

Lone Working Policy for Pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery Students

1. Preamble

- 1.1 This document is designed to provide guidance to Faculty members on the management and supervision of nursing and midwifery students working alone under indirect supervision, when allocated to practice placements where lone working is a possibility.
- 1.2 The Nursing and Midwifery Council requires that “all students on a NMC approved programme are supervised while learning in practice” (NMC 2018 p6)
- 1.3 “The level of supervision provided to students reflects their learning needs and stage of learning” (NMC 2018 p6). The level of supervision should be based on individual student need and can decrease as the student’s proficiency and confidence increase.
- 1.4 The guidance outlined in this document applies to all settings where pre-registration nursing or midwifery students have practice placements, and where lone working is a possibility.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 NHS Security management Service (2009a, p8) defines **lone working** as: “Any situation or location in which someone works without a colleague nearby; or when someone is working out of sight or earshot of another colleague.”
- 2.2 **Dynamic risk assessment** is defined as: “A ... continuous process of identifying hazards and the risk of them causing harm and taking steps to eliminate or reduce them in the rapidly changing circumstances of an incident.” (NHS Security Management Services 2009b p21)

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Executive Dean of Faculty

- 3.1.1 For matters within the control of the Faculty, the Executive Dean has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are adequate arrangements and resourcing for the effective management of risks associated with placement lone working activities.

3.1.2 In relation to the Faculty, this principally involves awareness of the risks and training ahead of the placement and having the means to check that placement organisations have suitable and sufficient policies, risk assessments and controls in place to manage lone working.

3.2 Placement organisation

3.2.1 The Faculty expects placement organisations to have suitable and sufficient lone working arrangements in place to ensure the safety of our students.

3.2.2 Placement organisations have the most direct control over student working arrangements and must therefore have suitable and sufficient lone working policies and procedures in place.

3.2.3 Placement organisations must fully brief our students on their lone working risks, procedures and precautions at the beginning of their placement.

3.2.4 Placement organisations are expected to have arrangements in place via student practice assessors to monitor the safety and well-being of students and investigate any incidents or near misses in accordance with Faculty and Trust policies.

3.3 Faculty Heads of Department and Programme Leads

3.3.1 Heads of Department and Programme Leads are responsible for familiarising themselves with the Faculty requirements for the management of lone working and ensuring adequate safe systems of work are in place for lone working activities undertaken by students within their departments or programmes.

3.3.2 This includes ensuring the programmes have suitable information and advice on potential lone working / personal safety risk and the relevant information is shared with students prior to the start of their placements.

3.3.3 Heads of Department and Programme Leads must also ensure Faculty partnership leads are checking placement organisations have up-to-date lone working procedures in place.

3.3.4 Heads of Department and Programme Leads must ensure a general risk assessment of the hazards and risks associated with placement lone working have been completed by the Faculty, and that this is reviewed annually or following an incident, near miss or changes in legislation or service provision.

3.4 Faculty Partnership Leads

- 3.4.1 Faculty partnership leads are responsible for ensuring that a suitable and sufficient lone working policy is in place in their allocated organisations.
- 3.4.2 Faculty partnership leads are also responsible for overseeing any incident investigations as required, liaising with trust/ placement organisation investigation leads and raising any learning opportunities or concerns with placement organisation or back to Faculty line management if relevant.
(See Appendix 1)

3.5 Faculty Link Lecturers and Clinical Teachers:

- 3.5.1 Link lecturers and clinical teachers are responsible for provision of advice and support to placement organisation staff and students regarding pre-registration student lone working and for escalating any concerns raised in practice to the placement organisation.
- 3.5.2 Link lecturers and clinical teachers may also be asked to facilitate investigations following a lone working incident.

3.6 Pre-registration Students are responsible for:

- 3.6.1 Complying with King's College London, Faculty and placement organisation's health and safety policies and procedures.
- 3.6.2 Informing staff within the placement organisation or Faculty of any unsafe conditions or concerns they may have or witnessed.
- 3.6.3 Ensuring they complete all mandatory training (e.g. practical and/or e-learning modules) and take an active role in the risk assessment process to ensure they fully understand lone working hazards and risks and how to protect themselves.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 This document provides specific guidance on the management of lone working activities to minimise their risks and safeguard students, their patients/clients and placement organisation.

4.2 Examples of lone working include:

- Student midwives working in community settings during the latter stages of their programme, such as managing a caseload under indirect supervision.
- Nursing students working under the supervision of a community team.
- Students accompanying a client on a community visit to build a relationship with the client, where there is no requirement for an escort.

- 4.3 This policy is not designed to replace placement organisation's lone working policy but should be read and applied alongside the placement organisation and their associated institutions' policies.
- 4.4 The purpose of this policy is to assist decision making and the ongoing management of situations where a student, following a risk assessment and with the agreement of their practice assessor or the Faculty, is pursuing a learning opportunity that involves lone working may be required during the placement or programme of study.
- 4.5 Decisions on suitability of indirect supervision or lone working must always be made with the safety of the patient or client and the student as the first considerations.
- 4.6 Practice assessors or practice supervisors must use their professional judgement to decide if activities may be safely delegated to students and the level of supervision required.
- 4.7 Other considerations include:
- The stage where the student is in their programme (and the student's experience prior to commencing their programme of study).
 - The complexity of care given within the learning environment.
 - Patient dependency and level of risk of harm to the patient or client.
 - Level of risk of harm to student.
 - The nature of the activities the student will be undertaking.
 - Evidence of the student's level of competence.
 - The student's level of confidence to carry out the activities without direct supervision.
 - The student's need to be assessed on achievement of specific skills or competencies.
 - Local and national policies that may place restrictions on students undertaking some aspects of practice.
- 4.8 The registered practitioner supervising the student remains accountable for any delegation of patient or client care.**

5. Procedure

5.1 Prior to placement commencing:

- 5.1.1 Before students begin a placement, where there is an opportunity or requirement for lone working under the indirect supervision of a practice assessor, the Faculty partnership lead must ensure that a suitable and sufficient lone working policy is in place within the placement organisation.

5.1.2 If there are any concerns regarding the availability or suitability of this policy, the student must not undertake lone working activities until the Faculty partnership lead has resolved any concerns.

5.1.3 As a guideline an organisational policy as a minimum should include the following requirements/details:

- Be up to date (i.e. not passed its expiry and ideally reviewed within the last 2 years).
- Be in line with the principals of the Faculty's policy.
- How policy and practice is reviewed / updated, including consultation and communication.
- Give details of key H&S stakeholders and their responsibilities for lone working arrangements with the organisation.
- Outline how lone working risks are assessed – both general and visit specific.
- Define precautions for personal safety.
- Include details of training arrangements and competency checks.
- Provide contact arrangements and means to monitor the location of the lone worker.
- Outline steps for dealing with emergencies / loss of contact.
- Outline procedures for reporting and investigating incidents / near misses, including follow up and close out action plans.

5.1.4 Students who may be involved with lone working during a placement must complete the lone working e-learning module provided by the Faculty, before the start of the placement, to ensure that they understand the process of safe lone working. This e-learning is not a substitute for any preparation required by the placement organisation. It is to ensure that the student is prepared to engage in that preparation and to highlight the process for raising any concerns about lone working.

5.2 Prior to Lone Working

5.2.1 Before undertaking any lone working activities, students must review the lone worker policy of the placement organisation and be made aware of any health and safety requirements that apply in the practice setting.

5.2.2 Students should be provided with the same level of preparation for lone working as staff employed by the placement organisation.

5.2.3 Students must be able to seek clarification and practise under supervision any safety or other intervention techniques that may be required, before undertaking such activities unsupervised.

5.2.4 A risk assessment must be completed by the placement organisation before students undertake any lone working. This should follow the risk assessment procedures of the placement organisation, with emphasis on

specific hazards raised by the student's status, their inexperience and any specific adjustments required.

5.2.5 The risk assessment should include¹:

- The suitability of accompanied/unaccompanied activity by students.
- Environmental, psychological, social and physical circumstances surrounding the activity, including historical information.
- Reasonably foreseeable risks posed and interventions to manage the risks identified.

5.2.6 Students who are pregnant, breastfeeding or new mothers (within 6 months of giving birth) must also complete a risk assessment to address their specific needs, in keeping with [King's College London guidance note](#) and the placement organisation(s) policies Lone working should be considered as part of this new and expectant mothers risk assessment.

5.2.7 When students require reasonable adjustments for health or other reasons, the placement organisation may need to seek advice from the Faculty when completing the risk assessment. Attention must be paid to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

5.2.8 The placement organisation should discuss with the Faculty's Faculty partnership lead or link lecturer any concerns relating to a student's competence to undertake lone working activities. A development plan should be put in place to address the required development. If a student is unable to meet the requirements of the development plan, they must not undertake any lone working activities.

5.2.9 The risk assessment must take account of student welfare and safety when travelling alone to and from patient/client premises. The placement organisation will initiate strategies to mitigate risk or harm. This is especially important if the student is using public transport or on placement during wintertime, when dark mornings/evenings may mean the student is potentially more vulnerable.

5.2.10 Students who choose to use their own vehicle for travel during a community placement must confirm with the placements team that they have business cover through their insurance company before they begin the placement activity.

5.2.11 Students and their practice assessor or supervisor should both sign the completed risk assessment which is then stored with the student's practice assessment document, with a copy retained by the placement organisation.

¹ See NHS Security Management Services (2009b) for detailed guidance.
https://www.btbl.co.uk/conflict_management/conflict_management_resolution/NHS-Secuicity-Management-Service-SMS-Compliance

5.2.12 Students should **never** undertake a lone visit to a client or an address where there is a known history or foreseeable risk of violence (NHS Security Management Service 2009b p16).

5.2.13 Students must agree to any indirectly supervised learning experience that involves lone working. If the students choose to not undertake work where lone working is a concern or later withdraws due to this concern, then any withdrawal should not impact their summative assessment.

5.3 During Lone Working:

5.3.1 Lone visits should be planned within normal working hours, and, if possible, during daylight hours. *There is specific guidance for student midwives undertaking their community or case loading placements or the continuity project, where there is an opportunity for them to attend a home birth (see appendix 2)*

5.3.2 Students must follow the placement organisation's policy regarding regular contact with their supervisor. The supervisor must always know the student's whereabouts and be easily contactable by the student.

5.3.3 If at any time during the activity, a student feels that the situation falls outside their level of competence, they should immediately contact their supervisor for advice and, if necessary, arrange for the client to be reviewed by a qualified member of staff.

5.3.4 If needed, students should document care delivered in the client's record and make arrangements for the entries to be checked and countersigned by a registered member of staff at the next appropriate opportunity in accordance with placement organisation policy.

5.3.5 Students should undertake a dynamic risk assessment during the activity. If they are concerned about their safety or wellbeing at any time, they must remove themselves from the situation immediately.

5.4 After an Episode of Lone Working

5.4.1 Students must follow the placement organisation's procedure for "checking in" after each visit. This is to ensure that in event of incident or any loss of contact, a student's likely location can be determined throughout the day.

5.4.2 Students and their supervisors should have an opportunity for immediate feedback on their visits after each episode of lone working; an episode of lone working may be a single or multiple visits for purposes of feedback.

5.4.3 Contact with the supervisor may be sufficient to meet both requirements, but this must be confirmed by reviewing the organisation's policy.

5.5 If an Incident Occurs:

- 5.5.1 An “incident” is not limited to actual physical or verbal violence. If a student feels at any time that their safety is, or may be, compromised, they should remove themselves from the situation immediately.
- 5.5.2 If an incident occurs, the student should go to a place of safety and follow the placement organisation’s procedures for their lone working policy.
- 5.5.3 The students should contact their supervisor and arrange to meet to discuss the incident, arrange any ongoing care needs for the client and to complete health and safety incident reports for the placement organisation and the [Faculty](#).
- 5.5.4 Near misses should also be reported to enable learning before harm occurs.
- 5.5.5 The risk assessment, relating to the patient or client, should be reviewed to assess whether this client or location remains appropriate for a student to visit alone.
- 5.5.6 The Faculty Partnership Lead should contact the student to confirm their wellbeing and to arrange a meeting to investigate and discuss the incident.

6. Further Information

- 6.1 <https://www.suzylampugh.org/pages/category/lone-worker-training>
- 6.2 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>
- 6.3 <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2013/06/On-line-Catalogue178763.pdf>

7. Acknowledgements

- 7.1 This policy has been adapted from Bolton University, Central London Community Healthcare and Kings College Hospital Lone Worker policies and Plymouth University’s Indirect Supervision of Students Statement.

8. References

- 8.1 NHS Security Management Services (2009a) Developing a policy for the protection of lone workers. Available at:
https://www.btbl.co.uk/conflict_management/conflict_management_resolution/NHS-Security-Management-Service-SMS-Compliance

- 8.2 NHS Security Management Services (2009b) 'Not Alone' A guide for the better protection of lone workers in the NHS. Available at: http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Documents/Lone_Working_Guidance_final.pdf
- 8.3 NMC (2018) Student Supervision and Assessment. Available at: [student-supervision-assessment.pdf \(nmc.org.uk\)](http://www.nmc.org.uk/student-supervision-assessment.pdf)

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