



## Social Work: Lone Working Procedure

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy is designed to provide guidance on the management and supervision of students in working alone or unsupervised when allocated to practice placements.

It is normally a requirement of professional awarding/accrediting bodies that students are required to be under the direct supervision of a School based tutor/University Link Tutor who is a professional in the same discipline in which the student is aiming to qualify when allocated to placements in educational settings, as part of their programme of study.

Direct supervision is particularly important for inexperienced students during the initial stages of their programme and should apply equally to students approaching qualification. However, it is recognised that the specific learning outcomes/competencies required of some programmes of professional preparation, require students to be exposed to more challenging experiences and learning opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of professional skills. In some instances this may require students to either work alone or with minimal supervision.

## **2. PROCEDURE/POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy aims to provide specific guidance on the management of such situations in order to minimise risk and safeguard the student, their pupils and placement providers.

Examples might include:

- Students working on their final assessed placement during the latter stages of their programme will have sole charge of the class and be on their own in the classroom for extended periods of time. In this case there is minimal supervision.

This policy is not designed to replace those of placement providers, but should be read and interpreted in the context of whatever policy regarding Lone Workers is currently being adopted within placement provider organisations and their associated organisations. The policy for Lone Working on Placement should also be read in the context of Northumbria University Lone Working Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to assist decision making and the ongoing management of those situations where a student with the agreement of their School based tutor /University Link Tutor is pursuing a learning opportunity where indirect or arms length supervision is a requirement of the programme and is needed to support achievement of pre-determined learning outcomes/competencies.

**In the event that an untoward incident occurs during a period of lone working, the student must immediately inform the School based tutor or the University Link Tutor.**

## **3. PROCEDURE**

Risk assessment of lone working should include consideration of any risk to the student, pupil, other workers, other agencies and the organisation providing the practice placement environment.

Consideration must be given to student welfare and safety when travelling alone to and from the educational placement premises. Strategies should be initiated to reduce/minimise risk or harm. This is especially important if the student is using public transport or on placement

during winter time when dark mornings/evenings may mean the student is potentially more vulnerable.

The student should be made aware of any strategies for seeking help in an emergency and processes and procedures for who to inform.

The guidance outlined in this policy applies to all settings where Education Studies (ITE/PCET) students are allocated to practice placements as part of their programme of study. See **Appendix 1 Flowchart** – Process for approving and managing situations where students on placement may be required to work alone or at arms length.

### **3.1 Guidance for Educational Placement Settings Facilitators and Mentors**

Indirect supervision or lone working in the pursuit of professional learning is a sanctioned event by the appropriate School based tutor/ University Link Tutor and should be negotiated with the student.

The student must be given prior access to the Lone Worker policies for the placement organisation (if there is one) and made aware of any health and safety requirements that apply in the practice setting. The student must be able to seek clarification and be given the opportunity to practise under supervision any safety or other intervention techniques that may be required before undertaking such activities unsupervised.

If in doubt about the value of the planned experience to the student's professional development, placement co-ordinators, School based tutors /University Link Tutors, are advised to discuss the proposal with the relevant Placement coordinator at the university and Programme Leader for the programme of study the student is following or their Professional Tutor. If this is not possible, contact should be made with the Director of Practice Placements at the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Practice Placement Office, on 0191–2156052.

As in all practice placements students are under the supervision of a qualified member of staff at all times. This can be direct or indirect and the level of supervision is determined by:

- (a) The students' stage of training
- (b) The students' capability/previous experience
- (c) The type and nature of the skills being developed
- (d) Qualified staffs' knowledge of the pupils and the situation and potential risks involved in lone working

In order to develop the skills that are required of a qualified practitioner, the student must be an active participant in practice. However, unaccompanied visits with pupils are not permitted at any time.

### **3.2 Information for students**

- (a) The student understands the local policies and procedures for Incident Reporting.
- (b) Lone working may form part of the normal pattern of care for particular patients/clients as identified by the nursing, allied health or social care professional.
- (c) There is feedback after the intervention between the student and the professional that includes the completion of any formal documentation associated with the visit. The entry should be followed up, witnessed and countersigned by the supervising professional at later date.

- (d) All activities are to promote the students' learning. The student is made aware that he/she can terminate a visit if circumstances change or they feel vulnerable/unsafe.
- (e) Students who choose to use their own motorised transport whilst allocated for community experience must ensure that they have arranged business cover through their Motor Insurance Company. This requirement will be communicated to all students.
- (f) Those with direct responsibility for supervising and sanctioning a student's indirectly supervised learning experience that involves a motorised journey to a service user, are advised to satisfy themselves that the student has made this amendment to their motor insurance policy. This can be seen as both good and safe practice. If the student cannot evidence Business Cover for their motor vehicle, the indirectly supervised learning opportunity **must not** take place.
- (g) **Students are not allowed to carry service users, or their carers as passengers. Students should follow the policy of the placement provider with regards to driving any unit vehicle.**

Exceptions to this can only take place after a full risk assessment in-line with the placement provider's own policy and procedures for carrying service users. Students are responsible for ensuring they hold a current, valid driving licence, that their vehicle is taxed and has a current MOT certificate and they have appropriate insurance with business cover or are covered by the organisations insurance cover

## LONE WORKING POLICY & PROCEDURE (Social Work) - APPENDIX 1

### Process For Approving & Managing Situations Where Students On Placement May Be Required to Work Alone Or At Arms Length.

