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Lone Worker Policy

Protecting the Health, Safety and Welfare of People Working Alone

1 Introduction

Lone workers are defined in the following ways. 'Those employees who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.' (Health and Safety Executive 1998) and 'Employees whose activities involve a large percentage of their working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or without supervision.' (Croners Health and Safety 2001)

Lone work is not the chance occurrence of finding oneself on one's own, for example, when somebody arrives first in the office or leaves last, or where an individual has to go unaccompanied to another part of the workplace. Lone work is specifically intended to be unaccompanied work, or work without immediate access to another person for assistance.

2 Principles and Values

Within Foresight there must be an integrated organisational approach to addressing the problems associated with lone working. The following principles and values should underpin the development of strategies and policies for addressing the issue of lone working at a local level.

Foresight should develop and promote a culture where the personal safety of all staff is valued and protected and where increased risks resulting from working alone are seen as unacceptable.

Trustee Board of Foresight need to communicate and show their commitment to reducing the dangers associated with lone working, make available the resources for putting policies into practice, and make sure that it is clear who is responsible for each function.

All staff should expect that any risk to them or their colleagues will be reduced as far as possible by using effective risk management systems.

Staff and their representatives should be fully involved in developing and putting in place local strategies and policies to reduce the risks associated with lone working.

Effective support mechanisms should be in place for staff who need to work alone.

3 Identifying Lone Workers

Lone workers within Foresight can be found in a wide range of situations. A simple categorisation system and examples of staff groups who may be required to work alone are given as follows:

Annex 1

1 Staff working in fixed establishments:	Reception staff Trainers
2 Staff working in normal work hours:	Volunteer Befrienders Project Co-ordinator
3 Staff working out off normal work hours:	Volunteer Befrienders After school clubs Project Co-ordinator

4 The Dangers of Working Alone

The number of people working alone is increasing. People who work alone face the same dangers in their daily work as other workers. However, for lone workers, the risk of harm is often greater. The risks to lone workers will depend on the type of situation where lone working is being carried out.

Annex 2

Dangers which lone workers may face are as follows:

Accidents or emergencies.	Visiting high-risk locations.
Lack of first-aid provision.	Working in confined spaces.
Fire.	Handling dangerous substances.
Problems with access/egress.	Not receiving enough rest.
Night work or unsocial hours.	Potential violence.
Manual handling.	Vulnerability of travelling alone.
Working alone in buildings.	Lack of peer support.
Poor or lack of communication.	
Passive smoking risks.	
Driving alone.	

5 The Legislative Framework

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of all other staff. Foresight must know and apply the legislation and standards that pertain to their working practices. They must then assess whether or not the working practices of their lone workers meet the requirements.

There is no general legal restriction on working alone. However, the broad requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations (1999) still apply. These say that Foresight should identify the dangers associated with lone working, assess the risk involved, and put in place measures to get rid of or control the risks. If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be put in place. Risk assessment should help to determine the level of supervision that is required. In certain high-risk activities there may be specific restrictions on working alone, for example, fumigation work, work in confined spaces, and electrical work near live conductors. In these situations, at least one other person may need to be present. It may also be necessary to have someone present who is

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dedicated to the rescue role, for example in working in confined spaces. The following are examples of legal requirements specifying work situations where more than one person is needed.

Confined Spaces Regulations (1997) - entry into confined spaces.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (1994) - certain fumigation work and other work with substances which are dangerous to health (see separate Guideline).

Electricity at Work Regulations (1989) - electrical work near live conductors.

The above list is not exhaustive. General obligations in both statute and civil law may require the adoption of equivalent standards for similar work. What is essential is that lone workers should not be at more risk than other staff. This may require extra risk-control measures to be put in place. Risk assessment should take account of both normal work and foreseeable emergencies, such as fire, illness and accidents.

6 Risk Assessment and Control Measures

In carrying out risk assessments on lone working, you should consider the following:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Can one person adequately control the risks of the job?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What training is required to make sure the staff member is competent in safety matters?
- Have staff received the training which is necessary to allow them to work alone?
- How will the staff member be supervised?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are people of a particular gender especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are new or inexperienced staff especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are younger staff especially at risk if they work alone?
- What happens if a lone worker becomes ill, has an accident, or if there is an emergency?
- Are there systems in place for contacting and tracing those who work alone?
- Control measures that can be put in place include:
    o instruction;
    o training;
    o protective equipment;
    o supervision; and
    o back-up procedures.

Foresight should take steps to make sure that control measures are used and that risk assessments are periodically reviewed to make sure that the control measures are adequate.

Procedures will also need to be put in place to monitor the activities of lone workers to make sure that they remain safe. These may include the following:

- regular contact between the lone worker and the supervisor, for example by telephone;
- supervisors periodically visiting and observing people who work alone;
- automatic warning devices that operate if specific signals or communications are not received periodically from the lone worker;
- other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency that operate manually or are activated automatically by the absence of activity if necessary; and
- systems to check that a lone worker has returned to base or home after finishing their work activities.

7 Recommended Approach

7.1 Developing Policy
Measures for dealing with the risks associated with lone working are based on careful thought and good assessment of the risk. The risks of working alone must be taken seriously at all levels of the organisation. Policies, management arrangements and organisational culture must reflect this. Policies on lone working should cover the following issues:

- a commitment to making sure that those who work alone are safe;
- defining and identifying lone workers;
- a statement of the aims of the policy;
- details of employers' legal responsibilities;
- details of managers' responsibilities;
- details of staff's responsibilities;
- identifying the hazards of lone working;
- information on risk assessment;
- details of control or risk-reduction measures;
- details on arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how policies are put into practice;
- manual handling policy and the risks of musculo-skeletal injury if lifting is done.

Policies need to be translated into effective action. They need to be supported by more detailed procedures, by effective organisation and by a positive health and safety culture. Policies need to recognise that staff may work in the situations described at (point 3) and in any location.

More specific policies or local guidelines may also be required to address specific areas of risk, for example in relation to:

- staff working outside normal office hours;
- staff travelling on their employer's business; and
- staff involved in domiciliary or home visits.

Policies and guidance should set out clear procedures and set limits as to what can and cannot be done while working alone. There should also be agreement on circumstances in which it is correct to stop work and get advice. Appendix 1. A provides a flowchart relating to assessing risk and developing policy for making sure that lone workers are safe. Local managers only need to adopt policies to take account of specific local risks.

The principles of partnership should be adopted when developing and implementing policies and guidelines, as North East Lincolnshire Council are a valuable source of information and advice. Their involvement will help to make sure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate control measures are put in place. Foresight will also find it useful to compare policies with partner agencies such as social services whose staff face similar issues.

7.2 Staff Competence and Training

Training is particularly important if there is only limited supervision to control, guide and help lone workers in uncertain situations. This training may be a very important factor in avoiding panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to have enough experience and be able to fully understand the risks associated with the tasks they carry out in their work, together with the precautions they must take to eliminate, or reduce, these risks.

Staff must be competent to carry out work unaccompanied and to deal with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training. This should include knowing when to stop and get advice from a supervisor. Part of the training given to lone workers must be to impress upon them the need to report any incidents which could affect their safety. This information is essential in any review of the adequacy of working arrangements. If training is necessary as part of the control strategy, this should be recorded as part of the risk assessment. An indication of how often refresher training should be given should also be noted.

8 Policy into Practice and Review

8.1 Recording and Collecting Data

Lone workers must be actively encouraged to report and record any incidents that could affect their safety, in order to allow a proper review of the adequacy of the working arrangements. This should also extend to 'near miss' reporting.

8.2 Monitoring

Once safe working arrangements and strategies have been put into practice, they need to be regularly monitored and reviewed to make sure they are still effective. There should be support and commitment from senior management level and very clear management responsibilities linked to local arrangements.
The policy on lone working should include a timescale and mechanism for a review by Foresight Trustee Board. There should also be the opportunity for occasional reviews if this is required.
Foresight:

- should identify local quality indicators in relation to the management and reduction of risk as a matter of good practice; and
- analyse information on reported incidents and use the results as the basis for future risk assessment and review.

8.3 Communication

Foresight must make sure that they set up clear communication systems, so they can pass on the organisation's policy on lone working to all relevant staff and to others working on a lone worker basis. This will include staff, students, volunteers.

In order to communicate the organisational policy on lone working:

- there needs to be obvious commitment and support from Trustee Board for the policy to be fully adopted within the organisation;
- briefing sessions should be held for staff on the launching of the new or amended policy;
- Project Co-ordinator must make sure that volunteers/staff are aware of their individual responsibility to keep to the policy; and
- new staff must be made aware of the policy and their responsibilities as part of their induction.
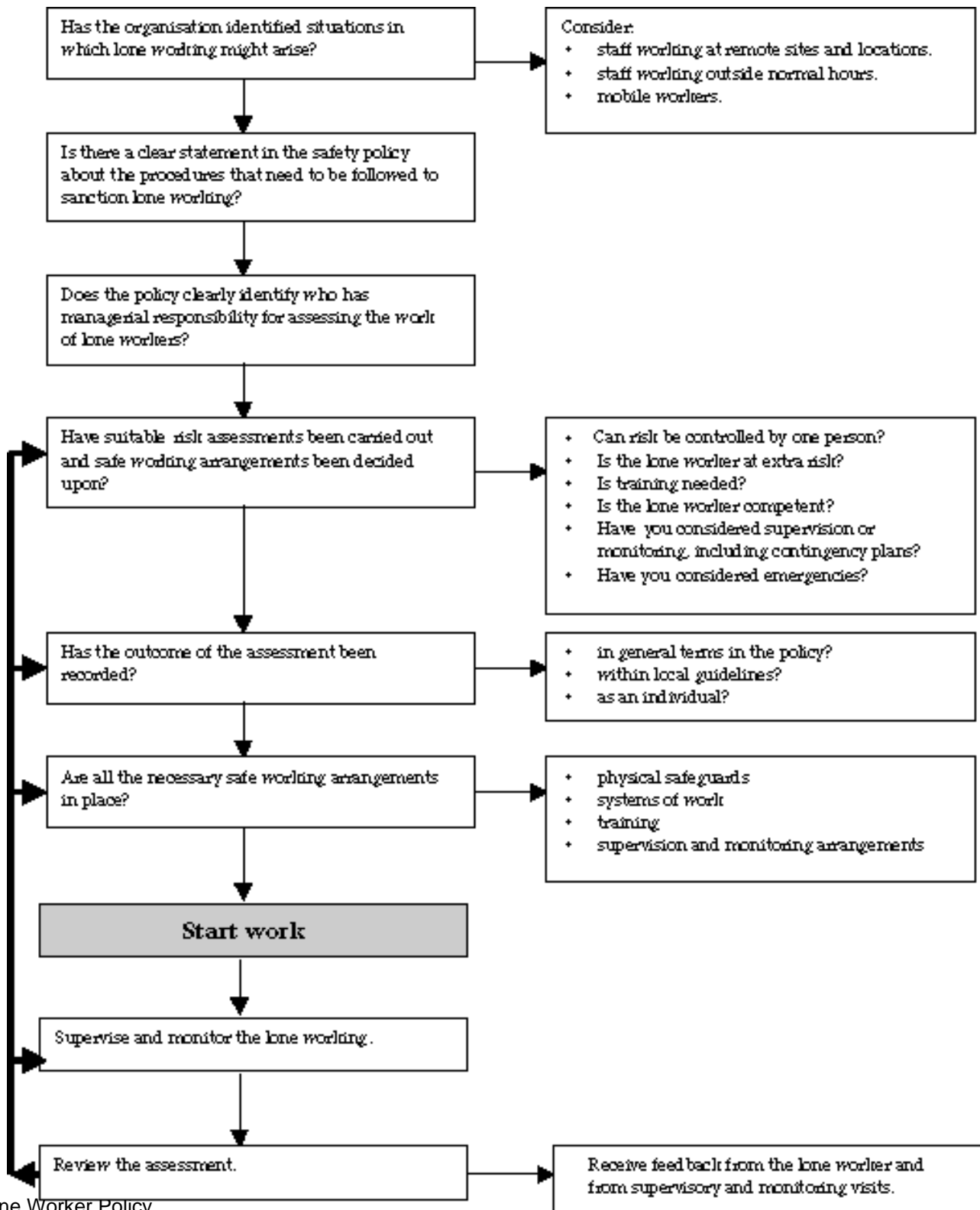
8.4 Measuring Success

Foresight should have the following in place:
- a policy on lone working based on a full risk assessment which is reviewed each year within the Health and Safety Committees;
- appropriate and thorough training programmes for relevant staff based on local risk assessment and including refresher training; and

- robust and effective reporting systems which encourage staff to record all incidents and near misses.
- In summary, Foresight must be able to show that everything that is reasonably practicable is being done to eliminate or reduce, as far as possible, the risks associated with lone working. This will be achieved through a combination of risk assessment and increased awareness, having in place safe systems of work and making sure appropriate staff training is provided.

APPENDIX 1

Summary flowchart for making sure lone workers are safe

| Has the organisation identified situations in which lone working might arise? | Consider: • staff working at remote sites and locations. • staff working outside normal hours. • mobile workers. |

Is there a clear statement in the safety policy about the procedures that need to be followed to sanction lone working?

Does the policy clearly identify who has managerial responsibility for assessing the work of lone workers?

| Have suitable risk assessments been carried out and safe working arrangements been decided upon? | • Can risk be controlled by one person? • Is the lone worker at extra risk? • Is training needed? • Is the lone worker competent? • Have you considered supervision or monitoring, including contingency plans? • Have you considered emergencies? |

| Has the outcome of the assessment been recorded? | • in general terms in the policy? • within local guidelines? • as an individual? |

| Are all the necessary safe working arrangements in place? | • physical safeguards • systems of work • training • supervision and monitoring arrangements |

Start work

Supervise and monitor the lone working.

| Review the assessment. | Receive feedback from the lone worker and from supervisory and monitoring visits. |

APPENDIX 2
Policy on lone working

1 Policy statement
1.1 Foresight takes extremely seriously the health, safety and welfare of all its staff. It recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community or in isolated work areas. The purpose of this policy is to enable Foresight to meet its obligation to protect such staff so far as is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working.
1.2 This policy and its procedures have been developed and agreed through the local Partnership Forum.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all staff including temporary, volunteers, students and those on work experience. It forms an integral part of Foresight's Health and Safety policy and applies along with specific local guidance on lone working. The policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of our staff.

3 Definition of Lone Workers

3.1 Foresight defines lone workers as:
- 'staff whose working activities involve in situations where they are without any kind of close or direct supervision.'

4 Policy Aims

4.1 This policy aims to:

- increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working;
- make sure that the risk of working alone is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable;
- make sure that appropriate training is available to staff in all areas, that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone;
- make sure that appropriate support is available to staff who have to work alone;
- encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working; and
- reduce the number of incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 Lone working environments present a unique health and safety problem. Although there is no specific legal guidance on working alone, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, we must organise and control the health and safety of lone workers.

5.2 The Chief Executive is responsible for:

- making sure that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risk associated with lone working;
- providing resources for putting the policy into practice; and

- making sure that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the Board regularly reviews the effectiveness of the policy.

5.3 Line managers are responsible for:

- making sure that all staff are aware of the policy;
- making sure that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly;
- putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone;
- making sure that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary;
- making sure that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident; and
- managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through an effective system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.

5.4 All staff are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their actions;
- co-operating by following rules and procedures designed for safe working;
- reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy; and
- reporting any dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone.

6 Identifying Lone Workers

6.1 Lone workers within the organisation are likely to be found in a wide range of situations. The categorisation system at Annex 1 identifies the main staff groups who may be at risk within the organisation, and lists example occupations for each category.

7 Assessing Risk

7.1 Lone workers should not face any more risks than other staff within the organisation. Setting up safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different to organising the safety of other staff, so we must all follow the general principles of risk assessment. If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, other arrangements must be put in place. Risk assessment should take account of both normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, illness and accidents. The risk assessment process is summarised below, separated into five distinct stages and action points to support effective assessment of the risks involved in lone working.

ANNEX 3

	Process	Action point
1	Identifying lone workers	Establish and identify lone workers for each work area.
2	Identifying associated hazards	Isolate the range of dangers associated with whole work areas of work and/or work processes. Review a generic risk assessment to make sure you have included these issues.
3	Assessing the degree of risk for generic	Review the generic risk assessments and complete

	or individual situations	individual or local risk assessments if necessary. Then prioritise the level of associated risk.
4	Putting control measures in place, and developing safe systems of work	Assess how effective the existing control measures are and update them if appropriate. Develop local procedures or action plans if necessary.
5	Evaluating and review	Evaluate and record how effective the control measures are. Review when the assessments or controls are no longer required.

7.2 Risk assessments must be carried out in all areas of work where working alone poses an actual or potential risk to staff. The risk assessment will involve identifying all potential dangers and the risks associated with specific work tasks or activities. It should identify who will be affected and how, and the control measures which are needed to get rid of or reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably possible. Risk assessment should be carried out by competent people and should be recorded and shared with relevant others. Factors to consider when carrying out the risk assessment include the following:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What training is needed to make sure the staff member is competent in safety matters?
- Have staff received the training which is necessary to allow them to work alone?
- How will the person be supervised?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are people of a particular gender especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are new or inexperienced staff especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are younger workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or if there is an emergency?
- Are there systems in place for contacting and tracing those who work alone?

7.3 Details of the risk assessment should be recorded and should include:
the extent and nature of the risks;

- factors that contribute to the risk including job content and specific tasks and activities; and
- the safe systems of work to be followed to eliminate or reduce the risk.
- Information from the risk assessment should be passed to staff. Risk assessments should be reviewed and updated each year (or sooner should circumstances change).

8 Managing Risk

8.1 The risk which lone workers face should be reduced to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable. Using safe systems of work depends largely on local circumstances, and local procedures or protocols should be in place that provide specific guidance for staff in relation to lone working and the associated risk reduction. Issues to consider in developing safe systems of work include:

- joint working with others for high-risk activities;
- improvements to security arrangements in buildings;
- security lighting in parking areas;
- using checking-in and monitoring systems;
- communication systems for sharing information on risk with colleagues in other disciplines and agencies; and

- using personal protective equipment or mobile phones and personal alarms.

8.2 Annexes 2 and 3 provide two generic examples of risk assessment and measures to help control these general risks. However, each type of lone-working situation will need to be assessed and, where necessary, take account of local circumstances. Arrangements for managing risk should include:

- guidance for lone workers on assessing risk;
- details of when to stop and get advice; and
- the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident or emergency. All staff must be familiar with these local protocols and procedures. There may also need to be detailed guidance to tackle specific areas of risk such as:
- lone workers travelling alone on work-related business;
- domiciliary and home visits;
- working out of normal office hours;
- working with dangerous substances; and
- electrical appliances.

9 Staff Training

9.1 Foresight will provide training where required to allow lone working. The training will be based on the needs identified through local risk assessment. Advice and guidance on training is available from the Training and Development Department.

10 Reporting and Recording

10.1 Staff should report all incidents (including near misses) to their line manager at the earliest opportunity. These should be reported on an incident form and the line manager should investigate all reports. In order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and associated local protocols, local statistics and incident reports should be reviewed regularly.

11 Monitoring and Reviewing

11.1 We will monitor and review this policy in partnership to make sure that we are achieving the aims of the policy. We will do this with Professional Organisations and safety representatives. The review processes will include:

- collecting and monitoring all reported incidents by our Health and Safety Adviser;
- every three months, reporting to Safety Committees and the Partnership Forum incident statistics and safety improvement measures which have been introduced;
- every year, reporting to our Health and Safety Committee and Risk Management Group on how we are following the policy, the outcomes of risk assessment, and details of training provided; and
- every year, reporting to the Board on progress in reducing risk and incidents and making recommendations for the forthcoming year.

This information is also available in other formats, languages and picture format upon request.