SISTON PARISH COUNCIL

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY (Including Lone Working & Eye Tests)

1. Introduction

Siston Parish Council is committed to achieving good standards of health & safety for employees and volunteers at work.

The main principles of the Council's policy are that:

- Health and safety is everyone's responsibility, whilst acknowledging Councillors and the Clerk have ultimate responsibility;- employees and contractors who are managing and carrying out work are responsible for making sure it is safe;- standards should be high and control measures should be proportionate to the level of risk.

If in doubt, employees/volunteers should raise health and safety matters with the Chair of Council, the most effective practice measures require management action.

2. Lone Working

2.1 Lone workers are defined by the Health and Safety Executive as those people who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

2.2 Lone working is acceptable in many circumstances, provided appropriate measures are made to control risks; following the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulation. Some tasks require at least two people to be involved in the work.

A risk assessment should be carried out prior to any lone working in order to identify the hazards of the work, assess the risks involved, and devise and implement a safe method of working.

2.3 The hazards that all workers face are increased when there is no one else to give a warning and emergency assistance is unavailable if required, so the risk of serious injury can be more likely.

2.4 Never work alone in the following situations:-

- Where the risks are unacceptable
- In confined spaces
- Over or near water
- On live electrical equipment
- Areas specifically designated as "no lone working"

2.5 Wherever the risk assessment determines, avoid working alone in the following situations:-

- Known or potentially violent or threatening situations
- In remote locations
- In derelict or empty buildings
- In any hazardous environment, e.g. cliffs or confined spaces
- On live roads
- On roofs
- Using ladders which cannot be tied and require footing

- Near demolition work.

3. Risk Assessment and Precautions

3.1 There are a few criteria to be used in deciding whether an individual can safely undertake a task by working alone:-

- Is the workplace and access to it safe?
- Does the task require more than one person (e.g. heavy lifting, inspection work involving the erection and moving of ladders?)
- Are the risks such that it would not be safe for one person to undertake the work (e.g. visiting a potentially violent client, inspection of a derelict building or on a live highway?)
- Does the individual have experience of the hazards and sufficient ability to undertake the work by him/herself?
- Is there a risk of violence and/or aggression?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? – consider both physical and mental factors in and routine work or foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional burdens on the individual.

3.2 Precautions should be taken when lone working is planned or could arise. The main aspects that these precautions cover are:-

- Awareness of any special hazards; devise and implement safe systems of work to ensure that the risks are eliminated or controlled. If in doubt, send two or more people
- Ability to act effectively if an emergency
- Arrangements to alert others of the need for action, if return is overdue
- Check if there are any particular rules or requirements that you should follow
- Make sure any equipment can be safely handled by one person and also, ensure safe access and exits
- Ensure the member of staff has adequate protective clothing and equipment (particularly clothing to keep out rain and cold)
- Take a torch, suitable for the work environment, if you expect to be out after dark or entering unlit areas
- If working on electrical apparatus ensure that a safe system of work is implemented. Prior to work beginning, apparatus should be switched off and locked off and unable to be re-energised by any other person
- Do not ask anyone to perform work they are not trained, equipped or prepared to perform safely.

3.3 Wherever possible, work should be undertaken by two or more persons when working away from the normal workplace. There may be occasions when it is possible for one employee to carry out the work. When this situation arises, the employee should remain in regular contact with the Chair, who can summon help if required.

3.4 If the risks are assessed and it is deemed acceptable to work alone, it is important that the employee communicates their whereabouts, intentions and expected periods of absence to the Chair.

3.5 See Procedure for Working Alone or Visiting other Premises/Locations Guide below.

4. EMPLOYEE EYE TESTS

4.1 Computer screen work does not cause vision problems, but if people have problems, they may become more apparent as they work with a computer. The Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 (amended in 2002) describe what workers are entitled to, and this policy is based on those regulations.

People are advised not to commit themselves to any expenditure without being sure of their entitlement.

What you are entitled to is normally: An eye examination – for most users of computer equipment. Glasses – for a small number of people in special circumstances.

4.2 Eye examination

If you regularly use a computer for extended periods (eg two hours or more) then you are entitled to the cost of an eye examination, when you start work and if you have not had one for a reasonable period (2 years if suitable in most cases but a shorter period may be suitable if you are experiencing significant problems).

The examination is similar to a traditional eye examination but it will also examine the vision at an intermediate distance (where the screen is likely to be) in addition to the traditional reading and distance levels.

There is no obligation on employees to have an eye and eyesight test. Eye and eyesight tests are to be undertaken in the employee's own time.

4.3 Glasses

You are only entitled to glasses if they are needed only for the screen work and not for everyday use such as reading or driving.

So you will not be provided with glasses if they are for the following (i) A near vision prescription that brings the screen into focus (eg reading glasses), or (ii) A distance prescription that brings the screen into focus.

This normally means an intermediate distance prescription. The free glasses provision covers basic single vision lenses, and does not include special lens treatments such as tints and coatings.

If people want varifocals, tints or more expensive frames, they can pay a top up, but note that in many cases varifocals can present problems because they could lead you to adopt a poor working posture, with stress on your neck.

A report from the optician should be given to the Parish Council which should clearly state whether or not the employee needs a corrective appliance specifically for his or her work at the VDU. If so, the Council will pay for the basic cost of the glasses to a maximum of £60, or the equivalent amount of money towards a pair of glasses of the employee's choosing.

In terms of driving, each individual is responsible for ensuring they are fit to drive. It is not the Parish Council's policy to pay for eye tests and spectacles for employees who drive in their course of work.

Extract from Health & Safety Executive guidance:

Does my employer have to pay for DSE spectacles? Answer: Your employer will only have to pay for spectacles if the test shows you need special corrective appliances (normally spectacles) that are prescribed for the distance the screen is viewed at. If an ordinary prescription is suitable for your DSE work, your employer does not have to pay for your spectacles.

Procedure for Working Alone or Visiting other Premises/Locations Guide

The Clerk should ensure awareness of the safety procedures in place, including the following points:

- Do not turn a "blind eye" to potential problems just to get information or "cut corners."
- Do not assume that people will wonder where you are. Ensure that they know.
- Do not leave a work area in an unsecured manner.

All Council employees who are required to visit other premises, existing buildings, unoccupied sites, remote locations, derelict buildings and any other location involving working away from the office as part of their normal work activities. Inexperienced staff must not be sent to work at hazardous locations/ situations, unless supervised by experienced colleagues familiar with such hazards (it is normally inappropriate for persons under 18 years old to work alone).

Consideration should be given to possible health and safety hazards when developing safe systems of work. Some examples are:-

Before a visit:-

What will you be doing? What clothing and equipment will you need? Will you need help to carry out the work? Discuss the hazards at the site with the Clerk or a colleague who has visited the site before, or the occupier. To include fire escape arrangements, security details and first aid kit. Ensure an intruder could not get in to the building whilst a worker was working alone. Ensure that someone knows where you are going, what you will do and when you expect to return.

On arrival at the location / site:-

If visiting an occupied work location, report to reception or the site office. Establish the occupier's rules or procedures for site visitors and follow them; ask to be briefed on the hazards associated with that particular site. Obey all warning signs and notices. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, e.g. gloves, eye protection, ear defenders, high visibility clothing and head protection.

 While carrying out the work:-

Observe the comments above, on arrival at the location. Report the hazards to the occupier or site manager. Whilst working on site, follow safe systems of work at all times.

On leaving the site:-

Report your departure to the reception office. Return any borrowed equipment or clothing.