



# **Working Alone**

**With children/young people/adults**



Working alone with Children  
Approved Autumn Term 2019

## **Working Alone (with children young people or adults)**

**This document is based upon Coventry Local Authority Guidance  
which we adopt within our Multi Academy Trust**

### **1 Scope**

This document provides advice for all teaching and support staff who regularly, or on an occasional basis, work alone with children, young people or adults. Working alone occurs in a wide range of different circumstances and it is recognised that it can present particular difficulties and concerns.

The purpose of this advice is to alert both managers and staff to the issues involved and to assist them in dealing with situations in ways that minimise any potential risks. It identifies good practice and working arrangements when working alone with people, which aim to ensure an appropriate professional environment and the application of necessary safeguards through risk assessment to address any potentially vulnerable person.

The focus of this guidance relates to staff working on their own without other people -- for further advice on health and safety related issues see Appendix 1.

**For advice on staff working completely alone on site — See Appendix 1 and contact the Health & Safety Team.**

### **2 Definition**

Working alone relates to situations:

- where a member of staff is on their own and is working with or supervising one or a small number of children or young people
- is meeting, or working alone with another adult (excluding staff).

It occurs onsite and offsite, both within and outside normal working hours. This will include, for example, 1:1 sessions, group activities, school trips, home visits, parent evenings and interviews.

Working alone will often form part of the normal working pattern within a particular job and as such may not be regarded as particularly significant or even distinct. Through management support and guidance and through personal awareness it is important that staff appreciate and understand the nature of the activity, the potential risks and what is required to minimise them.

Head Teachers/Managers should ensure that staff are kept informed of where advice and guidance on working alone can be found and accessed on site. As and when new documentation or advice becomes available, schools/establishments should ensure that staff are made aware.

It is the responsibility of management to determine appropriate and reasonable working arrangements, including those for working alone (with other people) and to provide guidance and support to staff.

There are many different types of situations where working alone will be applicable. In some jobs it will be an integral part of the role, in others it may occur less frequently.

It is important that managers are clear as to when such situations will or may arise and what practice and working arrangements will be appropriate having regard to the nature of the event and the particular circumstances.

#### **A risk assessment should be undertaken.**

This process needs to be undertaken in conjunction with and discussed fully with the members of staff concerned to ensure that there is a clear understanding of what is required. Guidance on Lone Working Risk Assessment is available on the Coventry Schools Learning Net, or contact the H&S Team.

Planning should be undertaken involving management and staff, to prepare for known events and to consider arrangements and good practice.

There need to be mechanisms to ensure that staff new to situations are properly briefed (e.g. new staff, supply teachers). There will be a need to review agreed arrangements to take account of operational experience, or to consider any new or changed situations. It is known that the highest risks often occur in emotionally charged situations involving for example upset, anger, or stress.

There is a need also to identify what procedures can be put in place to assist staff if problems arise. Support systems will need to take account of such issues as location, timing, communications, emergency contact(s) and degree of risk. In some situations the risk might be considered too great for working alone to be permitted.

During the actual event an individual member of staff is ultimately reliant on his/her

professional judgment and common sense for dealing with the particular circumstances that arise. The process of preparation, planning, management advice, training and review as described above including the range of techniques available and essential safeguards that are required provide an essential and critical framework of support and guidance.

### **3 Further guidance on specific matters is set out below**

#### **1. One to One situations**

These can be planned, unplanned, on-site or off-site events. The planning process will need to identify their purpose, need and the working arrangements and procedures to be followed. The frequency will also be a factor. Other considerations include:

- Informing other key colleagues of planned events, start/finish times and any concerns. Whenever possible be visible e.g. window, door kept ajar: there are many places where 1:1 work can take place outside of a single room.
- Is there an opportunity/need for a witness to be present or close by?
- Whenever possible 1:1 work should take place in a single area within an establishment (i.e. so that other staff know that this activity is taking place).
- Think carefully about seating arrangements (e.g. avoid placing yourself between pupil and door).
- Proximity considerations, body language, tone of voice, attitude.
- Any specific issues e.g. behavioural, cultural, gender, emotional, support arrangements.
- Are there any other viable alternatives to a 1:1 session?

#### **2. Out of School hours' activities on a School site**

When organising and running such activities (examples of which are lunchtime sessions, wraparound, after school clubs, summer schools) it is essential that emergency contact and support arrangements are put in place and that the staff involved are briefed on these.

Planning and preparation including risk assessment will need to take account of any relevant factors e.g. the scope of the activity, the client group(s) concerned, duration and timing, on-site and off-site support, requirements arising from term time or closure period considerations and associated training needs.

#### **3. Supervision of changing for PE or swimming**

This can be a particular concern with primary aged pupils given their greater potential need for support from the supervising member of staff and where a teacher is supervising pupils of the opposite gender. Where possible, this situation should be avoided through the assignment of both male and female staff to the activity.

#### **4. Home visits**

Through the planning process, identify whether these are necessary (consider alternatives) and if so, whether this should involve working alone or a visit by two colleagues. Information about the family and any potential risks is required for an effective assessment before deciding on the visit. The visit should not take place if the risk is deemed too great. If working alone is justified/necessary the following

considerations will apply:

Other colleagues must be informed and given details of timings/issues

- Location - access / egress - who will be present
- Access to communications eg mobile phone
- Emergency contact / support - if uncertain cut visit short.

#### 5. Transportation of Children

Staff undertaking the transportation of children must comply with any statutory requirements (e.g. for education visits) and the City Council's Driving policy including appropriate vehicle insurance cover. Managers should ensure that staff assigned meet these requirements and are made aware of their responsibilities when carrying out transportation activities.

There will be occasions when children need to be transported in emergency situations. Examples of these are the transport of sick pupils or those with behavioural problems and usually involve car journeys from school to home. In the latter category the behaviour may necessitate more than one member of staff. Where it is only feasible or justifiable to use one member of staff, it may be helpful if that person is the same gender as the child being transported. This may not be possible especially where, for example, a Headteacher, or another senior member of staff needs to undertake the trip.

Other considerations in emergency situations are: Where possible, pupils will travel in the back seats.

Such transportation will usually be a last resort (the norm being a collection by a parent, or approved carer, or ambulance in an emergency).

#### 6. School trips including residential trips

Anyone undertaking a school trip must refer to the on "Educational off-site Activities and Visits policy" (EVO3) or contact the H&S Team.

The nature of these events will involve a range of working alone situations for the staff supervising the activity who may be supplemented by approved adult volunteers staff ideally need to comprise of males and females for dealing with sensitive matters that will arise.

In residential situations it is recommended that the staff work in pairs to avoid any potential compromising situations. There is a requirement for a minimum of two adults to be present when travelling.

#### 7. Support for very young children and children with special educational needs

When dealing with these children, staff will necessarily be involved in assisting them with a variety of issues. This will include 1:1 assistance, which will sometimes, depending on the nature of the need, involve care and personal contact. For example,

assisting with hygiene problems, toileting, undressing children for swimming, bathing or undertaking, where necessary, particular intimate tasks, assisting children with disabilities or dealing with distress.

Staff will use their professional judgement when dealing with these situations, but it is important that the manager has in place appropriate measures and guidance to safeguard children and members of staff. A regular review and audit of activities will identify those situations where working alone is both necessary and justified. This will enable appropriate procedures to be determined. Where there is a genuine concern about the degree of risk, the manager will need to consider the advisability of having a second member of staff in attendance.

## 8. Support for Staff

Inspire Education Trust is committed to supporting and safeguarding staff in the proper conduct of their duties. Where a member of staff is verbally threatened or physically assaulted the matter must be promptly reported so that the incident can be appropriately dealt with and the necessary support arrangements addressed.

Managers should ensure that new staff are informed of the appropriate procedures (e.g. through the induction process).

Further advice and guidance is available from your our HR Adviser, the Authority's Occupational Health - Counselling and Support Unit is available to provide support for employees. Advice on risk assessments is available from the MAT H&S officer.

Important: Remember that Working Alone situations need to be reviewed on a regular basis to take account of any changed circumstances or new information in the assessment of risk and agreed working arrangements.



