skillsforcare

Supporting staff that regularly work alone

A guide for adult social care employers

August 2019

Contents

Introduction

This guide provides information about what works well for adult social care employers that employ staff who regularly work alone.

It's based on learning and recommendations from research that Skills for Care did with adult social care employers that employ lone workers.

It has top tips for best practice under key headings such as recruitment and retention, planning the workload, learning and development, health and safety, and supporting mental health and wellbeing.

This learning will help you to better understand how to recruit people that are suited to lone working and how to support them to stay safe and healthy at work.

You can use the guide to learn new ideas and make changes to your practice.

The guide is relevant for staff that work at a managerial level in adult social care organisations that employ staff who regularly work alone, and individual employers.

The recommendations and tips are based on an independent research study that Skills for Care commissioned in Autumn 2018 about lone working in the adult social care sector in England. You can read the full research report **here**.

Contents

Click on the headings below to find out more.

What is lone working in adult social care?

Lone working is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'.

When we think about lone working in adult social care, we commonly think about domiciliary care workers or outreach workers. However, there are many times when other adult social care workers might work alone.

For example, in a residential care setting a support worker could be working alone in a separate part of the building to the rest of their team or manager.

Examples of roles where lone working might happen include:

- domiciliary/home care workers
- personal assistants (PAs)
- live-in carers
- supported living workers
- drivers
- staff that work remotely on the same site as their team members e.g. residential/nursing homes
- overnight workers (sleep-in and awake)
- social workers
- community care assessors.

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Recruiting and retaining the right people for lone working

There were lots of things that people told us that they enjoyed about working alone.

Whilst it doesn't suit everyone, lone working can be a good 'fit' for people that have specific values, personality traits and ways of working.

This section shares what people said they enjoyed about working alone, the values that are associated with lone working and tips to help you to retain staff that work alone.

You can use this learning to update your job adverts, application forms and selection process, to help you to recruit people that have the right values and personality traits for lone working. This will help to reduce time and wasted resources in recruiting the wrong people and set realistic expectations about the role.

> **"Some people just have a personality that suits working alone. They enjoy it for the very reason that they aren't in an office or a team."**
>
> **Registered manager – adult domiciliary, private sector**

Benefits of lone working

We asked people what they enjoyed about working alone and what gave them job satisfaction. Three main themes emerged in their answers:

- the rewarding nature of being able to provide one-to-one, personalised care and support for people
- the opportunity that lone working provides to build and sustain relationships with the people they support
- witnessing the positive effects that regular and consistent one-to-one care and support can have on the people they support, particularly around happiness and general demeanour.

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Here are some of the things that lone workers said that they prefer about working alone.

Lone workers said that working alone:

made them feel more calm and relaxed	**"I like my own company and am more relaxed when working alone."** (Domiciliary home care worker)
enabled them to be more efficient and productive	**"In a busy office it can be difficult to focus…there are more interruptions. Working alone allows me to focus and get on with things. It means I am more productive."** (Domiciliary home care worker)
gave them greater autonomy and developed their decision making skills	**"Lone working encourages workers to use their own initiative and make decisions. It also gives them a sense of independence."** (Domiciliary home care worker)
gave them greater independence	**"I feel much more independent when I'm working on my own."** (Domiciliary home care worker)

Although some of these benefits might relate to the type of work that they do, they are also strongly linked to lone working.
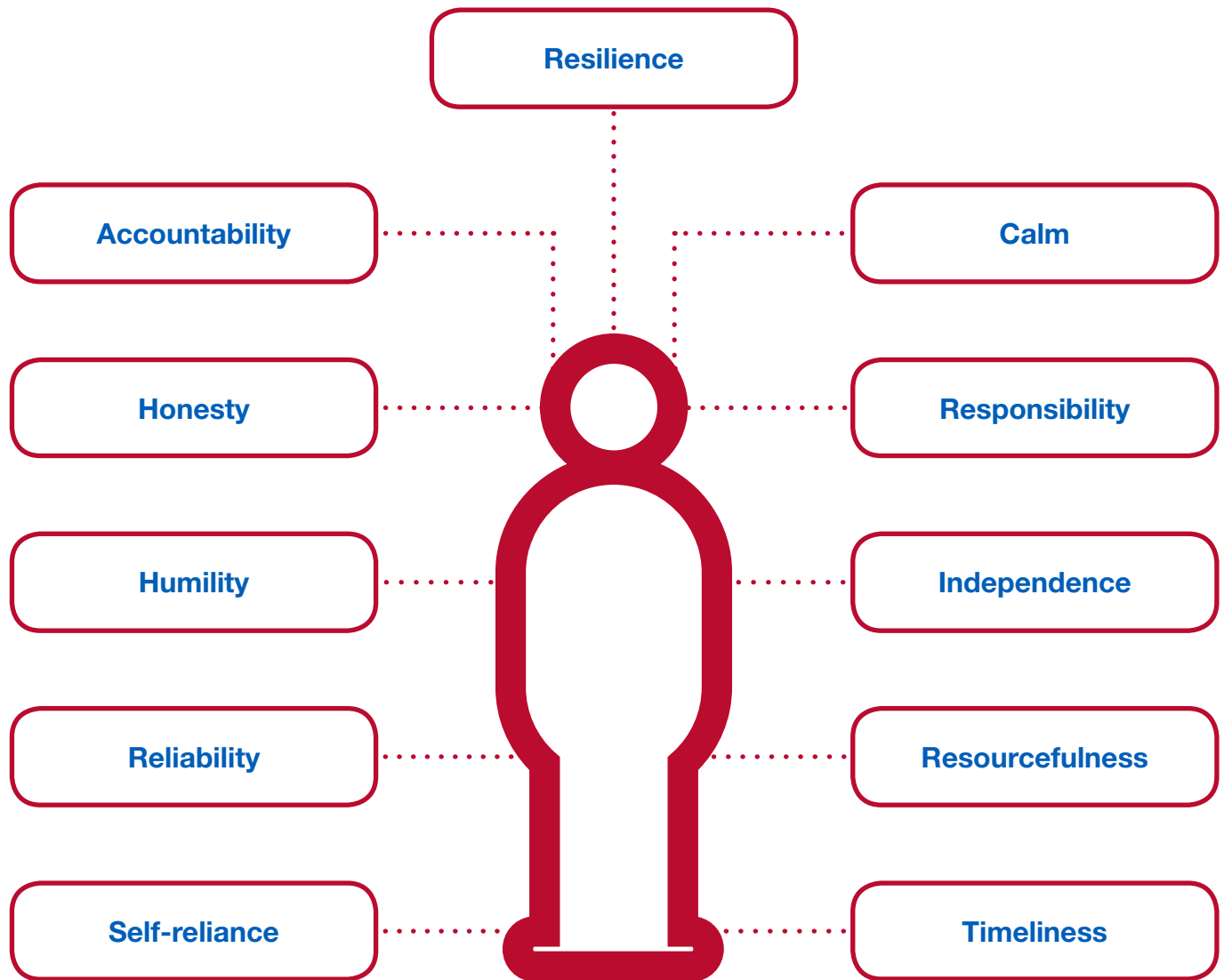
You could use these benefits, or quotes from your workers, in your recruitment materials to attract people that enjoy similar ways of working.

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Values associated with lone working

This diagram shows some of the common values that people that enjoy working alone have.

You could include these values in your job adverts, application form and selection process to attract and recruit people with similar values.

Diagram one: what values do lone workers have?

Resilience

Accountability

Calm

Honesty

Responsibility

Humility

Independence

Reliability

Resourcefulness

Self-reliance

Timeliness

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Top tips

Promote the benefits of lone working, and the values that lone workers need, in your recruitment process by:

- identifying what values you want workers to have – you could use some of the values in diagram one
- embedding these values in your job adverts
- assessing whether candidates have these values in the application and selection process, for example, in your application form, interview or group exercises
- promoting the benefits of lone working in your job adverts, including quotes from your workers.

Retaining lone workers

In the research, over half of the managers that responded said that staff turnover was a challenge of employing lone workers, and believed that lone working is one of the main reasons for this.

However, lone workers themselves didn't agree with this – just over three-quarters reported that lone working had a positive impact on the likelihood of them continuing to work in their current role. Only 8% said that working alone increases the likelihood of them looking for employment elsewhere.

This is an interesting difference of opinion and suggests that employers need to better understand how workers feel, and to identify if and how issues relating to lone working might affect staff retention. You can do this by engaging with workers on a regular basis to see how they're feeling about their role.

Top tips

Check in with staff and see how they're feeling through:

- regular supervisions
- employee forums
- staff surveys
- regular sessions for staff to meet and share any concerns or good practice with peers and/or managers.

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Resources to help

Click on the resources below to find out more.

Online recruitment and retention toolkit

This toolkit shares tools and resources to help you to recruit and retain people that have the right values and behaviours for your organisation and the adult social care sector.

Embedding values into job descriptions

These tips will help you to embed your workplace values into job descriptions, to help you attract people with similar values.

Examples of job adverts

These tips and examples will help you to embed your workplace values into job adverts, so that people know what you look for in employees.

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Case study

The Good Care Group is a homecare provider that employs over 500 live-in carers, that are all lone workers.

The service did psychometric testing and face to face interviews with the existing workforce to find out what separated their best performing and longer staying staff, from those that left.

The results showed that highest performing staff scored highly in terms of:

- tenacity
- resolve
- self-discipline
- emotional stability
- resilience.

During the recruitment process, the Good Care Group uses psychometric testing and situational interview questions to recruit people that have these values.

Since introducing this new approach in 2012, the organisation has seen a reduced turnover of around 20% each year.

This case study is taken from our 'Good and outstanding care' guide (2018).

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Planning and managing the workload

The workers that we spoke to were positive about the autonomy, responsibility and flexibility that lone working brings, particularly around managing their own workload.

Having a robust process for assessing staffing levels and allocating workloads based on the needs of the people that you support, ensures that you have enough of the right workers to deliver high quality, person-centred care and support, and reduces burnout.

This section shares some top tips from managers about how they plan and manage the workload of lone workers effectively.

You can use this learning to reflect on your processes, and get ideas about what you can change and improve.

> **"I enjoy being able to plan my own workload and diary. It gives me great job satisfaction and ownership of my own work and enables me to prioritise tasks."**
>
> **Live-in carer**

Top tips

(Please note that some of these tips aren't relevant for individual employers.)

- Plan staffing levels depending on the needs and wishes of the people that you support and the level of funding available.

- Use caseload management tools that score people in terms of their needs, wishes and risk, and use these scores to plan rotas and match people with workers that have the right skills, knowledge and similar interests.

- Plan for lone workers to carry out all of their duties when you plan their workload, including time for travel, handovers and record-keeping.

- Consider the environmental and geographical factors that might impact staffing levels, for example the accessibility and location of where people live.

- Share your rota as early as possible and consistently. Provide workers with easy ways to access the rota and keep up to date with any changes.

- Develop a contingency plan to maintain safe staffing levels, for example:
  - work with other local services whose workers could cover shifts
  - have a team of bank lone workers
  - use agency staff to cover emergencies
  - have alternative plans in place for home visits, for example family friends or neighbours.

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- Have a dedicated person or team that's responsible for planning, reviewing and managing workloads.
- Be clear with workers about how you can be flexible around their own needs
- Regularly review the workloads of lone workers, in line with changes to the needs and wishes of the people you support and other factors.

"We have a rota app – it works well – if the rota is updated, I get a notification."

Carer working for an agency, from lone worker research

Resources to help

Click on the resource below to find out more.

Guide to safe staffing

This guide explains what CQC will inspect around safe staffing and will help you to decide and maintain safe staffing levels, embed safe recruitment practices and ensure that your staff are safe and competent.

Case study

Walnut Care is a domiciliary care agency in rural Lincolnshire, so it's important that they have a good contingency plan for extreme weather conditions.

They give everyone that they support a 'rating' of red, amber or green based on the level of support that they might need in an emergency (and discuss this with them and their family).

- **Red** – refers to people that need to be visited and that need it on time
- **Amber** – refers to people that need to be visited but the timing could be flexible
- **Green** – refers to people that have got family and/or could manage with less support in times of emergency

When they activate contingency plans, each manager takes responsibility for a number of staff and contacts them at least once a day.

This case study is taken from our 'Guide to safe staffing' (2018)

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Supporting learning and development

In the research, lone workers said that learning and development helped them to develop their skills and gave them the opportunity to get to know other staff.

This section shares tips from managers about how they plan, coordinate and deliver learning and development for lone workers.

You can use this learning to reflect on how you develop staff and get ideas about what you can change and improve.

Induction

The Care Certificate is a set of standards that define the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of specific job roles in the health and social care sectors, and is aimed at new recruits.

"Training gives me the confidence to make the correct decisions."

Domiciliary/homecare worker

"I made friends during my induction and now talk to those ladies on WhatsApp."

Domiciliary/homecare worker

It's a great tool to use as part of induction for lone workers. As well as introducing them to topic-specific knowledge, you can use the Certificate to introduce new workers to your organisation's culture and values, health and safety policies and procedures, and agreed ways of working safely.

It's a good opportunity to check that staff understand their role, assess that they're competent and confident to do it and ensure that they know how to seek further advice when needed.

Here are some of the Care Certificate standards that might be particularly relevant for lone workers.

- **Standard 1**: Understand your role – ensures that workers know what their role involves and ways of working.
- **Standard 3**: Duty of care – ensures that workers know how to deal with incidents and difficult situations.
- **Standard 13**: Health and safety – ensures the workers know their own responsibilities relating to health and safety including around risk assessment, moving and handling and managing stress.

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Learning and development

In addition to the learning and development associated with the care delivery aspect of their role, lone workers might need other training to develop skills that are associated with working alone.

This could include training around:

- confidence building to help with making decisions independently
- resilience and mental wellbeing as a lone worker
- personal safety
- conflict resolution and managing challenging situations alone.

It's also important to think about how you offer training to lone workers and assess their learning.

Lone workers told us that shadowing and buddying more experienced colleagues were good ways of learning. It also gave them social contact, a support network and the opportunity to feedback on quality of care.

Remote learning, such as eLearning, can also be cost effective, but you need to consider how to assess learning in action, which can be more challenging for managers of lone workers.

Top tips

Promote learning and development by:

- encouraging lone workers to get to know each other through training and learning opportunities
- providing shadowing and buddy systems where possible
- offering a variety of learning opportunities to suit different learning styles e.g. classroom based, eLearning, peer learning and team learning
- promoting team meetings as skills development and an opportunity to share learning.

Walnut Care is a domiciliary care agency in rural Lincolnshire. The service takes a flexible approach to shadowing as part of the induction process, and doesn't allow new workers to work unsupervised until they're confident and competent to do so.

When new staff start they do training that's specific to the needs and wishes of the people they support.

All new workers complete an induction programme which includes learning around the Care Certificate, face to face training and shadowing. New workers work with existing workers on a visit that requires two people. This helps them to learn on the job from experienced colleagues.

"We're flexible with new workers to ensure they're competent and confident in their role before they work unsupervised," Chief Executive, Melanie Weatherley, says. "Some people take a few months to become ready, whilst others only take a few weeks, and this is fine."

This case study is taken from our 'Guide to safe staffing' (2018)

Resources to help

Click on the resources below to find out more.

Care Certificate

Our practical resources will help you to embed the Care Certificate in the induction process. They include a workbook, assessor guide and a self-assessment tool.

Guide to developing your staff

Our interactive guide will help you to plan, deliver and evaluate the learning and development that you provide for your workers.

Meeting health and safety responsibilities

Employers are legally responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all of their workers, including lone workers, under the Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

This section explains what responsibilities employers have around health and safety and shares some tips about how to meet these responsibilities.

Employer responsibilities

Most lone workers will carry out their duties without incident. Occasionally there may be times when they must deal with situations that may cause stress, fear, injury and/or pain.

"It is the employer's duty to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of lone workers and to carefully consider and deal with any health and safety risks for people working alone."

Health and Safety Executive

It's important to be aware that there have been occasions where lone workers have been harmed at work. Therefore, employers need to take appropriate steps to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to reduce the risk 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. The greater the level of risk and the higher the likelihood of harm, the more time and money should be spent reducing the risk.

See **Appendix one** for more detailed risk assessment guidance and a risk assessment template.

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Top tips

Meet health and safety requirements by:

- carrying out a lone worker risk assessment, involving the lone worker
- recording, monitoring and regularly reviewing risk assessments and control measures, especially when there has been a change in circumstances
- putting systems and equipment in place to ensure that workers that work alone are safe, for example, first aid kits and/or personal alarms
- taking necessary action if an identified risk cannot be made safe for the worker, and applying control measures to bring the risk to an acceptable level
- developing a plan to prepare for situations where a worker may have to leave a situation for their own safety
- having effective policies and procedures in place, including incident and accident reporting
- ensuring staff receive health and safety training
- knowing where lone workers are during their shift
- ensuring that lone workers can contact their manager and have out of hours support as required
- having appropriate insurance cover.

Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others that are affected by their work activities, and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

The poster on the next page has some tips for lone workers about how they can keep safe. Download the poster **here** to share with workers.

Resources to help

Click on the resource below to find out more.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance

HSE provides free guidance and advice for employers, and helps workers to understand how they can stay safe and well at work.

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Top tips for people that regularly work alone

Support each other and keep in touch by:

- Regular communication between lone working colleagues via phone calls, text messages and social media
- Shadowing shifts
- Coffee mornings
- Group training
- Team meetings
- Social media
- Online chats/forums
- Team development days or lunches
- Develop a team guide of the local area
- Sharing learning with each other

Keep safe by:

Following your organisation's lone worker policies and training.

Using Personal Protective Equipment and moving and assisting equipment as required and report any equipment concerns.

Keeping to your planned schedule or let your manager know if something changes or you are delayed.

If you have access to a mobile phone at work, ensuring it's charged, and you have emergency numbers saved.

If driving, keeping your valuables out of sight and parking in a well-lit place.

Knowing what to do and who to tell if you're feeling uncomfortable or worried, and remove yourself as soon as possible.

Asking for help if you feel a task cannot be done safely alone.

In an emergency contact: 999

For out of hours support contact:

Other information:

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Personal safety

Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, which means that they need to understand how to keep themselves safe.

This section outlines some of the main challenges that lone workers face in relation to their personal safety, and shares some of the ways that employers can support the personal safety of lone workers.

The risks to personal safety associated with lone working

In the research, lone workers said that there were some key challenges or risks in relation to their personal safety, including:

- travelling to different locations alone, especially at night

- poor mobile phone signals in some areas, meaning that lone workers may be unable to contact managers or colleagues in the event of an emergency or when they need prompt advice or assistance

- not having colleagues on hand to assist should they be exposed to unexpected or unpredictable behaviour or situations.

> **"The app (that the agency utilised) used geo-tagging which enabled the service to monitor that the care worker had arrived safely at the property and their time of arrival. The application monitored when the care worker left and enabled the service to monitor the time that had been spent with the person."**
>
> **CQC inspection report, homecare agency rated 'outstanding' for 'safe'**

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Supporting personal safety

There are lots of measures, including digital-based solutions, that you can implement to ensure that lone workers are safe.

Top tips

Support personal safety by:

- issuing mobile phones including, where required, a function that provides access to specialist support in case of an emergency
- providing equipment, for example personal alarms, circuit breakers, torches, personal protective clothing, fire blankets and/or first aid kits etc. – this could be a mobile kit for workers to take with them or you could negotiate for this to be available where the service is provided, for example, in someone's home
- having a process and system for lone workers to regularly clock in and out, for example, of each home or service visit – this could be, for example, via an app
- using GPS tracking devices so employers know the location of lone workers
- offering a help/advice line for lone workers during working hours, including out of hours.

If you're considering or using digital technology, it's important to think about whether these will work for you, for example, mobile and internet coverage can be inconsistent in rural areas.

> **"It can sometimes feel a bit unsafe in some areas when it is dark, the weather is bad and you are driving long distances."**
>
> **Domiciliary care worker**

Resources to help

Click on the resources below to find out more.

Live Life Safe – Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Trust offers training, briefings and talks to support managers and lone workers to manage their own personal safety.

Supporting good mental health and wellbeing

The research suggests that there are some aspects of lone working that have a positive impact on people's mental health and wellbeing, and some that have a negative impact.

This section explains how lone working can impact people's mental health and wellbeing, and shares some of the ways that employers can support lone workers to have good mental health and wellbeing.

"It is easier for me as there are no workplace tensions; no dynamics with colleagues that need managing."

Domiciliary home care worker

Positive impacts of lone working on mental health and wellbeing

Participants said that there were lots of positive impacts of lone working on their mental health and wellbeing.

For example, working alone can help some people to feel calmer and more relaxed, as they prefer not to be in a team or office-based environment and enjoy working somewhere that typically involves fewer workplace tensions and conflicts.

They also enjoy the responsibility and autonomy that lone working provides, which improves their self-confidence and self-esteem, and get greater job satisfaction from working with the people they support on a one-to-one basis.

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Challenges of lone working on mental health and wellbeing

Participants raised some challenges of lone working that had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

They said it can be more difficult to discuss issues or challenges that they're experiencing, and to catch up with colleagues.

They can also experience increased stress levels through feeling the burden of decision-making and not having other colleagues present to seek advice and discuss different options.

For live-in carers, there could be a sense of feeling 'penned in' within a person's home, and finding it difficult to relax, particularly if living in rural areas or somewhere with few socialising opportunities.

Lone workers also said that they can feel more pressure to work when they're unwell because it can be harder to cover absences. This can also lead to lone workers taking on more work if no-one else is available, especially at short notice.

It's important that employers understand how employees feel, so that you can address any issues or concerns early and avoid them escalating to a point that affects someone's mental health and wellbeing.

> **"Lone workers can have less opportunity to share pressures and can feel they carry sole responsibility for a client's health and well-being."**
>
> ___
>
> **Area manager – voluntary/third sector adult community care**

> **"Staff who work alone are more likely to continue working when they should rest, due to the responsibility that they shoulder for the well-being of clients."**
>
> ___
>
> **Operations manager – private sector adult domiciliary care**

Supporting mental health and wellbeing

There are lots of initiatives and support that employers can offer to support the mental health and wellbeing of lone workers, including increasing awareness of resources and services to help, providing ongoing emotional support, offering employee incentive schemes and assistance programmes, and introducing health and wellbeing initiatives.

Top tips

Support lone worker's health and wellbeing by:

- designating a carer liaison officer or mental health champion that acts as a point of contact for lone workers and supports them via ad-hoc conversations/catch-ups, as well as through more formal processes. This can help you to identify issues and offer support early before things become a bigger issue
- matching lone workers to the people they support based on similar personalities and/or interests. This is not always possible, however, it can help to minimise the risk of loneliness and isolation for lone workers, and mean that people receive better care and support
- supporting lone workers to deal with difficult events, for example if someone they support dies or becomes seriously ill, some employers offer lone workers the opportunity to discuss their feelings with a psychologist or other mental health practitioner
- arranging drop in sessions when lone workers can discuss concerns and get advice
- encouraging lone workers to use online/virtual support systems, for example, advice forums
- developing a 'local guide' for new starters or for those less familiar with the local area, that includes tips on where to pick up lunch, cheap parking or places to socialise after work.

Resources to help

Click on the resources below to find out more.

Greater resilience, better care

This guide is for managers in adult social care services. It explains what resilience is and how they can develop the resilience of workers.

Building your own resilience, health and wellbeing

This guide is for individuals and gives you practical ideas and activities to help you to develop your own resilience, health and wellbeing.

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Communication and support

Effective, two-way communication with managers and colleagues is important for lone workers to keep up to date with what's happening and ensure that they can seek advice and help when needed.

This is particularly important for lone workers that might have less contact with colleagues and support systems.

Good communication and support will ensure that lone workers feel valued and part of a team, and gives them the opportunity to learn from each other. This helps them to feel confident and competent to work alone safely and ensures that they're supported to do this.

This section shares what support lone workers said they want from their employer, and gives you some ideas about the ways that you can communicate with and support lone workers.

Support for lone workers

In the research, lone workers identified three main areas of communication and support that they want from their employer.

- **Access**: employers need to be approachable and respond promptly to queries and issues.
- **Escalation**: lone workers felt best supported when it was easy to escalate work-related issues and problems.
- **Out-of-hours support**: lone workers value access to out-of-hours support from their managers, including in the evening and at weekends.

"Monthly newsletters are a great way of us sharing good practice and good things that have happened e.g. a client's 100th birthday. It keeps us in the loop."

Home care worker

"I have a fantastic manager who is always on the other end of the phone if I need her. I can have open and honest discussions with her and she provides me with lots of support if I need anything."

Live-in carer

"A sense of teamwork is hard to achieve. I miss those chance encounters with co-workers."

Domiciliary home care worker

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Here are some of the ways that lone workers can keep in touch with their colleagues and employer.

Regular face to face check-ins with managers		**Intranet, including with remote access**	
Supervisions		**Induction**	
Team meetings		**Appraisal and performance reviews**	
Email		**Drop in sessions**	
Newsletter		**Open office**	
Text alerts		**CEO/employer lunches**	
Social media pages			

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Top tips

Provide effective communication and support by:

- having processes and systems in place to regularly communicate with lone workers and keep them up to date - they should be consistent with communication systems and processes for non-lone workers

- ensuring that lone workers know who to contact when they need advice or in an emergency

- having prompt, effective and easily accessible out-of-hours support that's available to all lone workers

- ensuring that all workers know the escalation procedure to follow if there's an issue or emergency, or if they need advice, including during 'out-of-hours'

- providing formal opportunities for lone workers to have face-to-face discussions with managers

- offering regular opportunities for lone workers to meet each other to share good practice and learning, e.g. shadowing shifts, training sessions and team meetings

- where possible, establishing staff intranets or equivalent that provide lone workers with quick and simple remote access to policies, procedures and guidance documents.

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Case study

Bay Care Domiciliary Care Ltd uses an online system to plan the rota and communicate with staff on a day to day basis.

Its Director and Registered Manager, Katrina Green, told us: "we know that recording and sharing information is important, so we wanted to make it simpler and more effective for staff by using a digital system."

She researched different software companies and chose PP and Mobizio because it met the service's needs and it was user friendly.

The system supports real time care planning and stores up-to-date notes for staff to view before their visits. Staff get direct alerts regarding their visits and what tasks need doing, updates to documents and rota changes. They can also record case notes after visits which are useful for handovers.

The system also supports them in other areas such as administering medication, completing body maps, filling in incident forms and with finance processes such as payroll.

Domiciliary care workers, that work alone, download the app on their mobile phone and do face to face training, and can access webinars and handbooks to help.

For managers, the system provides real time reports to ensure that they don't miss any visits and has online forms, so they can deal with any concerns quickly.

This case study is taken from our 'Guide to safe staffing' (2018).

Resources to help

Click on the resource below to find out more.

Guide to effective supervision

This guide explains the role of the supervisor and gives practical tips and advice about doing effective supervisions including scheduling and timing, reflective practice and appraisals.

Summary

This guide shares some of the findings and recommendations from research that Skills for Care commissioned about lone working in the adult social care sector in England.

The research found that, on the whole, job satisfaction amongst lone workers was high – 80% of participants said that lone working has a positive impact on their job satisfaction.

The research also identified some challenges and risks associated with lone working. For example, lone workers reported that they sometimes don't feel part of a wider team and find it harder to get advice and support for managers and colleagues.

Employers that took part in the research shared a range of useful and effective ways to support lone workers, which we've shared in this guide.

Many of these are operational and don't require large amounts of time and money.

We hope that this learning will give other employers ideas about what they can improve and how they can better support employees that work alone.

You can read the full research report **here**.

If you have any feedback about the guide, please email **policy@skillsforcare.org.uk**.

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Appendix one: risk assessment guidance and checklist

Employers should set the limits of what can and cannot be done by workers while working alone.

If the risk assessment shows that the risk is too hazardous for one worker to manage alone, you'll need to introduce other arrangements. For example, if someone needs support with moving and assisting, and you decide that it's not safe for one person to do, you might seek an occupational therapy or physiotherapy assessment to see if alternative equipment can make it safer or negotiate a changed care package so that two workers can work together.

Support for workers with their physical health is not necessarily lone worker specific and the usual policies and safety measures apply to all workers.

Some physical health related issues that could arise from lone working include:

- the worker's physical health when undertaking risk assessments for lone working settings/roles
- provision of training in the safe use of equipment, lifting and handling before the worker is deemed competent and safe to work alone (in a role which requires these tasks)
- provision of safe and appropriate equipment
- changes to people's care and support that happens unexpectedly, requiring a different response to the planned care, with a potential impact on the workers physical health
- making prompt referrals to occupational health if physical problems arise.

Employers should ensure that lone workers are competent to deal with the requirements of the job and are able to recognise when to seek advice from elsewhere.

Regular training will enable them to put into practice the safety measures that you've identified to keep them safe, and you can review this through frequent supervision.

Lone worker risk checklist

Here are some potential risks that lone workers might face. Consider which ones are applicable to your workers and use this checklist to prompt further discussion and explore potential risks. Review the findings and use them to develop a lone worker risk assessment. Please note, this list is intended as a guide only and is not exhaustive.

Potential risk area	Issues to consider	Is this relevant for me?
Knowledge, skills and training	Having the right values, skills and knowledge to feel confident to effectively work alone	
	Accessing up to date information about the people that workers are supporting	
	Having the skills and confidence to decline to provide support that is not in the care plan or that the worker feels is unsafe	
Travelling	Travelling to and from work, or for work, including: ■ walking ■ using public transport ■ cycling ■ logging that you have arrived / process if you are not able to arrive	
	Using their own cars, including: ■ business insurance ■ breakdown cover and processes ■ accidents ■ safe parking ■ driving with a person supported in the car	
	Carrying confidential information	
	Adverse weather conditions	
	Travelling to an unfamiliar area	
	Driving for long periods and rest breaks, especially in rural areas	

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In the community	Carrying cash, medication, laptop, mobile phone or equipment that appears to be valuable	
	Becoming unwell whilst working alone	
	Provision of first aid kit, torch, personal alarm	
Environment	Using equipment, including: ■ moving and assisting ■ specific equipment ■ personal protective equipment ■ safe use of chemicals (COSHH)	
	Safety of the environment, such as: ■ pets ■ hygiene and cleanliness ■ others that live with the person ■ visitors ■ family and friends ■ substance misuse	
	Accessing people's homes or other spaces, for example, using lifts in high rise buildings	
Personal safety	Keeping in contact with lone workers	
	Emergencies, logging changes, 'emergency code words' and escape routes	
	Incidents and accidents while working alone	
	Policies and procedures around personal safety, and worker's understanding of them	
	Training in health and safety, which is tailored to the role and situation	
	Risks due to personal circumstances or health conditions, such as workers that are pregnant, young, disabled and/or from an agency	
Physical health	Safe moving and handling training	
	Provision of safe and appropriate equipment	
	Environmental risks to physical health	

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Mental health and wellbeing	Refreshment, toilet and lunch breaks for lone workers	
	Communication channels to seek advice when needed, especially out of hours	
	Initiatives to support mental health and wellbeing	
	Opportunities for lone workers to meet with colleagues	
	Support after an incident or accident	

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