LONE WORKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION AND LEGISLATION

Lone working presents unique health and safety challenges as staff members have to some extent to ensure their own safety. It is however as far as the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 is concerned, the responsibility of the employer to ensure the safety of lone workers.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires risk assessments to be conducted for lone working activities.

Lews Castle College also have a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of students. Generally students should not be left in a lone working situation at any time.

DEFINITION

A lone worker is someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision and may be in a situation or location without a colleague nearby. They may be out of sight or earshot of another colleague.

LONE WORKERS AT LEWS CASTLE COLLEGE

Although some staff members at Lews Castle College may spend time on their own during the normal working day they would not generally be classed as lone workers. This is because the majority of buildings are usually occupied by others during the working day.

Whether or not a person is allowed to work alone out of normal hours depends both on the degree of risk posed by the work, and on the individual.

The health and safety risk involved in “staying behind in the office” is small, however an employee or student for example conducting lathe work or machine maintenance can give rise to a foreseeable risk of injury. As the risk increases the problems of lone working require greater attention.

The person conducting lone work must be responsible and when necessary properly trained. The individual’s health is also important and must be considered at all times when lone working is considered necessary.

Specific examples of staff working at LCC premises:

- Staff working in isolation in high risk areas such as workshops.
- Staff working outside normal hours such as cleaners, security and maintenance workers.
Specific examples of staff involved in lone working away from LCC premises:

- Staff working at home.
- Staff conducting on-site training at other establishments.
- Staff conducting work placement visits at employers premises.
- Staff involved in field and study trips.
- Staff who are travelling to and from LCC premises and other academic partners premises.

ASSESSING AND CONTROLLING THE RISK

A risk assessment must be conducted for all lone working situations.

This will identify all potential hazards faced by lone workers and assess the risk involved both to the lone worker and to any other person who may be affected by their work.

The risk assessment will be conducted in accordance with the LCC Risk Assessment Policy.

Where a risk assessment identifies a high risk activity lone working must not be carried out and it will be necessary to ensure that there is at least one other person present. Examples of these activities include:

- Workers with medical conditions, disabilities, expectant mothers and those who may be inexperienced
- Working with hazardous substances
- Working in a confined space.
- Working at or near live electricity.
- Working during adverse weather – in some situations all work will be suspended during adverse weather.
- Working where there may be a threat of violence.

Heads of Department in conjunction with staff members are requested to identify all lone working within their respective Department and thereafter arrange for a risk assessment to be conducted.

A Lone Worker Register will be produced and updated by Heads of Department on a regular basis. The LCC Form Lone Workers Register will be used for this purpose.

Thereafter, it will be necessary to conduct risk assessments for each of the lone working situations.

When the risk assessment has been conducted a lone working procedure will be put in place.

Please contact the Health and Safety Adviser who will assist with this procedure.
FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE RISK ASSESSMENT

Establishing a healthy and safe working environment for lone workers is very different to organising the health and safety of other employees. Lone workers face particular problem, some of which require special attention when planning safe working arrangements. For this reason additional risk control measures may be necessary. Examples are listed as follows:

- Are there any medical conditions that may prevent a staff member from conducting lone working? Medical advice may be requested. It is important to consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional physical and mental burdens on an individual.

- Can any necessary temporary access equipment, such as portable ladders or trestles be safely handled by one person?

- Can all the machinery and goods within the College be safely handled and operated by one person.

- Are there any chemicals or hazardous substances being stored or used that may pose a risk to a lone worker?

- Do objects that are large and heavy require to be lifted by one person?

- Is more than one person required to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment or workplace transport?

- Is there a risk of violence?

- Are young, pregnant or disabled workers particularly at risk if they work alone?

- Are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communication in an emergency?

- Are trainees left on their own at any time?
CONTROL MEASURES

It will be necessary to put control measures in place to reduce the risk of identified hazards causing harm. Existing control measures should be assessed for effectiveness and additional control measures put in place where necessary.

Control measures may include:

- Alternative work methods.
- Additional training.
- Additional supervision.
- Protective devices.
- Specific information, instruction and training – emergency procedures, out of hours procedures, off site procedures, personal safety training.
- Increased communication systems – regular pre-arranged contact by phone or mobile phone.
- Increased supervision.
- Increased security.
- Increased lighting at entrances, exits, car parks.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Employers are legally obliged to ensure that lone workers have no medical conditions that may make them unsuitable for working alone. Work routines and foreseeable emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on an individual. It is the responsibility of individual staff members to inform their line manager of any medical conditions that may affect their ability to conduct lone working.

TRAINING

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in uncertain situations and is important to ensure that employees do not panic in uncertain situations.

All lone workers require to be sufficiently experienced and must fully understand the risks and required precautions. Lews Castle College will set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone.

This will be done by ensuring that employees are competent to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond their scope of training. This will extend to stopping work and seeking advice from a senior member of staff.

SUPERVISION OF LONE WORKERS

Lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision. 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. New staff members or those undergoing training performing a task that presents special risks or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. Lone working situations can be included in health and safety induction and as part of the specific Departmental familiarisation.