# Aspire Schools
# Sole Working Policy

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| Policy reviewed by: | Executive Team, Aspire Trustees<br>Ratified by Trustees June 2025 |
| Updates | Date and name change |
| Policy expires: | August 2027 |
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## 1. Purpose and context

We define sole workers as 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. Sole workers may be found in a range of situations:

- Staff on school sites where:
  - People working separately from others, e.g. in isolated areas of the school building. This may be 1:1 with a student
- Mobile, or peripatetic staff operating away from their school base:
  - Taking students on visits for work experience or college visits
  - Taking students out for behaviour/ regulation intervention/ mentoring sessions
  - Working with students at their home school
  - Working with students in their homes
  - Delivering off-site curriculum sessions: Duke of Edinburg Award work, PE, Local trips

There is no general legal prohibition on working alone with a student. However, a risk assessment of sole working tasks must be carried out.

Sole working can be included as part of an overall risk assessment for an activity or a specific sole working assessment must be carried out. A sole working risk assessment is included with this guidance.

**The Head of School** is responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out, however, this task can be delegated to a competent person.

## 2. Identify the hazard

Activities identified needs to be assessed to determine the level of risk they present. This involves looking at factors such as:

- The potential for violence and aggression.
- Risk of allegation.
- The environment and other activities taking place in the same working area. Examples of these two areas include working in a public place (library, school office) or other school setting.

In addition, the risk assessment must take account of foreseeable emergencies which may arise, such as equipment failure, illness and accidents.

### 2.1 Potential for violence and aggression and risk of allegation

It is recognised that the hazards presented by a particular sole working activity will vary, e.g. tutoring in the home, or working in the community with a small group of students.

The following table identifies four areas for consideration as they are applicable when assessing sole working risks. This table does not contain an exhaustive list and should be used as a starting point.

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| The student | Individual characteristics can have the potential to contribute towards violence and aggression, e.g. previous history, or the fact that the person is unknown and there is no available information to use as part of the risk assessment process. |
| The parent | Individual characteristics can have the potential to contribute towards violence and aggression, e.g. previous history, or the fact that the person is unknown and there is no available information to use as part of the risk assessment process. |
| The employee who is sole working | Factors which may increase or decrease the chances of violence and aggression occurring, e.g. their competence (level of training, experience, cultural awareness etc.), role (e.g. tutor, behaviour support, teacher) and the things they might do (e.g. arriving late for a home visit) |
| Interaction | The interaction which takes place between the employee and the student, for example, enforcing rules, re-regulating strategies, asking questions about family backgrounds, transporting students. |
| The work environment | **Outside Aspire School sites**<br>For example; a home visit to a student, tutoring in the home, working with students in public places, working with students at a different school.<br><br>**Within Aspire School sites**<br>Sole working employees need to be able to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency.<br><br>1:1 work with students (mentoring, intervention work)<br><br>Where there is the potential for violence and aggression involving a student, both staff and visitors need to be able to move to a place of safety if a difficult situation arises, for example, exit the room that you are working in, be aware of areas covered by CCTV. |

## 2.2 Physical hazards

The working environment and activities may present particular hazards and should be considered as part of the lone working risk assessment, for example:

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| Work environment | The level of risk varies from one working environment to another, higher risk environments can include: public spaces, community and contextual factors surrounding a student's address.<br><br>Lower risk sole working environments can include working at school sites that are secure and driving alone on short duration journeys in built up areas.<br><br>There must be a safe way in and out of the workplace. This can be difficult to achieve when working on premises which are not under the control of Aspire Schools, for example when making a first home visit. |

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| | Other areas for consideration include when using third party owned electrical appliances, poor lighting, poor seating in student's homes, etc. |
| Activity being undertaken | The level of risk varies by activity.<br><br>Examples of higher risk activity includes working with a small group of students in the community. 1:1 interventions off site when a student is dysregulated. Driving students in own car.<br><br>Lower risk sole working activity includes home working, working with students on a regular basis in their home (home tuition). |
| Equipment | It should be established whether equipment can be used and controlled safely by a sole worker, for example, gardening tools.<br><br>Each activity needs to be risk assessed to determine if any equipment or substances needed as part of the activity pose a risk. |
| Communication with others and supervision | Means of communication vary depending on the work activity and location. There are areas where a mobile phone signal is not available. This also impacts on the ability to summon assistance in the event of an emergency.<br><br>Staff who's working pattern is mainly 1:1 or outside of the school teams, should receive fortnightly supervision from their line manager. |

## 2.3 Who is at risk and when

The sole working assessment must consider who might be harmed as a result of our activities, for example, employees, visitors and contractors.

The following table provides details of some specific aspects for consideration when assessing the suitability of lone working for Aspire School employees:

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| New and expectant mothers | Impaired ability to carry out physically strenuous work.<br><br>Later stages of pregnancy may increase the risk of falls through reduced visibility and changes to mobility.<br><br>Risk of early labour or miscarriage through physical assault. |
| Young people | Lack of experience and level of maturity.<br><br>Inability to concentrate for long periods. |
| People with a disability | More difficult to adapt to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. car breakdown, venue being inaccessible). |
| New employees, trainees including inexperienced volunteers | Lack of familiarity through level of experience or training needs. |
| Specific medical conditions | Some individuals may have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. These may include some health |

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| | conditions, such as unstable epilepsy or diabetes. The consideration of medical conditions should include both routine activities and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual. |

The following table provides examples of individual consideration for non-employees:

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| Contractors | Unfamiliar with site layout, emergency procedures, adjacent activities and site hazards. |
| Parents or Professionals attending an Aspire Schools site for a one-to-one meeting. | Unfamiliar with exit route from meeting room, may become agitated and need to leave the room in anger. |

Staff may work across sites, or be visiting different sites.

Sole working may be encountered during part of a working day as well as for sole working occupations, for example, delivering a 1:1 mentoring session or taking a child out for an ad hoc regulation break.

All of the above considerations are just a guide and are not exhaustive. Each risk assessment must consider the vulnerabilities of the person involved in the sole working task, and identify controls to reduce to an acceptable level.

## 3. Controlling the risk

It is important to ensure that control measures are proportionate to the risk.

A key factor in controlling sole worker risk is to ensure that sole workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their supervisor.

The extent of supervision must be proportionate to the risk and the competency of the sole worker.

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that safe working arrangements are in place for all stages of the activity, from activity planning to implementation. These arrangements include ensuring that sole workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their supervisor and knowing when and how to contact their line manager for support.

### 3.1 Withdrawing from sole working activity

The Head of School/ Line Managers must ensure that the sole worker is supported if they decide that they need to terminate the work they are carrying out to protect their (or others') safety. For example, if the presenting behaviours of a student changes to make the situation unsafe. In this instance a review of the arrangements for ongoing delivery of provision must be made.

### 3.2 Unsafe sole working

In circumstances with all control measures in place, if the assessment identifies that it isn't possible for the provision to be delivered safely, then sole working should not proceed.

### 3.3 Supervisory monitoring of sole working

The line manager must ensure that sole worker monitoring takes place. Monitoring can include:

- Line manager responsible for initial risk assessment of places of offsite working taking place.
- Fortnightly meeting or 'check in' to ensure that any issues are picked up and that any practically or emotionally difficult situations can be discussed and supported.
- Making regular contact with the sole worker using mobile phones, teams or e-mail.

### 3.4. Mandatory control measures for potentially violent and aggressive situations

Where there is the potential for violence and aggression, the following three risk categories and mandatory control measures are provided. Some employees may fall into more than one category of sole working, therefore all control measures against each individual category may apply.

Additional information is provided for consideration, this information is a guide only and isn't a fully inclusive list of control measures.

| Risk Category | Control Measures |
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| **Category 1**<br><br>Staff working in classrooms 1:1 with students<br><br>Examples would include: Teachers, behavior support staff, learning support staff | **Mandatory**<br>• Staff must be briefed on the measures required to ensure their working practice is safe and emergency procedures.<br>• All employees must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their line manager/colleagues. Details made available should include location, car make, model, registration number and mobile phone number. |
| | **For guidance and consideration**<br>• Refer to low risk office sole working procedure |

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| **Category 2**<br><br>Staff working in locations where security is inadequate or where shared premises would allow non-authorised access to their work area.<br><br>Staff working in unfamiliar locations but not meeting members of the public.<br><br>Staff visiting students who have been assessed as presenting no risk to staff.<br><br>Examples would include: home tutors, outreach workers<br><br>Outreach work | **Mandatory**<br>• Where dealing with violence and aggression training is not provided, the line manager should give clear information to sole workers on what work can and cannot be done alone; when to withdraw or stop work; communication and check-in procedures; signs of escalating violence and aggression and emergency procedures.<br>• Where the problem relates to poor security allowing un-authorised access to work areas, the security of the building should be reviewed, if necessary, with the other occupiers or landlord and appropriate measures introduced.<br>• Daily work tracking arrangements must be put in place in line with the level of risk involved<br>• All employees must record an itinerary of their movements that is accessible to their manager/colleagues. Details made available should include location, car make, model, registration number and mobile phone number.<br>• Provide all other relevant assessment information, for example, where alarms are located in private meeting rooms. |
| | **For guidance and consideration**<br>• Consideration should be given to ensuring that employees receive appropriate training in dealing with confrontational situations, such as Team Teach. |

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| **Category 3**<br><br>Staff who work with students who are known to present challenging or aggressive behaviour.<br><br>Staff who routinely undertake sole working in remote locations. | **Mandatory**<br>• Employees dealing with students must receive training on dealing with confrontational situations, such as the Team Teach. This training should be repeated annually.<br>• Information to include what work can and cannot be done alone; when to withdraw or stop work; communication arrangements and emergency procedures.<br>• A form of employees tracking system must be introduced and its use enforced. This could either be a buddy system or an automated system.<br>• Employees must be briefed on the procedures for sole working before they start such work for the first time.<br>• Where a student presents a known risk of violence, then the visit should be re-arranged for a venue where appropriate levels of security or assistance are available. If there are particular reasons for the visit to take place at the student's home then at least 2 people should attend.<br>• Consider issuing a personal safety alarm.<br>• Provide all other relevant assessment information. |

### 3.5 Emergency arrangements

Sole workers should be capable of responding to foreseeable emergencies through the development of planned arrangements, for example, fire and first aid need. The requirements for emergency will depend on the nature of the work being carried out.

Where it is possible, a sole worker should withdraw from circumstances of escalating violence and aggression towards them.

Where a sole worker monitoring system is used it must include a means to raise the alarm in the event of (a) failure to contact a sole worker (b) an emergency request for assistance.

## 4. Risk assessment

Sole working issues may be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. However, where sole working has not been considered as part of other risk assessments, a specific risk assessment must be carried out. It is important to note that the original risk assessment may change as the activity itself progresses and further information on the competency of sole workers has been provided in this guide.

### 4.1 Risk assessment review

Sole working risk assessments must be regularly reviewed in line with changes which have been identified, for example, a violent incident has occurred during the last visit and it is no longer safe to sole work in the future.

All incidents and/or previously unforeseeable risks must be reported by the sole worker as soon as possible, reviewed by the line manager and flagged on Arbor which will warn other workers of the risk. If no changes have occurred within a twelve-month period, then sole working risk assessments should be reviewed at that point.

Head of Schools/ Line Managers must ensure that there are adequate reporting and feedback mechanisms are in place which allow for new information to be gathered about any changes which impact on the risk assessment. Changes to working practice must be assessed and communicated to all relevant employees.

**Appendix 1**

# Sole Working Policy Risk Assessment Template

**This risk assessment covers sole working for the following activity:**

**Staff covered by this risk assessment:**

**Pupils covered by this risk assessment:**

**Please consult section 2 of the Sole Working Policy to ensure that all potential hazards have been considered.**

| **Risk Category** | | | | | | | | | | |
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| **What are the risks / causes of harm?** | **Who might be harmed and how?** | **How might they be harmed? What are the factors to be assessed?** | **What is the level of risk? L/M/H** | **What measures are already in place?** | **What further action is necessary?** | **Action by whom?** | **Action by when?** | **What is the new level of risk? L/M/H** | **Action completed?** | **Review date** By Whom? Comments |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

[2] Staff at risk will not be assessed under this policy.

| What are the risks / causes of harm? | Who might be harmed and how? | How might they be harmed? What are the factors to be assessed? | What is the level of risk? L/M/H | What measures are already in place? | What further action is necessary? | Action by whom? | Action by when? | What is the new level of risk? L/M/H | Action completed? | Review date<br>By Whom?<br>Comments |
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| What are the risks / causes of harm? | Who might be harmed and how? | How might they be harmed? What are the factors to be assessed? | What is the level of risk? L/M/H | What measures are already in place? | What further action is necessary? | Action by whom? | Action by when? | What is the new level of risk? L/M/H | Action completed? | Review date<br>By Whom?<br>Comments |
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| What are the risks / causes of harm? | Who might be harmed and how? | How might they be harmed? What are the factors to be assessed? | What is the level of risk? L/M/H | What measures are already in place? | What further action is necessary? | Action by whom? | Action by when? | What is the new level of risk? L/M/H | Action completed? | Review date<br>By Whom?<br>Comments |
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| What are the risks / causes of harm? | Who might be harmed and how? | How might they be harmed? What are the factors to be assessed? | What is the level of risk? L/M/H | What measures are already in place? | What further action is necessary? | Action by whom? | Action by when? | What is the new level of risk? L/M/H | Action completed? | Review date<br>By Whom?<br>Comments |
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| | | | | | | | | | | |

**Risk assessment undertaken by: ……..** [name of member of staff]

**Date: ……**

**Authorised by: ……..** Aspire Head of School / Service

**Review date: ……**