Lone Worker Policy

Policy Statement

Phoenix Arts takes the health and safety of its employees and volunteers seriously. We have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our employees and volunteers while at work or carrying out volunteer activity. We realise that at any given time, staff or volunteers may be working or volunteering alone, either in our buildings or externally.

Aim and Scope

This policy is designed to alert employees and volunteers 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 designed to give employees and volunteers a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

Related Policies and Procedures

Lone Working Risk Assessment
Lone Working Procedure

Related Legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Context

Phoenix Arts has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and volunteers while at work or engaged in volunteer activity. At any given time, employees or volunteers may be alone, either in our premises or when operating on our behalf externally. We are responsible for assessing the risks to lone workers and taking steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary. Employees and volunteers have the responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe. Taking precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone. This policy is designed for employees and volunteers who either frequently or occasionally work or volunteer alone. It also refers to both high and low risk activities.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For example:
- People working separately from others in a building.
- People who work outside 'normal' hours.
- People who work away from their fixed base without colleagues.
- People who work at home other than in low risk, office-type work.

The definition covers staff and volunteers in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures.

Potential Hazards of Working Alone

People who work or volunteer alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks.

However, additionally they may encounter the following:
- Accidents or sudden illnesses may occur when there is no-one to call for help or first aid available.
- Fire.
- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building for example, danger of being accidentally locked in.
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone.

Measures to reduce the risk of lone working

To reduce the risk for people working alone we carry out a risk assessment of the following issues, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- 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.
- Any other special circumstances.

All available information should be taken into account and risk assessments should be updated as necessary. 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.

In any situation where an employee or volunteer is operating alone and feels unsafe, they must remove themselves from that situation immediately and report the incident to their line manager or supervisor.

In any situation where an employee or volunteer is operating alone and an incident occurs, this must be reported to their line manager as soon as possible. An incident is any situation where the health and safety of the employee or volunteer is compromised and may include an accident, fire, violence or threat of violence (this list is not exhaustive).

Supervision

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. We ensure that you understand the risks associated with your work and the relevant safety precautions.

- Employees or volunteers will be given training that covers lone working where appropriate during induction.
- Employees or volunteers new to a role where they may be lone working may need to be accompanied initially.
- Regular contact by phone may be appropriate and we ensure that employees or volunteers carrying out duties alone have a mobile phone available at all times to enable them to contact the office in the event of an emergency. (if the office is closed mobile numbers will be made available)

Accidents and Emergencies

Employees and volunteers operating alone should be made aware of the process for responding correctly to emergencies.

Employees or volunteers who are alone in the building must inform (the Operations Manager) and are responsible for adhering to security and fire regulations.

Conclusion

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff or volunteers, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors.

Phoenix Arts ensures that measures are in place to reduce risk and that expectations have been communicated to employees and volunteers operating alone and that appropriate training is provided.

All staff and volunteers, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and should take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with carrying out their normal duties.

Updated by *Operations Manager*   Approved by The Board
Date: Thursday, 15 August 2024   Date: 9th July 2024

Procedures

Security of the building

- Phoenix Arts is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to control access to the building, and that emergency exits are accessible.
- Alarm systems must be tested monthly.
- Staff working alone must ensure they are familiar with the exits and alarms.
- There must be access to a telephone and first aid equipment for staff working alone.
- 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.
- In buildings where staff may be working with people in relative isolation, there should be an agreed system in place to alert colleagues in an emergency.

Personal safety

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.

- Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.
- Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the Operations Manager.
- Staff will phone their line manager to inform them when they arrive and leave the venue they are working in.
- If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as appropriate.

Arrangements for contacts and responses should be tailored to the needs and nature of the team. Issues to take into account include:

- staffing levels and availability
- Staff working in the community should be issued with a mobile phone; they are responsible for checking that it is charged, in working order, and with sufficient credit remaining with the relevant provider.

Assessment of risk

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

- 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
- any other special circumstances

- All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.
- 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.
- While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

Planning

- Staff should be fully briefed in relation to risk as well as the task itself.
- Communication, checking-in and fallback arrangements must be in place.
- The CEO is responsible for agreeing and facilitating these arrangements, which should be tailored to the operating conditions affecting the team.

Practice Guidance

Personal Safety
'Reasonable precautions might include:

- taking care when entering or leaving empty buildings, especially at night
- ensuring that items such as laptops or mobile phones are carried discreetly.
- The agreed plan for contact or emergency response may be a standard one for the 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.

Be aware of the environment
- Know what measures are in place where you work: check out alarm systems and procedures, exits and entrances, and the location of the first aid supplies.
- Make sure that your car and mobile phone are in good working order, and that electrical and other mechanical equipment is safe to use. Check the instructions for use, and ensure that faults are reported /dealt with.
- If a potentially violent situation occurs, be aware of what might be used as a weapon against you, and of possible escape routes.
- Try to maintain a comfortable level of heating and lighting.

Be aware of yourself
- Think about your body language. What messages are you giving?
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words. Avoid anything which could be seen as sarcastic or patronising.
- Think about what you are wearing. Is it suitable for the task? Does it hamper your movement? In a potentially risky situation, does a scarf or tie offer an opportunity to an assailant?
- Be aware of your own triggers – the things that make you angry or upset.
- Be aware of other people
- Take note of their non-verbal signals.

Be aware of their triggers.
- Don't crowd people – allow them space.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time you will need to do something, and don't make promises which can't be kept, either on your own or someone else's behalf.
- Listen to others and show them you are listening.

Risk Assessment

Activity	Potential Hazards	Control Measures
Working in office/premises alone	**Fire:** Burns Smoke inhalation Trapped in building	• Fire detection system • Fire alarm call points • Fire action: safety notices/information • Extinguishers • Fire doors kept shut • Training for staff • Fire exits kept clear • Planned inspections • Hazard reporting and correction • Adequate cleaning/ waste disposal • Electrical safety inc PAT testing • No smoking, or controlled smoking environment
	Intruder: Attack Verbal abuse Theft of property Arson	• Controlled access to building • Access to phone • Cooperation of building users • Keep valuables locked up • Fire precautions • Post incident support
Illness/ injury/ accident	No immediate access to medication or assistance	• Alert team members if able • Access to phone • Take medication as directed or as needed • Planned inspections of workplace Avoid high risk activities (e.g. working at height) • Reporting faults and repair process • Provision of first aid equipment • Trained first aider • Electrical safety • Post incident support
Working with public or service users	Assault Verbal abuse Threats	• Avoid conflict – use non - threatening body language • Withdraw politely from situations which become inflamed • Staff briefings and sharing information • Awareness of risks