

PROCEDURE FOR COUNCILLOR LONE WORKING

1. WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS?

These may be summarised as follows:

- Personal attack, threatening behaviour offered whilst away from support
- Councillors having an accident, being injured or involved in some other emergency whilst away from support
- Councillors becoming ill whilst away from support
- Entering properties at the invitation of the occupant.

2. DO I HAVE TO CARRY OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT?

Yes, this can be a dynamic or a specific risk assessment. A dynamic risk assessment is carried during the visit and a specific one is if particular hazards have been identified:

- Look at the controls already in place
- Identify who could be harmed
- Apportion a risk factor after considering if the controls are enough
- If the risk is still too high apply additional control measures.
- Review any risk written assessments on a regular basis

When assessing the risk, consider the type of work being conducted and whether it needs to be tailored to the individual or to the particular task. In many circumstances there will be a combination of relevant factors, e.g. working after dark, visiting residents' homes alone, site visits etc.

3. WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

The next step is to consider the following:

A. Pre-planning

Those who make visits alone should:

- Draw on your own experience and that of your colleagues.
- Find out as much as possible about the identity of the person being visited.
- Carry their identification and mobile telephones with them at all times.
- Consider any potential risks of making night visits alone.
- Check your insurance policy to ensure you have adequate cover.
- Ensure your spouse/partner or fellow ward councillor is aware of your location and expected time of visits.
- Ensure your spouse/partner or fellow ward councillor knows your mobile telephone number.
- Ensure your spouse/partner or fellow ward councillor knows your route and expected time at each location.

B. Training, Awareness and Attitude

- Prevention is the key to safeguarding the 'Lone User' whether it be from violence, accidents or injury
- The key to good prevention is awareness, and the most practical way of improving this in organisations is through proper training schemes
- The Safety Co-ordinator can arrange training which contains elements of the skills needed when dealing with the public, avoiding/handling conflict, dealing with violence etc., and further training can be provided if required.

Areas where Councillors might benefit from training are:

- Personality traits and mannerisms which may exacerbate situations
- Inability to deal with difficult customers, handle conflict rationally, confront people with controversial issues in a polite way, etc.

Although one of the main concerns is the risk of violence to Councillors, the other risks of accidents and injuries must not be overlooked. Training can be made available for a variety of tasks. If the demand is there, just ask.

C. Communications

Good communications are a key feature for any 'safe system of work' and are particularly important as far as the 'Lone Worker' is concerned, as they may be the only way that an unplanned event will be identified.

4. A COUNCILLORS GUIDE TO SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK

The following system is a quick guide to ensure a safe system of working, although it can be adapted to suit each Councillor:

Make sure before leaving home:

- Inform others of your location in advance, e.g. mobile phone, use Outlook to record whereabouts.

To ensure whilst making a visit:

- Carry mobile phone, charged up and with contact numbers stored.
- If considered necessary carry a Personal Attack alarm – check in working order and test periodically.
- Always carry Council identification to reassure resident.
- Wear suitable clothing if attending a Development Management Committee site visit.
- Park vehicle with clear exit away from property without having to turn round.
- Conduct interview outside or on doorstep, if appropriate.
- Only enter private property if feeling entirely unthreatened or agree to meet at a neutral venue.
- If pets are intimidating you, ask the resident to remove and/or restrain.
- Ensure your spouse/partner or fellow ward councillors are aware of your location.

Threatening Behaviour:

- When attending visits where threatening behaviour is anticipated, take a colleague with you.
- If feeling threatened, leave the premises on a pretext, e.g. another appointment to attend.
- Report any threatening or inappropriate behaviour to the Safety and Emergency Planning Officer and share the information with your ward councillors.
- Ensure you have received appropriate lone working training.
- Ensure your spouse/partner or fellow ward councillors are aware of your location

5. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

Like most Health & Safety systems, it is necessary to review your arrangements from time to time and communicate any changes that need to be made to those who need to know.