

Northstowe Town Council

Lone Working and Staff Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Adopted: 25th November 2025

Review Date: May 2026

1. Introduction

Northstowe Town Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors and members of the public who may be affected by its activities. The Council recognises that some duties involve lone working and that these activities present particular risks which must be identified, assessed and controlled. This policy integrates lone working controls with staff safeguarding measures so that personal safety is central to all lone working arrangements.

2. Purpose and Scope

Purpose: to provide a robust framework for the assessment and management of lone working risks; to define responsibilities; to set out procedures that reduce risk to an acceptable level; and to integrate safeguarding throughout.

Scope: applies to all persons undertaking work on behalf of the Council, including office work, site inspections, community engagement, meetings, events, travel between locations and home/remote working.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- HSE INDG73 'Working Alone' guidance
- NALC / SLCC best-practice models for local councils

4. Definitions

Lone Working: any work activity undertaken by a person without close or direct supervision where assistance may not be readily available if an incident occurs.

High-Risk Activity: any task where the inherent hazards and reasonably foreseeable consequences exceed tolerable risk for a lone worker (e.g., work at height, electrical work, confined spaces, working near water, live highways, derelict structures).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Council: approves the policy; provides resources; monitors assurance and review.

Town Clerk / Managers: ensure risk assessments are completed and reviewed; authorise or prohibit lone working; implement communication and monitoring systems; provide training and equipment; investigate incidents; report to Council/Committee.

Employees/Councillors: take reasonable care; comply with procedures and training; use equipment provided; report concerns, incidents and near misses immediately; decline work if risk cannot be controlled.

Contractors/Volunteers: must comply with this policy and the Council's risk assessments when acting on the Council's behalf.

6. Principles of Safe Lone Working

- Avoid lone working where practicable (risk elimination and substitution).
- Prohibit lone working for high-risk activities (e.g., electrical, height, confined spaces, near water, hazardous substances, unstable structures).
- Plan tasks, schedule during daylight where possible, and use buddying for elevated risk scenarios.
- Maintain reliable communication and check-in/out procedures; ensure emergency access/egress at all times.

7. Safeguarding Integration

- Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff and councillors whose roles involve public contact.
- Avoid one-to-one meetings with vulnerable adults/young people; use controlled venues or an additional staff member.
- Report any safeguarding concern immediately to the Town Clerk (Designated Safeguarding Lead). Record and escalate in line with the Council's safeguarding procedures.

8. Risk Assessment Methodology

All lone working must be subject to a written risk assessment using a likelihood (1–5) × severity (1–5) matrix. Controls follow the hierarchy: eliminate, substitute, engineering, administrative, PPE. Assessments must be specific to the task and environment, recorded, communicated and reviewed after any change or incident.

Example steps: (1) Identify task and environment; (2) Identify hazards and persons at risk; (3) Evaluate current controls; (4) Score likelihood and severity; (5) Specify additional controls and residual risk; (6) Assign responsible person and review date.

9. Procedures by Scenario

Office-Based Lone Working: keep external doors secured; do not admit the public after hours; ensure lighting; keep exits clear; keep mobile phone charged and accessible; notify start/finish times; report completion.

Site Visits/Inspections: log destination and expected return; carry phone and required PPE; avoid remote or poorly lit areas; consider buddying; confirm arrival/departure; do not enter unsafe structures; withdraw if hostility arises.

Handling Money/Valuables: avoid predictable banking routines; do not carry large sums alone; use lockable containers and secure storage; consider dual control; vary times/routes.

Public Meetings/Engagement: use safe neutral venues; maintain a clear exit; sit nearest exit; discontinue meeting if threats arise; record and report any aggression or intimidation immediately.

Home/Remote Working: ensure safe workstation and environment; maintain regular contact; follow data protection and confidentiality requirements.

10. Communication, Monitoring and Escalation

- Mandatory check-in/out with an agreed contact; use scheduled call/text/app-based prompts for higher-risk tasks.
- If a check-in is missed: attempt contact; escalate to Town Clerk; verify last known location; if still no contact within 30 minutes, notify emergency services.
- Maintain up-to-date emergency contacts; log all escalations.

11. Training, Supervision and Wellbeing

Induction includes lone working and safeguarding awareness, de-escalation, dynamic risk assessment, and emergency response. Annual refreshers are provided. Supervisors conduct spot checks and debriefs. Wellbeing considerations include managing fatigue, stress and exposure to aggression; support is available through management and HR processes.

12. Incident Reporting, Investigation and Review

All incidents, near misses, safeguarding concerns and violent/aggressive behaviour must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk. Serious incidents are investigated; RIDDOR is followed when applicable. Learning outcomes inform updated assessments, procedures and training.

Appendix A – Lone Working Risk Assessment Matrix (Landscape)

Complete for each lone working activity. Use the scoring guidance below and ensure additional controls reduce risk to Low wherever practicable.

Task / Activity	Location	Hazard Description	Persons at Risk	Existing Controls	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk Rating (L×S)	Additional Controls / Action	Responsible / Review Date
Office lone working	Council Office	Slip/trip; fire; unwanted visitor	Admin staff	Doors locked; clear exits; alarm; phone accessible; incident log	2	3	6 (Medium)	Install panic alarm; maintain CCTV; scheduled check-ins	Manager / [Date]
Site inspection – play area	Open space	Aggression; isolation; uneven ground	Officer	Notify itinerary; carry phone/PPE; daylight visits	3	4	12 (High)	Buddy system for remote sites; GPS check-in; avoid dusk	Manager / [Date]
Banking cash (low value)	High street	Theft/assault ; accusation	Officer	Vary times/routes ; lockable pouch; low values only	2	3	6 (Medium)	Dual control for >£X; taxi if required; secure storage	Manager / [Date]

Scoring guidance: Likelihood 1=Rare ... 5=Almost certain; Severity 1=Minor ... 5=Fatal. Risk Rating bands: 1–5 Low; 6–10 Medium; 11–25 High – high risks require immediate controls or cessation.

Appendix B – Lone Working Pre-Task Checklist

This checklist must be completed prior to any lone working activity and retained with the risk assessment file.

- ☐ Task has been risk assessed and authorised by the Town Clerk/Manager.
- ☐ Location, route and expected return time logged with designated contact.
- ☐ Communication device (phone/radio/app) tested and fully charged; signal available.
- ☐ Emergency procedure known; emergency contacts available.
- ☐ Required PPE and equipment available and serviceable (hi-vis, torch, first aid, etc.).
- ☐ Environment assessed: lighting, access/egress, weather, public interaction, specific site hazards.
- ☐ Cash/valuables handling avoided or minimised; dual control if applicable.
- ☐ Worker is medically fit and feels confident to proceed; stress/fatigue considered.
- ☐ Check-in schedule agreed (times and method); completion confirmation arranged.

Employee Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Manager Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C – Emergency Contact and Escalation Procedure

If a lone worker fails to check in: (1) Attempt immediate contact; (2) Inform Town Clerk; (3) Establish last known location; (4) If still no contact within 30 minutes, notify Police and provide details; (5) Log all actions and outcomes.

Contact Name	Role / Relationship	Telephone Number

Policy Approval and Review

This policy was approved by Northstowe Town Council on [Insert Date]. It will be reviewed annually or sooner in the event of legislative change, operational change or following an incident.

Chairman's Signature: _____

Clerk's Signature: _____

Date: _____