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Executive Summary

There is no single solution to ensure the constant safety of lone workers. However, a comprehensive, robust and well implemented policy is the strongest foundation upon which to build a workforce culture that is equipped with the right tools, skills and incentives to enable lone workers to take greater responsibility for their own safety.

It is virtually impossible to implement any processes in relation to lone working without having an effective policy in place. The content of the policy does not have to be complicated but it does need to be structured and more importantly, it should be available to everyone.

About lone working and policy

Working practices have changed beyond all recognition over the past ten years and in response to the 24/7 culture that everyone seems to demand, many organisations employ staff who have to work alone for at least some part of their working time.

Solitary workers can experience feelings of vulnerability and perceive that they are at a higher risk of violence because of their lone worker status. It is therefore crucial that employers fulfil both their legal and moral duties to ensure that lone workers are adequately supervised and have access to guidance and support in times of uncertainty.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has conducted a number of case studies with organisations that employ lone workers and it was recognised that effective solutions could be implemented through policy and job design, which are implemented and disseminated to the lone worker.

Legislation

It is not illegal for staff to work on their own but just because they do, it does not mean that they should be put at any more risk than other employees. It is crucial that employers of lone workers fully understand the legislative obligations placed upon them, including:

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**
- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977(a) and The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996(b)**
- **The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007**
- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)**
- **Fire Regulations**

Legislation is in place for a purpose and employers are responsible for ensuring that it is observed and that staff are aware of it.

Where an employee believes that the employer is exposing them to risks or is not carrying out their legal duty in regard to health and safety, and this has been pointed to the employer without a satisfactory response being given, the employee can contact the

Health and Safety Executive in confidence. Therefore, if something is reported to you as an employer – don't ignore it, do something about it! Make sure your lone working policy makes provision for this.

What is a Robust Lone Working Policy?

A good lone working policy should:

- ✓ Clearly outline the organisation's intention to protect its lone workers
- ✓ Give clear definitions of
 - a lone worker
 - physical assault
 - non-physical assault
- ✓ Should help not hinder the organisation (be aligned with the mission statement)
- ✓ Tackle specific, local needs
- ✓ Outline relevant legislation
- ✓ Identifies the responsibilities of the organisation, managers and staff
- ✓ Be a living document and should be updated following regular review and evaluation
- ✓ Be clear in mechanisms for improvement, effective dissemination and implementation

A lone working policy should not:

- ✗ Be used as a mechanism to gather information about lone workers, unless it is for the specific purpose of protecting them (e.g. using timesheets to study working pattern efficiencies).

The consequences of misusing policy as a mechanism of monitoring staff, for purposes other than their safety, are potentially dire, as are the consequences of having no policy at all, or one that is out of date.

Common Challenges to Maintaining the Lone Working Policy

It's all well and good to have an up to date lone working policy in place in theory, but.....

- Who takes responsibility for developing and owning it?
- Who has the spare time to devote to writing a policy?
- Is it important that the whole company observes the policy; doesn't it just apply to those who work away from a fixed base?
- Who should be involved in developing the policy – is it just management?
- We could have a lone working policy, but how do we make sure our remote workers get to see it?
- We do have a lone working policy, but no one has looked at it for years – will it still be up to date?
- The policy is written down, but we don't know how to make it work?!

Connexion2 Solutions

Connexion2 reviews existing lone working policy and provides guidance as to where and how it should be amended / enhanced to

ensure it reflects legislative and regulatory requirements and customer bespoke practices.

Where there is no lone working policy in place, we will develop a policy on behalf the customer, ensuring legislative and regulatory requirements are incorporated, together with the customer's bespoke practices.

Drafting policy can be a time consuming and onerous task, when it is just one aspect of the job you do. It often slips down the list of priorities and turns into a job that some managers will take home and do at a weekend!

Benefits of a Lone Working Policy

The impact on an individual who has been involved in a difficult and unexpected situation should never be underestimated. They could be the victim of crime, violence, verbal abuse or a work related accident.

Developing and implementing policy, based on sound and up to date risk assessment and inclusion at all levels is straightforward, relatively simple to implement and in the majority of cases will be extremely cost effective.

The key message you convey to your lone working employees is that they feel valued – someone is interested in them and their safety. In return, it is likely that they will do a better job for you. Your reputation as a good employer is enhanced and as a direct result you are likely to retain and recruit a high calibre workforce.

Things add-up financially too, although the direct cost benefit of developing and implementing lone working policy may not always be obvious.

There are the costs associated with absence due to sickness, resulting from lone worker incidents, temporary staffing, higher insurance premiums, missed deadlines and potential customer dissatisfaction. In addition there is the increased workload and stress on remaining staff providing cover, which directly affects their productivity and health.

Summary

Where lone workers feel their safety is at risk, they must be empowered to walk away from situations and not complete work appointments, without fear of recrimination. For lone workers to be empowered there must be robust policy in place.

Don't fall foul of legislation. An organisation that is guilty of corporate manslaughter is liable on conviction to a fine. The amount of the fine is not defined by the Corporate Manslaughter Act and will be decided by the prosecuting court. It is anticipated that fines will be deliberately higher than historically levied and be linked to the severity of the breach and not to the size or profitability of the organisation.

Think of the return on your investment. The Health and Safety Executive estimates the cost of a single physical attack to cost an organisation in excess of £20,000.

Where a robust lone working policy is in place it is made clear what the employers and the employees responsibilities are in respect of health safety and wellbeing.

Don't skirt over the issues or, even worse, imagine that nothing will ever happen to your lone working staff.

ENDS.