

## Health and Safety Policy Lone working in Charlton Kings Parish Council's office

Approved by Council Minute 107/13/14

### Legislation

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Section 2 sets out a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work.
- The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999 Regulation 3 states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:
  - the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and
  - the risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment arising out of, or in connection with, the conduct by them of their undertaking.

**There is no general legal prohibition on working alone but the broad duties of the HSW Act and MHSW Regulations require employers to identify the hazards of the work, assess the risks involved, and put in place measures to avoid or control the risks.**

### Undertaking the Risk Assessment

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requires that employers should take steps to check that control measures are used and review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure it is still adequate. Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment etc. When risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back-up should be put in place.

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk-control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Employers should identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women or young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What happens if the person becomes ill or has an accident or there is an emergency?

**Task: Lone working by a member of staff or a Councillor in Charlton Kings Parish Council office.**

- **Degree of Risk: (Frequency + Severity) x Probability**
    - **Frequency : 10 + Potential Severity: 10 x Probability: 3**
- Degree of Risk = 30**
- **Risk classification: Amber.** Some risk if control measures are not consistently implemented.
  - **Nature of the Risk:** The most identifiable risk is of verbal abuse and potential physical assault in extreme cases.
  - **Control Measures**
    - **Training.** All staff and those Councillors who may often work alone in the office will receive training in 'Dealing with difficult customers'. These courses are specifically tailored to handle aggressive or serial complainers and would not eliminate but would significantly reduce the risk of verbal or physical assault.
    - **Physical barriers preventing access to general office space.** The office has been specifically designed to have a visitor-friendly 'counter' mostly at chest height but with a lower section. To prevent access through the door into the office space and beyond, a mortice lock will be fitted. When any individual is alone in the office, this door must be locked. Only a very determined and agile person would be capable of climbing over the counter to access the office space.
    - **Personal Protection.** A 'panic button' should be installed within immediate reach of the front desk and linked to the intruder or other alarm system. By this means, in extreme circumstances, including a medical emergency, the employee/Councillor would trigger the deafening intruder alarm which would summon previously agreed personnel in Church Piece businesses.
    - **Excellent Information systems.** To reduce potential frustration from customers, staff must have access to, and be well trained in the use of, good office systems that will allow them easily to access files of electronic and paper information.
    - **Lone Working 'Buddy' system.** As best practice, to further reduce potential risk to their safety, anyone who is working alone in the Council office should ensure that a family member, friend or Councillor knows that they are working on their own and when they will return or otherwise let their 'buddy' know they have ended the lone working situation.