Lone Working Guidance

Introduction

These guidelines, created by the UKCP Education, Training and Practice Committee (ETPC) and in partnership with UKCP Ethics Committee are designed to assist UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) Members, Organisational Members, and employers alike.

This document gives an overview of Lone Working, its scope, the areas of practice, and recommendations for control measures. This document is not exhaustive, and should be considered alongside UKCPs Safeguarding documents, and UKCP Code of Ethics

Trainees and Training Organisations should also consider these guidelines alongside the respective UKCP Standards of Education and Training.

There is an expectation on members to keep up to date with their CPD and new initiatives to support their good practice.

Context

There are numerous factors that define Lone Working, and some may not be obvious. There are conditions placed on employers related to risk assessment and Health and Safety in the workplace for their employees. This is the case whether they are paid or voluntary staff full-time or part-time These will apply to any therapist who works for the public, private or voluntary sectors.

For those who work solely in private practice they have a duty of care to themselves and their clients. A knowledge of and understanding of the principals of Lone Working can help to create a safe environment for the benefit of clients and reduce the risk of complaints and conflict situations

The Health and Safety Executive provide guidance on Lone Working and Working from Home. Your insurers will also have requirements which you must adhere to for your insurance to be valid.

In all circumstances there is a responsibility to ensure safe practice and working conditions. Where there are incidents of risk and harm these need to be logged and reported. This should be in line with the policy of the institution or establishment in which you are working. For those in private practice these discussions could take place with a supervisor to seek out what the next steps may entail.

Lone Working Guidance sits within a policy on Safeguarding which underpins reducing risk and minimising harm to self and others. Your employer has a duty of care to you whilst in their employment. Those therapists who run their own business need to be aware of issues that arise through Lone Working and make the necessary arrangements to ensure safe practice for themselves and their clients.

Definition

Lone Working includes where therapists are working:

- In conditions where service delivery requires them to work without a colleague present or close by.
- From their own home with no other person other than the client on the premises.
- When all others have left the premises.
- In an isolated space in an inaccessible part of a building.
- In the client's location (e.g. home, school), as part of an outreach service or otherwise in an inexact location (e.g. in the countryside as part of an ecotherapy approach)

(This is not an exhaustive list):

Purpose of this Guidance

- To alert individuals to the potential risks, challlenges and hazards of Lone Working.
- To alert individuals to the potential challenges of Lone Working.
- To identify responsibilities.
- To set out procedures to minimise risk.
- To enable trainers (both of qualifying trainings and CPD course) to develop a Lone Working protocol under the umbrella of Safeguarding.
- To assist employers to address the issues for the benefit of their lone workers.

Responsibilities

- This guidance applies to all therapists whether in training or practice, and whether employed, volunteering or self-employed.
- Training organisations and employers should consider how they can cover the aspects of this guidance to raise awareness of the potential issues in Lone Working.
- This guidance should be read in conjunction with any documentation provided by the therapists employer, and/or insurance company.

Procedure

Please note this section gives examples and questions to consider, but it is not the intention for it to contain a full list of all factors to be considered. Practitioners are encouraged to think widely about their own situation using these examples to start that process.

- General assessment of risk:

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What are the risks to your personal safety? E.g. who is nearby? Where are you in relation to

- o being able to call for assistance? What forms of communication do you have available? What systems can you put in place to minimise risk (e.g. a call back system)?

- o What are the risks to clients (including possible challenges to confidentiality)?

- The working environment/premises:

  - o Is this fit for purpose? Is it adequately lit/heated? Are there any inherent dangers? Is it accessible by others?

  - o Is there a professionally appropriate waiting space for parent(s) and/or carers?

- Working for an organisation:

  - o Are there specific factors to consider with regard to your organisation?

- Working from home:

  - o In addition to the above, e.g. does your client have access to all they need (e.g. a toilet)? Are your personal possessions safe?

- Working in "uncontrolled" environments:

  - o Are there other factors that need to be considered? For example, if you offer home visits, would you have access to all you need? If you offer therapy while in an outdoor environment or a public space, do you have systems set to ensure someone knows where you will be?

Control measures to consider

- Training.
- Physical measures (e.g. signing in).
- Technology (personal alarm, coded phone message).
- Sharing of information/concerns.
- Reporting system.
- Place of work.
- Legal duty of Employers (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974).
- Risk assessments to identify hazards.
- Insurance.
- GDPR compliance.

Expectation of Employers

- Employers should have a Lone Working Policy fit for purpose and in line with the advice of the Health

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and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Law (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Management of Health and Safety at Work 1999). There is separate guidance in Northern Ireland. Employers should have:

- Conducted risk assessments:

  - o Of employees.
  - o Of clients.
  - o Of working conditions.
  - o Of safe working practices.

- A reporting system.
- An incident log.
- A procedure for raising support in the event of an incident.
- Controlled Access to the building.

Raising awareness of Lone Working enables therapists to work in a safe, risk reduced environment which can lead to better outcomes for all.

Related Policies

- UKCP Safeguarding documents.
- UKCP Code of Ethics.

Further advice can be found

- NCVO Safeguarding Resources – www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust – www.suzylamplugh.org
- The Health and Safety Executive – www.hse.gov.uk/treework/site-management/lone-working.htm

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