

## Lone Working Policy

Policy Code:	HS6
Policy Start Date:	March 2026
Policy Review Date:	March 2029

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR29 Code of Conduct
- HS5 Health and Safety Policy
- HS7 Home Visits Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SW17 Safeguarding Adults Policy

## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 This policy is designed to alert staff to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is not intended to raise anxiety unnecessarily, but to give staff a framework for managing situations where the conditions of service delivery and its associated tasks require staff to work alone.
- 1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## **2. Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation**

- 2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Head of HR.
- 2.2 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

## **3. Aims**

- 3.1 To ensure clarity so that:
  - procedures are applied consistently across the Trust;
  - all staff have an understanding of lone working environments and practices;
  - all staff receive relevant information, instruction, training and supervision in respect of lone working;
  - risks to staff are minimised/controlled where practicably possible; and
  - appropriate resources are in place to ensure the health & safety of staff and pupils.

## **4. Definition**

- 4.1 Within this document, 'lone working' refers to situations where staff in the course of their duties work alone around the academies, attend the homes of

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individuals (HR, Attendance Officers), work in their own home, may be the only staff member present in an office or other establishment maintained by the Trust or who work outside of 'normal' hours. They will be physically isolated from colleagues, and without access to immediate assistance. This last situation may also arise where there are other staff in the building but the nature of the building itself may essentially create isolated areas.

4.2 It is recognised that on occasion administrative, outdoor education, IT, site staff, cleaners and external keyholders (security staff) might be alone in a building (i.e., with no other staff or other individuals, e.g., lettings). These individuals should take particular note of the following:

- ensure someone knows where you will be working and what time you will finish;
- make sure all doors and windows are locked, whilst ensuring all fire escape routes and final escape doors remain accessible for use in an emergency;
- be aware of health & safety, do not take unnecessary risks. For example, avoid potential hazards such as working at height and the use of ladders;
- when opening and closing sites, try to arrange the times so that you are on site just before others arrive, and close sites just after the last person has left, to keep the time that you are on your own to a minimum; and
- keep a mobile phone with you at all times.

4.3 External keyholders contracted to open, close or respond to alarm activations on Trust premises are more than likely to find that they are engaged in lone working activities. In these instances, they must comply with this policy which is shared with them at the point of contractual engagement and provide assurances via the Trust's 'CFISO6' process that they follow lone working procedures implemented by their own organisation.

## **5. Mandatory Procedures – Security of Building**

5.1 Managers are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible. Due to the individual needs of the sites, each Academy will have its own locking and unlocking procedures.

5.2 Alarm systems must be tested regularly.

5.3 Key codes for access must be changed at set intervals and, as a matter of course, if a breach of security is suspected.

5.4 Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the exits and alarms.

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- 5.5 There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.
  - 5.6 If there is any indication that a building has been broken into, a staff member must not enter alone, but must wait for back-up. This could include independent back-up, such as the Police or security company if necessary.
  - 5.7 In buildings where staff may be working with people in relative isolation, there must be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

For further information staff should refer to the Health and Safety Manual (which can be found on the online portal).

## **6. Personal safety**

- 6.1 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is a sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.
- 6.2 Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances (see Appendix 1).
- 6.3 Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager. The Trust will ensure that all premises and work areas are as safe as reasonably practicable to allow lone workers to conduct their work safely. For external keyholders, their employers are responsible for implementing procedures to ensure their lone workers have suitable means of communication available to enable them to seek assistance if required.
- 6.4 Staff must not arrange meetings with parents/carers or members of the public when lone working. All meetings should be arranged during normal school operating times or when there is more than one member of staff on site for the duration of the meeting.
- 6.5 Staff must know, and follow, relevant safe working procedures and guidelines, including operating machinery and using hazardous substances. Care should be taken when using passenger lifts whilst lone working, any mechanical breakdown or failure could result in staff being stranded with limited means of communication and requiring emergency lift rescue. Whilst most lifts will have emergency contact phones/speaker systems, it is recommended that lone workers carry a mobile phone on their person, in the event that assistance is needed.
- 6.6 Staff must inform their line manager of any relevant medical conditions.

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- 6.7 Staff must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed (this should be the case even if the member of staff is working out of hours). This also includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a task rather than returning to their base.
- 6.8 Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.
- 6.9 Staff such as cleaners or external keyholders who work to a pre-planned programme of visits, must inform their line manager if they deviate from the programme.
- 6.10 If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation by an agreed person, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.
- 6.11 Arrangement for contacts and response should be tailored to the needs and nature of the department. Issues to take into account include:
- staffing levels and availability;
  - the identified risks; and
  - measures in place to reduce those risks.
- 6.12 When staff work alone for extended periods on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.
- 6.13 Staff working around settings should keep a mobile phone on their person, which they are responsible for ensuring is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider.
- 6.14 Staff should take 'reasonable precautions' which might include:
- checking directions for the destination;
  - checking whether a person is known to present a risk and the agreed plan for working with them;
  - ensuring your mobile phone is fully charged;
  - ensuring your car, if used, is roadworthy and has breakdown cover;
  - avoiding where possible poorly lit or deserted areas (or take a partner with you if necessary);
  - taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night; and

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- ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phone are carried discreetly.

6.15 Staff should report any concerns out of office hours to the Site Manager.

6.16 The agreed plan for contact or emergency response may be a standard one for a team or specific to the individual situation. It should be recorded and readily accessible by the identified person, and updated as necessary. It may be appropriate to agree a code word or phrase to indicate that assistance is required.

6.17 Staff should be particularly aware that even ex-directory and mobile numbers will show up on Caller Display, and can be retrieved on 1471. If necessary, to prevent the person you call accessing your number, dial 141 before their number, or check the instructions for your mobile phone.

6.18 When visiting an area where a risk has been identified, staff should check that their clothing (tie, scarf, earrings etc) will not offer an assailant an advantage. Similarly, they should be aware that pens, pencils, keys or heavy bags may also be used to cause injury.

6.19 For further information please see Appendix 1.

## **7 Assessment of risk**

7.1 In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk, the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstance:

- the environment - location, security, access;
- the context - nature of the task, any special circumstances;
- the individuals concerned - indicators of potential or actual risk;
- history - any previous incidents in similar situations; and
- any other special circumstances.

7.2 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.

7.3 Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

7.4 For further guidance see Appendix 2.

## **8. Planning**

- 8.1 Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.
- 8.2 Plans for responding to individual service areas that present a known risk should be regularly reviewed and discussed with the staff team and any externally contracted lone workers who may not be aware of ongoing developments during building refurbishment or maintenance works, that may affect their duties.
- 8.3 Communication, checking-in and fall-back arrangements must be in place.
- 8.4 The team manager is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.
- 9. Reporting**
- 9.1 Accidents, incidents and near-misses should be reported on the Estates and Facilities Portal.
- 10. Staff working at home**
- 10.1 Staff working from their own homes should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that their address and telephone number remain confidential.
- 10.2 There should be regular contact with their line manager or other designated person if working at home for extended periods, and an appropriate reporting-in system should be used.
- 11. Unacceptable lone working**
- 11.1 The following activities are not to be carried out by lone workers under any circumstances:
- working at height;
  - manual handling of heavy or bulky items; and/or
  - undertaking work for which they are not trained.
- 12. Monitoring and Review**
- 12.1 The ongoing implementation of the Lone Working Policy will be monitored through the supervision process.
- 12.2 Lone Working and risk assessment will be regular agenda items for team meetings.

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12.3 Any member of staff with a concern regarding these issues should ensure that it is discussed with their manager or with the whole team, as appropriate.

12.4 A failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

**13. Policy Changes**

13.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

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## **The Priory Federation of Academies Trust Lone Working Policy**

This Policy has been approved by the Trust's Pay, Performance and HR Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Designated Member of Staff

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Safety Tips for Staying Safe When Out and About Alone**

The following tips have been developed using guidance provided by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

#### **Public Transport**

1. View timetables and decide time of travelling in advance.
2. When waiting for transport after dark, wait in well-lit areas and near any emergency alarms and CCTV cameras.
3. If using public transport, sit near the driver, move to a safer seat when possible; be aware of where the emergency alarm button is situated.
4. If something or someone makes you feel uncomfortable, act on your instincts and move seats to be ready to raise the alarm.

#### **Taxis**

1. Only use marked taxis.
2. Try making your bookings for outbound and return journeys before you leave.
3. If you can't book in advance, keep details of several firms on you to increase chances of successful booking.
4. When booking, ask for driver and/or car details so you can make sure you are getting into the right car.

#### **Driving**

1. Ensure your car is well maintained and that you don't run out of petrol; lock your car doors whilst travelling between visits; try to park in a well-lit area. Consider joining a national breakdown organisation.
2. Keep an emergency kit in your car - extra coat, torch, water, spare change, telephone charger.
3. Always have the necessary maps and directions in the car, reducing the need to stop and ask.
4. When arriving back at your car, be aware of your surroundings, have your keys ready and check inside the car before entering.
5. Do not keep valuables on a seat where they could be seen and grabbed through a window.
6. If you break down, be aware of your surroundings and only get out of your car when and if you feel safe it is safe to do so.
7. Road rage incidents are rare and, by not responding to aggression from other drivers, can often be avoided.
8. If the driver of another car forces you to stop, keep your engine running and if you need to, reverse to get away.
9. Try not to use isolated car parks.

10. When parking in a car park, consider where the entrances and exits are. Try to avoid having to walk across a lonely car park to get to your car. Park away from pillars/barriers and if possible, reverse into your space so you can drive away easily.
11. When you park in daylight, consider what the area will be like if you are returning in the dark.
12. Keep all valuables out of sight, for example in the boot
13. Lock your car even if you only go to pay for petrol on a garage forecourt.
14. If you are working on paperwork in the car, keep the activity to a minimum, park in a well-lit area, keep doors locked and try to remain aware of your surroundings. Think 'is this a safe place for me to park'?
15. If you are approached and feel uncomfortable, use your horn to attract attention or discourage the other person.
16. If you see an incident or accident or someone trying to flag you down, don't stop to investigate without thinking - is it? Could you help? Would it be safer and more use if you went to help?

### **Walking / Out And About**

1. Try to avoid walking alone at night.
2. Keep to well-lit or busy streets and avoid isolated areas or danger spots as much as possible.
3. Avoid areas where you know groups hang about.
4. Walk facing oncoming traffic.
5. If you have to walk in the same direction as traffic and a driver stops, simply turn and walk the other way.
6. If you think you are being followed, cross the street several times. If you still think you're being followed, get away from the situation - run if necessary to a busy area and seek assistance, for example go into a shop, office building or go to a lit house etc. and ask for help.
7. A confident appearance for example walking tall, normal pace, arms relaxed, will make you look less vulnerable.
8. Shout for assistance; a clear instruction such as 'call the police' may work.
9. Reduce the amount of bags or paperwork you are carrying. It could affect your ability to move quickly. Try to keep one hand free whenever possible.
10. Keep your phone and keys in your pocket, not your bag.
11. Don't limit your awareness of your surroundings by wearing a personal radio or stereo.
12. Consider carrying a personal safety alarm.
13. Remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.
14. Try to avoid danger rather than confront it. Walking away can be a simple but effective way to prevent an incident.
15. Carry your bag securely; if possible put the strap across your body. You may prefer to carry laptops etc. in a backpack (with some padding) rather than a laptop bag. If possible, remove any logos/ stickers on the bag which may identify it as containing computer equipment.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Assessment of Risk**

Staff making an initial visit to a place of work should have access to all available relevant information in order to make a reasoned judgement of any potential risk.

Departments must be encouraged to share all relevant information when making a request for a service, and control measures should be agreed where appropriate.

The following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access
- The context - nature of the task, special circumstances etc
- The individuals concerned- indicators of potential or actual risk
- History - any previous incidents in similar situations (Known Risk)
- Any other special circumstances.

#### **1. Assessment**

##### **The Environment**

- It is the responsibility of the manager to assess the risks presented by the building itself - access, lay-out, furnishings, lighting and temperature control - and to take appropriate action.
- Alarm systems must be accessible, and tested regularly.
- All staff must be familiar with the alarms, and be given clear instructions on how to respond to them.
- If people are travelling on transport or through a public place, or are visiting an isolated area, there must be an appropriate assessment of the risks this might present.
- If working outdoors climate should be considered. (i.e., is it exceptionally hot/cold?).

##### **Personal**

- In order to make a complete assessment, any history of an individual's challenging behaviour should be investigated.
- Any information regarding known concerns must be recorded (i.e., medical history concerns).
- Staff must be aware of the effect they may have on a situation through their verbal and non-verbal communication, and take steps to avoid provocation.

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## Sharing Information

- Information should be shared with relevant staff only due to issues of confidentiality and data protection
- Staff should ensure that relevant information concerning any possible hazards and violent or abusive incidents are shared appropriately with other departments and sections.
- Where lone working may be known to other departments, managers should inform others of incidents and of the specific control measures currently being implemented.
- If lone working hazards are identified by the Trust, it is expected that risk assessments and relevant control measures will be routinely shared.

## 2. Planning

- If working in an area where lone working has been identified as a hazard, always consider a joint visit as an alternative.
- Ensure there are agreed contacts in case of an emergency and a system for reporting back at the end of a visit is in place.
- Take into consideration the current situation and any previous events which have caused problems.