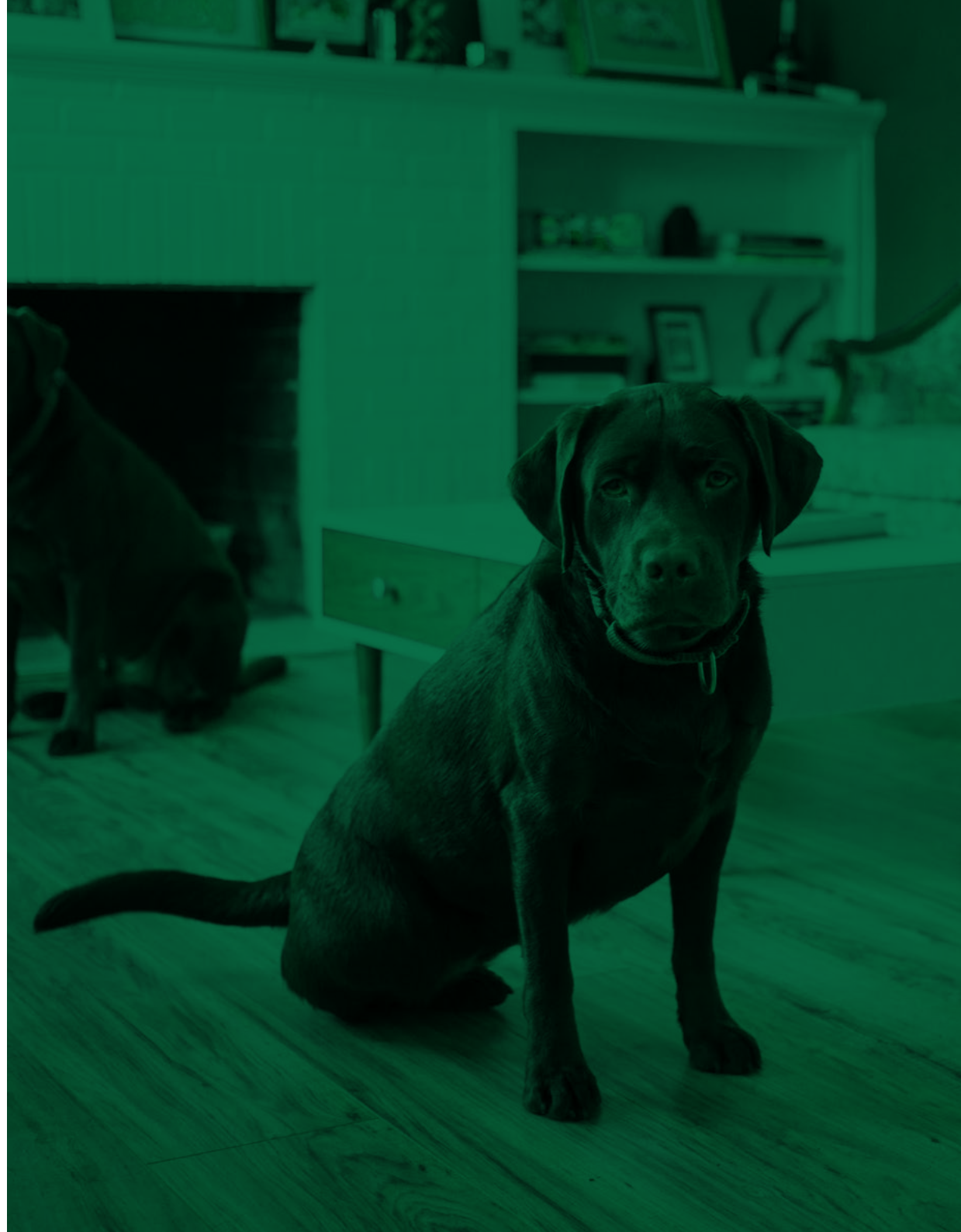
Lone workers in people's homes

Working alone in another person's home carries its own risks. As well as the risks that we have already looked at relating to travelling for work, there are possible dangers in the house the worker is visiting.

Which of these do you think a lone worker and their employer should consider when doing a risk assessment?

- a) The presence of pets
- b) Aggression on the part of the person being visited and / or from others in the household
- c) Household members smoking

Write your answer below.



Aggression

A worker who feels that they are at risk must know what to do, and their employer should ensure that they have clear procedures for the worker to follow.

Employers should also offer training to help recognise the early signs of aggression and know what to do.

The worker should be prepared to leave the premises and report the incident.

When someone becomes aggressive

Paul is a housing officer. He visits tenants to discuss maintenance issues, rent arrears, adaptations to homes, as well as other matters. Today he is visiting Allen and it is immediately clear that Allen has been drinking alcohol. He shouts at Paul and threatens to punch him.

What do you think Paul should do?

Write your answer below.





When a worker is worried

John is a care worker and he has to visit Owen late in the evening to help him to get ready for bed.

Owen lives with his son who runs a busy pub. John has to go through the bar when he arrives and when he leaves and he finds walking through the pub intimidating.

John's employer should address his concerns and do a risk assessment.

Employers have a duty to ensure both the physical and mental wellbeing of their employees and so a risk assessment should be done, even if there is unlikely to be any danger to John from the people in the pub.

Provide a companion

Having someone escort John through the bar.

Send another worker

Getting another care worker to go to Owen.

Access to a different entrance

Giving John access to Owen's accommodation through an alternative entrance.

Consider the individual

The perception of risk differs for each person. Whilst John feels intimidated, one of his colleagues may not. Risk Assessments should always consider the individual so they feel supported and safe.

Mental wellbeing, stress, and mental health

Working alone with poor social contact can cause work-related stress and affect people's mental health. Employees may feel disconnected, isolated, or abandoned. This can affect their performance, as well as their stress levels and wellbeing.

To make matters worse, being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support.

Keep in touch

It's a good idea for employers to put procedures in place that enable direct contact with the lone worker so managers can recognise the signs of stress.

Just a few examples of the early signs of stress include:

- Taking more time off or taking more sick days
- Arriving for work later
- Uncharacteristic mood swings or increased emotional reactions — being more tearful, sensitive, aggressive
- Becoming withdrawn
- Being more twitchy or nervous
- A loss of motivation, commitment, and confidence

Go to the **Resource page** to see the HSE's Stress Management Standards which emphasise the importance of relationships with, and support from, other workers.



Mental wellbeing, stress, and mental health

Some useful items should be provided by employers and others should be the responsibility of the worker. So, what items might lone workers find useful, and even, essential?



Preparation

Make sure you have read any risk assessments or previous notes about the people or places you're visiting. This will be particularly important if you visit people's homes. Training for lone working and understanding your organisation's risk management policy and safety measures, are vital.



Mobile phone

Always keep a fully charged mobile phone on you. Bring a charger and / or power bank with you — you can charge in the office, on the train, or in your car.



Fuel

Top up your tank before the day of your journey and consider carrying a spare can. When it comes to car care, you could always check your tyre pressure, water, and oil levels before any long trips too. Always ask your manager's advice and / or check your work's procedures before doing this.



Breakdown cover

If you have a car and drive to appointments, you'll need breakdown cover and quick access to the provider's phone number.



Money

Make sure you've got enough money for food and drink, parking, taxi fares, and in case of an emergency, such as needing to pay for a new tyre at the side of the road.



Emergency contact details

Know who to contact if you are late or in difficulty. This may include a coded message or text that doesn't alert the person you are with that you are phoning for help. You should also programme the police emergency number into your phone if it is not available on the lock screen.



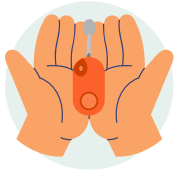
Diary / work schedule

Keep diaries and work schedules up to date and make sure your colleagues know where to find them. Consider using a shared digital calendar for instant and accessible updates.



Contact with colleagues

Keep in touch with colleagues and managers. Follow procedures for maintaining contact.



Alarm

You might feel safer if you carry a personal alarm. In a room with an alarm, make sure you know where it is (for example, under a counter) and know how to use it. Use of an alarm will only disorientate for a few seconds in order for the employee to run away.

Alarms shouldn't be relied on solely to protect a person and should be used as part of a number of measures.



First aid kit and medication

It's useful to have a few basics like painkillers, plasters, and antiseptic in case of headaches, blisters, and insect bites.

If you have any medical conditions, make sure you carry your medication on you at all times (for example, an adrenaline autoinjector for allergies or insulin for diabetes).



Summary

Let's see what you have learnt during this topic.

- There are many precautions you can take to protect yourself against dangerous accidents and incidents, whether you're working in empty buildings or outside alone, entering people's homes, or travelling
- There are many precautions you can take to protect yourself against dangerous accidents and incidents, whether you're working in empty buildings or outside alone, entering people's homes, or travelling
- Remember to safeguard your mental, as well as your physical, wellbeing. Walk away from any situation involving aggression and keep in touch with your employer to prevent stress from becoming overwhelming

The Health and Safety Executive, ACAS, and The Suzy Lamplugh Trust websites are all great sources of further information and advice.

You can find links to these on the Resources page [\(31\)](#) ►

Flip to page 29 to see the correct responses to the questions in this topic.

TOPIC FOUR

Quiz

Test your understanding with this short quiz.

Question 1

Employees who work alone are solely responsible for ensuring their own safety.

Is this statement true or false?

Write your answer below.

Question 2

A risk assessment for a job done by a lone worker should consider the worker who will be doing the job, as well as the job itself.

Is this statement true or false?

Write your answer below.

Question 3

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a source of advice and information relating to lone working

Is this statement true or false?

Write your answer below.

Question 4

The most effective way to respond to threats of violence is to try to de-escalate the aggression.

Is this statement true or false?

Write your answer below.





Question 5

Risks posed by other people are not the only risks faced by lone workers.

Is this statement true or false?

Write your answer below.

Great! Now flip to page 30 to find out the correct answers.

POST-ASSESSMENT

Answers and feedback

Find out how well you did!

Topic two – Responsibilities answers

Reporting issues

Yes - Jayne is responsible for ensuring that her employer has all the facts needed to undertake a risk assessment.

In her case, the risks of her having a seizure at work might be too great for her to be given night shifts, but her employer might be able to give her extra day shifts when she is less likely to have a seizure and when there are people around to keep her safe if she does have one.

Employees' responsibilities

No - Employees have a responsibility to co-operate with their employers to ensure their own safety.

Dominic mustn't ignore the measures that have been put in place by his employer. If something were to happen, he would be in breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act Section 7 by not following the employer's safe system of work.

Changing circumstances

Philippa must report the change in Georgina to her employer, who must then arrange for a risk assessment to determine whether Georgina needs two care workers to assist her.

Philippa should be involved in the new risk assessment. Philippa's employer is responsible for her safety, but Philippa must report any issues or changes since the last risk assessment was undertaken so that measures can be taken to address them.

Topic three - Measures to take answers

Lone workers in empty workspaces

c) Higher than normal working hours

In lone working the risk is always greater than when working around others, even when you're in your usual place of work and feel safe.

Many people work in office buildings when they are closed, for example, cleaners, security personnel, maintenance staff, and daytime workers doing overtime.

When there are fewer people in the building, the potential risk of crime is higher.

And if the person has an accident, or they become ill, there is nobody around to help them, meaning the risk for harm is heightened.

Lone workers in people's homes

All answers are correct.

Where there are pets in the house it might be necessary for them to be shut in another room for the duration of the visit.

If the worker is allergic to pet hair, they might not be able to enter the house at all, and their employer might have to find another person to do the visit.

If there is a chance that anyone in the house might become violent, then arrangements should be made to reduce the risk to the worker. Employers could ensure that two people make the visit or arrange to have the meeting away from the person's home.

Where the worker is likely to be exposed to cigarette smoke, the person being visited must agree not to smoke while the worker is present.

When someone becomes aggressive

A lone worker who is, or who feels, threatened should remove themselves from the situation. Paul should also report the incident to his supervisor.

Paul shouldn't go back to visit Allen until a risk assessment has been completed and any measures to reduce the risk have been put in place. This might require another person to be present in the meeting, or the conversation to take place over the phone, or for Allen to come to Paul's office.

Best practice would involve the employee checking any information held that might show the tenant is someone who can drink and become violent. Having known this, Paul would have felt prepared and would have had a contingency.

One of the main considerations for employers when risk assessing home visits is whether they are necessary. In this example, unless the visit was to assess the state of the property, the meeting might have been better held on neutral ground.

Topic four - Quiz answers

Question 1

The answer is False.

Responsibility for an employee's safety lies with the employer, not the employee, although the employee must co-operate with the employer in this matter, including understanding the risk assessment, contributing to the risk management process, and reporting any incidents or issues that may have occurred, or changes in circumstances.

Question 2

The answer is True.

A risk assessment must take into account the person who will be working alone as well as the job they will be doing.

Question 3

The answer is True.

The HSE provides advice and information for both employers and employees in relation to lone working.

Question 4

The answer is False.

When faced with violence, always remove yourself from the situation and report the incident to your manager.

Question 5

The answer is True.

Although a lone worker might be in danger from other people they can also be in danger from the materials or machinery they work with, or conditions that cause them stress, being a danger to mental as well as physical wellbeing.

How well did you do?

/ 5

%



ADDITIONAL INFO

Resources

Additional guidance and information.

ACAS Working from home and hybrid working

Exploring homeworking.

HSE Stress and mental health at work guidance

Managing stress at work.

Suzy Lamplugh Website

Suzy Lamplugh Trust is widely regarded as a field expert in lone-working and personal safety training, stalking training, as well as consultancy, campaigning, and support services.

HSE Lone working guidance

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.



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