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LONE WORKING

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LONE WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited (hereinafter referred to as "Nursing Direct") complies with its responsibilities in addressing the risks associated with lone working for all staff, including agency workers. This policy supports staff, including agency workers, who work alone, whether they spend a significant portion of their working time operating in situations without interaction with other workers, close or direct supervision, or anyone nearby to provide assistance if needed, especially if their health and safety are at risk.

This arises as a legal obligation for Nursing Direct under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to assess all risks to health and safety, including those associated with lone working. If there are potential risks identified, appropriate arrangements must be implemented. The risk assessments entail identifying workplace hazards and evaluating their likelihood of causing harm to staff including Agency Workers and others. Furthermore, they involve determining the preventive or control measures Nursing Direct needs to adopt to mitigate risks and safeguard lone workers from harm. If the risk assessment indicates that a lone worker cannot safely perform the work, it is crucial to escalate arrangements for providing support and assistance, or devising a contingency plan, to the relevant professionals for implementation.

In view of the above aims, Nursing Direct focusses on:

- Its legal duty of assessing potential health and safety risks to the lone workers when they are engaging with service users within the community or at their own homes and have measures in place for managing such risks with possible reasonable steps being taken for their safety.
- Providing training, supervision, monitoring, and support for lone workers and the management of Nursing Direct to have a clear understanding on Lone working.
- Adopting appropriate guidance outlining the responsibilities of both lone workers and Nursing Direct as an employer under health and safety laws. This aims to improve safety and minimise the risks as is practical to do so. Practical measures are taken to safeguard lone workers from various risks, encompassing work-related violence, hazards from service users and the public, environmental risks, and health-related hazards and injuries. Providing guidance and support on the measures and requirements to be in place in accordance with Government legislation Rules and regulations ensuring that Nursing Direct manage health and safety risks of any lone worker.
- Having a process which supports Nursing Direct in meeting the Key Lines of Enquiry/Quality Statements (New) of safe, well led, caring and effective to ensure safer practices surrounding lone working in order to safeguard, support and promote the health, safety and welfare of Staff including Agency Workers working alone.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The main Purpose of this policy is to safeguard, support and promote the health, safety and welfare of Staff including Agency Workers of Nursing Direct who are working alone.
- 1.2 To support Nursing Direct in meeting regulatory aspects of Safe, Effective and Well-led status as outlined by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and to ensure that it gives attention to Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) and Quality Statements ensuring that:
 - Nursing Directs' lone workers possess the required skills, knowledge, and experience to deal with the risks of lone working and protect themselves with effective evidence-based support processes and practices in place to reduce the risks
 - What lessons are learned, and improvements made when things go wrong
- 1.3 **Relevant Legislations, Laws, Rules, and Regulations:**

To meet the legal requirements Nursing Direct has taken into consideration the following legislations when complying with its role and duty as an employer towards Lone working.

 - The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
 - Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The following roles may be affected by this policy:
 - All Staff including Agency Workers identified as lone workers.
- 2.2 The following Service Users may be affected by this policy:
 - All Service Users
 - NOK/Families of service user
 - Power of Attorney holders
 - Advocates as duly authorised
- 2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:
 - Commissioners
 - Local Authorities
 - NHS, ICB/CCG

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To ensure suitable processes are in place to assess all potential risks to Staff including Agency Workers' health and safety when lone working, further identifying what hazards exist in the workplace and how likely it is that they will cause harm to the Staff including Agency Workers, the service user, and others.
- 3.2 To decide on what prevention or control measures that Nursing Direct needs to take to reduce the identified risks and to protect the lone workers from harm.

- 3.3 To ensure appropriate arrangements and measures are effectively, practically, and reasonably established to mitigate risks to lone workers, it is imperative to prevent them from encountering avoidable risks or harm during the execution of their duties for service users within their scope of work. If the risk assessment indicates that a lone worker cannot safely perform the work, it is crucial to escalate arrangements for providing support and assistance, or devising a contingency plan, to the relevant professionals for implementation.
- 3.4 To ensure that robust lone working procedures are in place, ensuring lone worker safety at all times.

4. POLICY

- 4.1 Nursing Direct recognises that there may be an increased risk to the health and safety of its Staff including Agency Workers whilst working alone. The Registered Manager has an overall responsibility for ensuring that suitable measures are put in place to protect their lone workers, whilst undertaking their work activities of care delivery. The Registered Manager has responsibility for ensuring the following policy provisions are in place:
- All appropriate risks will be assessed prior to the commencement of any service by a lone worker.
 - Appropriate resources and processes will be established to support the health, safety, and welfare of any lone worker.
 - If the risks are assessed as being too great, and the health, safety and welfare of the Staff including Agency Worker cannot be assured, then a service will not be provided by a lone worker. Instead, a contingency plan will be arranged.
 - All risks will be regularly reviewed (periodically or as and when required depending on the requirements of the package) by Nursing Direct and lone workers will also get opportunities to contribute to the process through their regular supervisions, feedback, and any concerns raised whilst lone working issues.
- 4.2 All lone working activities are subject to a suitable and sufficient risk assessment procedure which will be further detailed under the below Procedure section.
- 4.3 Robust lone working procedures are in place and suitable resources/equipment is provided to ensure lone workers safety and ensure suitable management of lone worker risks.
- 4.4 Suitable emergency procedures are in place and are clearly communicated to and understood by the lone worker to ensure an appropriate response in the event of an emergency situation.
- 4.5 Nursing Direct arrange appropriate mechanisms and procedures to ensure that any incidents are recorded and reported at the earliest opportunity. The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring all incidents are suitably investigated and will also engage with lone workers to find out what their concerns are and look for possible solutions.
- 4.6 If the risks associated with the lone working activity are assessed as being too great, and the health, safety and welfare of the Staff including Agency Worker cannot be assured, it is crucial to escalate arrangements for providing support and assistance, or devising a contingency plan, to the relevant professionals for implementation.
- 4.7 All risks assessments and safe working procedures will be regularly reviewed on at least an annual basis or an as and when basis, to ensure that they remain suitable and are sufficient in minimising risks to lone workers.
- 4.8 Nursing Direct will ensure that all lone workers are thoroughly trained at the commencement of their employment and at suitable intervals thereafter, to ensure they are aware of the risks and know how to keep themselves safe. Training will ensure lone workers understand the risks of their work, the precautions that are needed, who to report back to and what should be done in an emergency.
- 4.9 Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited will ensure that lone workers identified as at risk of workplace violence are provided with training in personal safety. Conflict resolution training will assist lone workers to recognise situations where they may be at risk, and the appropriate steps they can take to eliminate or manage the risk.
- 4.10 Nursing Direct will ensure it has considered the impact that lone working can have on work-related stress levels and mental health.
- 4.11 All lone workers must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and avoid placing themselves at risk. They must also take suitable measures to ensure the security of the working environment at all times.

5. PROCEDURE

- 5.1 A suitable risk assessment is undertaken for any aspect of lone working prior to any Staff including Agency Worker being permitted to undertake any of their lone working activities.
- 5.2 All lone workers are briefed on the specific risk assessment and the lone working procedures in place to keep them safe prior to undertaking any lone working activity. Lone workers will be required to ensure they fully understand the contents of the task-specific risk assessment in place prior to starting work. All specified control measures must be implemented and remain in place throughout the duration of the activity.

Where the lone worker's tasks are carried out in a service user's own home, consideration will be given within their risk assessments to the knowledge of any hazardous historical information on the service user or relatives who are regularly on the premises at the same time as the Staff including Agency Worker. This may include issues relating to drugs or alcohol misuse, and/or mental health conditions that have led to previous violent incidents or other hazards (subject to the provision of Data Protection Act).

The Risk Assessment could include the assessment of task requirements, work environment, capability, health conditions and disabilities, behavioural aspects, triggers or service user needs, history of risks and any other known risk factors to ensure that risks to lone workers are suitably identified and adequately controlled.

Lone workers face a broad range of health and safety hazards, just as any other worker does, but the risk can be considerably higher as a lone worker when assessing manual handling, fire risks, risks of handling hazardous chemicals and other substances or medication.

It is not always feasible to identify all hazards associated with lone working situations, especially in instances where the workplace or area is situated within the community or beyond the direct control of the employer. In such circumstances, lone workers are trained to manage risks and are provided with training to effectively address such situations.

The risk Assessments of Nursing Direct will be adequately cover:

1. The risk to the health and safety of Nursing Directs' lone workers
 2. The risk to others who may be affected
 3. Identification of the preventative and protective measures needed (as far as reasonably practical)
 4. The need to review the assessment if there is reason to believe that it is no longer valid
 5. The importance of keeping a written record, of the findings of the assessment if lone workers on certain package are particularly at risk
 6. Arrangements for the effective planning, organising, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures
 7. Provision of any health surveillance identified in the risk assessment.
 8. The appointment of competent people
 9. Procedures outlined within the care plan must be adhered to in the event that serious and imminent danger is identified as a potential risk or if the work environment is deemed unsafe.
 10. Health and safety information, instruction and training for all lone workers.
- 5.3 Comprehensive lone worker training is provided to all lone workers at induction and at suitable intervals thereafter, to ensure ongoing awareness of lone working risks and the measures in place to ensure lone worker safety.

Training will include details of:

- The safe working procedures in place to ensure lone worker safety including safety aspects of all premises, such as the Service User's home and any equipment being used.
 - The working limits imposed on lone working to ensure that risks are reduced to a level as low as reasonably practicable.
 - Arrangements for maintaining regular contact with their line manager.
 - Emergency procedures: fire, accident, illness, physical attack
 - Issues regarding how to handle behaviour which may be challenging, how to defuse any difficult situation which may arise as a result of such behaviour, and the reporting procedures to be used when concerns arise in the mind of the lone worker about the behaviour of anyone who they meet or may meet in the performance of their duties. Arrangements for ensuring that all work equipment and the work environment (where applicable) is kept in safe condition, free from defects.
 - Specific procedures and precautions for identified high risk activities such as manual handling.
 - Monitoring, supervision, and staff including Staff including Agency Worker support
- 5.4 Line managers are responsible for ensuring that lone working procedures are fully implemented, and that regular contact is maintained with all lone workers at intervals appropriate to the identified risk.
- 5.5 Suitable procedures and means of communication, including emergency contact details of a responsible person within Nursing Direct are provided to the lone worker to ensure suitable communication channels exist and are in place during Nursing Directs working hours of 05:30 – 22:30. Communication channels in place will allow the location of individuals to be determined at any particular time. This may include the requirement to report to a central point at the end of a working period or GPS tracking which is available on our online booking system.
- 5.6 Prior to commencing work alone, all lone workers must ensure that they have adequate means of communication/emergency contact, and this must be kept on their person and be fully operational throughout the duration of the activity.
- 5.7 Recognition will be given to mobile phone reception and other issues that may prevent contact being made in an emergency, which will be set out in the Risk Assessment, if required.
- 5.8 It is the responsibility of all staff including Staff including Agency Workers who may be allocated to work alone to disclose any medical conditions which may make them unsuitable for lone working to the Registered Manager as soon as they become known. Nursing Direct will follow HSE guidance on lone workers with medical conditions and consider following a risk assessment whether medical advice is required by Nursing Direct to ensure that the worker can safely carry out their role when working alone.
- 5.9 Nursing Direct recognises that lone working is a highly responsible role, with limited opportunity for observed practice or for the lone worker to share the responsibility for actions. However, any breaches of trust and failure to follow the agreed procedure will be viewed very seriously and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- 5.10 The assigned Clinical Leads within Nursing Direct are responsible for:
- Reminding all staff including Agency Workers of the importance of reporting any unsafe or defective equipment to ensure regular maintenance is carried out
 - Regularly reviewing the training needs of the lone workers and ensuring that refresher training, or training in new working methods, is provided.
 - Where risk assessment identifies the need, having verbal communication with lone workers at least once every shift.
 - Holding team meetings, which all lone workers must attend, when required
 - Providing lone working staff including Agency Workers with the contact details within the care plan of the person they can contact for help and support in fulfilling their duties whilst on duty.
 - Are fully briefed on the service users contingency plan, so in the event the office is closed the Staff including Agency Worker is aware of the contingency plan and process to follow.

5.11 **Work-related Violence**

Risks in the workplace can include:

- Working in locations where it is already known there is a high risk of violence.
- Late evening or early morning work when there are fewer people about
- Alcohol and drug use by service users or members of the public that lone workers may come into contact with
- Carrying money or valuables

Nursing Direct will carry out a risk assessment for work-related violence and will consider measures such as modification or design of the work environment, avoid workers being isolated and the provision of work equipment such as devices designed to raise the alarm in an emergency.

5.12 **Management of Stress and Mental Health**

Nursing Direct will ensure that procedures are put in place for the management of stress and mental health. Lone working can aggravate pre-existing conditions, and problems encountered at work can bring on symptoms or worsen their effect. Nursing Direct will assess work-related mental health issues to measure the levels of risk to lone workers. Where a risk is identified, Nursing Direct will take steps to remove or reduce the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

When any aspect of a lone workers package is unavoidably stressful, emotionally draining, or traumatic such as dealing with incidents, injuries, assaults or neglectful or harmful issues or risks of hazards, Nursing direct assess such occurrences. These should be reported to Nursing Direct through their incident reporting system where their concern is raised on the Radar Healthcare Reporting System. All events raised with Nursing Direct will be reviewed and escalated to the appropriate persons.

Nursing Direct recognise the importance of worker’s mental status and well-being after stressful or risky events, following their Welfare Procedure in these circumstances. These events will be addressed with careful consideration given to sensitive and confidential information within the subject matter, subject to data protection and information sharing protocols.

Depending on the seriousness of the event the lone worker will be called for a meeting with senior management and discuss the issues and resolve the matter.

Reported incidents or events pertaining to lone working will be periodically analysed and audited by Nursing Direct. This process provides opportunities for lone workers to voice their challenges and concerns through various measures, including supervisions. Additionally, Nursing Direct undertakes regular workplace inspections, spot checks, and surveys to gather Staff including Agency Worker perspectives and understand the trends and challenges associated with lone working. This information is utilised for continuous improvement and learning purposes to enhance the quality of the working environment.

6. DEFINITIONS

6.1 Staff including Agency Workers

6.1.1 Staff

Denotes the employees of Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited.

6.1.2 Agency Workers

Refers to individuals who are contracted with Nursdoc Limited or another employment business as an Agency Worker (temporary worker) provided to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited to perform care services under the direction of Nursing Direct.

6.2 Nursing Direct

Nursing Direct, also known as Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, is the entity regulated by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and responsible for the care service provision, contracted to provide homecare services to service users in their homes, in placements, essential healthcare facilities and in the community.

6.3 Nursdoc Limited

As the sister company to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, Nursdoc Limited acts as an employment business, specialising in providing staffing solutions to the healthcare sector.

6.4 CQC (Care Quality Commission)

CQC throughout this policy, the term “CQC” refers to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

6.5 Lone Worker

A lone worker is an Staff including Agency Worker who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision. A lone worker can also be referred to as a solitary worker.


6.6 Risk Assessment

Considers the associated risks with lone working in terms of the likelihood that an accident/incident can occur, and the consequences should that accident/incident occur to determine what control measures are needed to ensure the safety and welfare of the lone worker.

OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

To be ‘outstanding’ in this policy area you could provide evidence that:

- Service Users report high levels of satisfaction with the lone workers providing Care
- Innovative solutions to issues are put in place which encourage lone working (if that is what is wanted by the Service User)
- There are very few accidents, incidents or injuries involving lone workers
- There is evidence that promoting the health, safety and welfare of lone workers is an important theme within Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited
- The wide understanding of the policy is enabled by proactive use of the QCS App
- Comprehensive risk assessments are produced to ensure that lone worker risks are appropriately managed
- Where employees are lone workers, they feedback that they are very well supported by Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited
- When lone workers identify risks, they are consistently listened to, and issues are addressed quickly

COMPLETED DATE:	
SIGN OFF DATE:	
REVIEW DATE:	
SIGNED:	 Marc Stiff – Group Managing Director