

Weeke Community Centre: Lone working policy and procedure

1. Purpose

This policy outlines Weeke Community Centre's (WCC) commitment to ensuring the safety of staff and volunteers whom at times work alone whilst undertaking duties at the Centre. It sets out WCC's approach to the monitoring of lone working.

Trustees strive to operate a system whereby the movements of staff and volunteers who have cause to work alone are monitored to ensure their safety at all times.

2. Definition

Lone working may be defined as any work activity, which is carried out in isolation from other workers by an individual or a small team of people.

3. Statement

Weeke Community Centre is committed to ensuring the safety of all individuals and groups who use the Centre.

Our insurance policy requires that user groups utilising the Centre's premises should not operate without a member of staff or volunteer being present. Thus this policy relates to staff and volunteers of the Weeke Community Centre, who at times may find themselves working alone in the building.

We recognise our responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of our staff and volunteers, and thus seek to operate in accordance with all relevant legislation and statutory and regulatory guidance, particularly:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; and
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Weeke Community Centre will ensure all lone workers will

- be made aware of the location of the Centre's first aid kit.
- be made aware of the locations of emergency exits.
- have access to a mobile phone, ensuring that it is switched on at all times.
- make contact with another responsible person at pre-arranged times throughout the day
- be instructed to report problems concerning personal safety to trustees or to the Centre Manager (or other appropriate person).
- Record any accidents or incidents appropriately.

Centre trustees and the Centre Manager will ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for all lone workers, primarily to assess whether the work can safely be done by a single person and what arrangements are required to ensure that the lone worker is at no more risk than employees or volunteers working together.

Weeke Community Centre trustees will

- provide staff and volunteers with an identity badge (or Centre uniform) when working at the Centre.
- ensure that staff members receive appropriate training as necessary to assist in enabling them to identify situations of concern.
- Take all new members of staff and volunteers through this policy before commencing their duties.
- Encourage members of staff and volunteers to confidentially discuss issues of personal safety with the Centre Manager or with trustees at any time.
- Review the lone worker policy at any time. It will be re-assessed annually by trustees, to ensure that it is being implemented.

4. Procedures

4.1 Lone Worker Responsibilities

- All staff and volunteers who work alone will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety, and adopt working practices that helps them to maintain effective lone working practices.
- Another member of staff, trustee or responsible person should always know if someone is on their own in the building. The lone worker will be expected to make contact calls with them during the course of their work.
- Workers should not invite members of the public or user group enquirers into the office when working alone. Enquiries should be dealt with in the public areas of the community centre
- It is professional practice NOT to reveal any home details to community members.

4.2 Risk assessments

- Where a member of staff or volunteer has been identified as a lone worker, a risk assessment must be undertaken, taking full account of the risks of work carried out alone and how these risks should be avoided. A written copy of the staff member or volunteer's risk assessment should be kept on file.
- Risk assessments should refer to the Health and Safety Executive guidance on lone working : <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm>
- The risk assessment should take account of common hazards: manual handling, fire, hazardous chemicals and other substances, sudden illness and violence.

4.3 Difficult situations

- Lone workers should be made aware of possible triggers to aggressive situations and shown how to minimise them (see section 5 below, Minimising Risks)
- If a member of staff or volunteer has a situation that they feel compromises their safety, they should immediately leave the situation and dial 999.
- All violent or aggressive incidents must be recorded and reported to the line manager.
- It is essential that a staff member or volunteer who has been abused, threatened or assaulted receives advice and support from colleagues or trustees.
- If appropriate the incident should be reported to the police.

5.0 Minimising Risks

Aggressive and threatening behaviours are much more common than actual physical violence, but both carry the potential for violence. It is important to be able to recognise the signs that a situation might be getting out of control. Increasing tension may be signalled by:

- voice getting louder, or dropping to a threatening tone;
- verbal threats – these should always be taken seriously;
- racist or sexist abuse or foul language;
- threatening gestures;
- agitation; and
- pointing/ poking fingers or pushing.

People who are behaving aggressively are likely to be afraid of losing control. They need to be reassured that the situation is still under control and that you do not represent a threat to them:

- always try to position yourself with access to a suitable escape route;
- stay calm, keep your voice down;
- listen and be interested in what the person is saying;
- don't "call a bluff";
- avoid raising your hands or pointing;
- don't stand too close and don't touch a person who is becoming agitated
- don't corner an angry person – allow them an escape route.

It is important to recognise that some situations will escalate however well they are handled. If a WCC staff member or volunteer feels there is a risk to themselves or others, they should attempt to withdraw.