Lone Worker Policy

Introduction

Myhomecare.ie recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community, in isolated work areas and out of hours. The purpose of this policy is to protect such staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working.

Scope of the Policy

This policy is provided for use of ALL STAFF in their day-to-day work. This policy also covers volunteers and where appropriate, contractors. The policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of our staff.

Definition of Lone Workers

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision such as:-

Staff in fixed establishments where;
- Only one member of staff works on the premises
- Staff working separately from others
- Staff working outside normal hours

Mobile lone workers working away from their base and when their work may be carried out in;
- Client's home
- Nursing homes
- It is recognised that any member of staff may spend a limited amount of their working time "alone".

Aims of Policy

The aim of the policy is to;
- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working;
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that the safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable;
- Ensure that appropriate training is available to all staff in all areas that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone;
- Ensure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone;
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working.

Responsibilities

Employer

Myhomecare.ie is responsible for:
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working;
- Providing resources for putting the policy into practice; and
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed.

Homecare Nursing Manager is responsible for:
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly
- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone

- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incidents

Employees
Employees are responsible for;
- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions
- Co-operating by following rules and procedures designed for safe working
- Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate
- Taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy; and
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

Risk Assessment
Risk assessment is essential to good risk management.
Assessments shall be carried out for and by all staff whose working practice makes them vulnerable.   This includes staff that are site based but work in isolation as well as mobile staff whose work takes them out into the community.   Recommendations will be made to eliminate or to reduce the risk of the lowest level reasonably practicable.

In all cases there is a fundamental question about the need for lone working.
Where staff either Work Alone in buildings or carry out domiciliary visits managers should first complete the relevant Lone Workers Checklist.

These checklists can be used as a tool to assist managers to identify if the existing control measures are adequate and if not, what modifications or additional actions can be considered necessary to help reduce the risks associated with Lone Working.   The check list should be retained by the Head office.

Once the checklist has been completed the manager should carry out a Risk Assessment and document this on a Risk Assessment form. (See Appendix 3)

Risk assessments for site based lone workers must include;
- Safe access and exit
- Risk of violence
- Safety of equipment for individual use
- Channels of communication in an emergency
- Site security
- Security arrangements i.e. alarm systems and response to personal alarms
- Risk assessments for mobile lone workers must include
- Client risk assessment where applicable
- Arrangements for home visits, including consideration of alternatives
- Travelling between appointments
- Reporting and recording arrangements
- Communication
- Personal safety

Following completion of the Risk Assessment, consideration should be given to any appropriate action that is required. Managers must ensure that risk assessment systems are in place to meet the specific needs of all lone workers within their area of control.

Incident Reporting

An incident can be defined as an unplanned or uncontrolled event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause injury, ill health or damage.

In order to maintain an appropriate record of incidents involving lone workers it is essential that all incidents be reported through the organisations Incident Reporting form (Appendix 4).   On completion the form should be forwarded to the appropriate risk manager. The General Manager will also review incidents linked to issues of security.

Staff should ensure that all incidents where they feel threatened or "unsafe (even if this was not a tangible event/experience) are reported. This includes incidents of verbal abuse.

Contacting/Involving An Garda Síochána

If a situation arises which precipitates the need for An Garda Síochána attendance, the employee at risk should contact the head office. Head office will take the details of the situation and will alert An Garda Síochána, Homecare Nursing Manager and site security (if incident occurs onsite).

Employees who need assistance from An Garda Síochána whilst out and about or travelling should dial 999.

Myhomecare.ie is actively committed to protecting staff from violence and assault and will support criminal proceedings against those who carry out assault. All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to An Garda Síochána and will be supported by their manager throughout the process.

Except in cases of emergency, employees should inform their manager of any incidents immediately.   The employees' manager will thereafter take responsibility for contacting the An Garda Síochána to report the details of the incident.

Support for Staff

All new staff to the organisation will receive an induction handbook, included in which will be reference to the Lone Workers Policy, and this will be highlighted as part of the organisations Induction.

Employees working for the organisation should know that their safety comes first. Staff should be aware of how to deal with situations where they feel they are at risk, or unsafe. Staff should also be able to recognise how their own actions could influence or even trigger an aggressive response.

Managers will therefore ensure that all lone workers training needs are assessed and that they receive appropriate training.

Immediate Support Following a Violent Incident.

In the event of a violent incident involving a lone worker, the homecare nursing manager should immediately ensure that the employee(s) receive any necessary medical treatment and/or advice.   If an incident occurs out of hours the on call manager/night co-ordinator should be contacted.

Managers should be sensitive to the employee's need to talk about the incident and should take care to avoid any impression that

this is not accepted or expected. Discussion should involve identifying any significant learning points for the employee and other colleagues if necessary. Staff should be made aware they can be accessed directly by the member of staff or via Occupational Health.

The line manager should also consider whether the employee needs specific information or assistance relating to legal or insurance aspects. The importance of colleague support should never be underestimated. Colleagues are likely to be seen as primary emotional supports.

The homecare nursing manager should ensure appropriate written and verbal reporting of any violent incident.

Appendix 1
Lone Workers Checklist
Working Alone
Site/ Client:

Checklist Completed by:
Date completed: Review Date:

Main Issues of Concern	**Yes**	**No**
Do staff work alone?		
Do staff work outside normal office hours?		
Do staff meet with clients or patients in isolated locations?		
Is there enough security provision?		
Is there poor access to the building?		
Do staff activities involve working in confined spaces?		
Do staff activities involve handling dangerous substances?		
Control Measures for Consideration	**Yes**	**No**
Do you provide joint working for high-risk activities (i.e.in confined spaces and with dangerous substances)?		
Do you carry out regular supervision or colleague checks during activities?		
Do you use entrance security systems (i.e. digital locks or swipe cards)?		
Is there security lighting around access points and parking areas?		
Have you installed panic buttons linked to manned locations?		
Do you use reporting checking-in systems?		
Do you use two-way radios or other communication systems?		
Do staff have information and training on basic personal safety		
Are staff trained in strategies for preventing and managing violence?		
Do staff have access to forms for reporting incidents or near misses and appreciate the need for this procedure?		
Are your existing control measures adequate?		
If NO what modifications or additional actions are necessary?		
1.		
2.		
3.		

Appendix 2
Lone Workers Checklist
Homecare Visits
Description of work activity or danger: _____
Staff exposed to the risk: _____
Site: _____
Checklist completed by: _____
Date completed: _____ Review Date: _____

Main Issues of Concern	Yes	No
Do staff carry out visits in high-risk locations (i.e. Areas with high crime rates)		
Do staff carry out visits in isolated rural areas?		
Do staff visit unfamiliar clients or relatives?		
Do staff visit a high-risk or unstable or unpredictable client group?		
Do staff carry out visits during unsocial hours?		
Do staff carry valuables or drugs?		
Control Measures for Consideration	**Yes**	**No**
Do you provide accompanied visits when there are concerns about safety?		
Do you include potential or known risk factors in referral documents and care plans?		
Do you share risk information with other professionals and HSE?		
Are there systems for monitoring staff whereabouts and movements for regularly reporting to base?		
Have staff been advised to carry a mobile phone?		
Do staff have information and training on basic personal safety?		
Are staff trained in strategies for preventing and managing violence?		
Do staff carry forms for reporting incidents or near misses and appreciate the need for this procedure?		
Are your existing control measures adequate?		
If NO what modifications or additional actions are necessary?		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		