

Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning

Lone Worker Policy and Procedure

Manager: Hannah Lindsay

Last Reviewed: 30 September 2025

Next Review Due: 30 September 2026



Lone Working and Safe Touch Policy

Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning (WILTS-EAL)

Review Date: 1 September 2025

Next Review Due: 1 September 2026

Linked Policies: Safeguarding & Child Protection | Behaviour | Whistleblowing | Health & Safety | GDPR/Data Protection | Complaints

1. Purpose

This policy sets out WILTS-EAL's approach to:

- Safe lone working
- Appropriate and therapeutic physical contact ("safe touch")
- Staff responsibilities
- Learner safety and emotional wellbeing
- Record-keeping and safeguarding expectations

It reflects statutory guidance including **KCSIE 2025**, the **Children Act 1989**, and Ofsted's expectations for alternative provision, as well as DEFRA considerations for animal-assisted learning environments.

WILTS-EAL is committed to ensuring that all staff work in an **open, transparent, and safe** manner, always acting in the **best interests of the child**.

2. Definition of a Lone Worker

A **lone worker** is anyone working without direct or close supervision.

At WILTS-EAL this may include:

- The Managing Director
- Facilitators, assessors, verifiers, or volunteers
- Staff travelling to meetings, clinics, or training
- Staff working 1:1 with learners indoors or outdoors

3. Lone Working Arrangements at WILTS-EAL

3.1 General practice

- Staff frequently work **1:1** with learners.
- Wherever possible, **two adults** are present on site when learners attend.
- Staff always have access to a **charged mobile phone**.
- Emergency numbers are displayed on the **ICE board** in the office and feed room.
- Most work occurs **outdoors in public or visible areas**.
- Indoor 1:1 work (e.g., written tasks, confidentiality needs) is conducted with:
 - A table between staff and learner
 - Doors open where appropriate
 - Visibility maintained

3.2 Remote or low-visibility activities

Activities such as woodland walks or map-guided dog walks are valuable but require:

- Informing another team member of the plan, location, and expected return
- Carrying a charged phone
- Agreeing check-in times if needed

3.3 WILTS-EAL responsibilities

WILTS-EAL will:

- Conduct **lone-working risk assessments**
- Ensure staff are medically fit for lone working
- Identify tasks that must **not** be done alone
- Provide supervision and communication systems
- Put emergency procedures in place
- Consider risks of violence, dysregulation, or flight
- Comply with all legal and safeguarding requirements

3.4 Staff responsibilities

Lone workers must:

- Take reasonable care of their own safety
- Carry a charged mobile phone
- Follow all safeguarding and health & safety procedures
- Use equipment safely
- Report concerns immediately to the Managing Director
- Contact the commissioner or **MASH** directly if urgent safeguarding concerns arise
- Keep personal information private

4. Safe Touch: Principles and Purpose

WILTS-EAL recognises that:

- A “no-touch” policy is **not** supported by statutory guidance
- Touch must always be in the **child’s best interests**
- Some children welcome touch; others do not
- Touch must be **appropriate, proportionate, and non-secretive**
- Staff must maintain **professional boundaries** at all times

Safe touch supports:

- Emotional regulation
- Attachment and trust
- Trauma recovery
- Social and neurological development

This policy is informed by attachment theory, trauma-informed practice, and neurobiological research.

5. Types of Touch Used at WILTS-EAL

5.1 Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch

Examples:

- High-fives
- A hand offered when walking
- A pat on the back
- A brief arm around the shoulders

Used for reassurance, connection, and de-escalation.

5.2 General Reparative Touch

Used to soothe emotional distress and support regulation.

Examples:

- Hand on the back or arm
- Gentle rocking
- A brief, safe hug

Staff will normally seek **verbal consent**, e.g.:

“You look upset. Would it help if I put my hand on your back?”

If a child initiates a hug, staff may reciprocate appropriately.

Where a child is clingy, staff will help them develop alternative self-soothing strategies, including animal-based regulation.

5.3 Contact / Interactive Play

Used only when:

- A trusting relationship exists
- The child feels safe
- The activity is developmentally appropriate

Examples:

- Gentle chasing games
- Building hand-towers
- Throwing soft cushions
- Soft-bat fencing

These activities support emotional regulation and brain development.

5.4 Positive Handling (Calming a Dysregulated Child)

Used **only when necessary** to prevent harm and after all non-physical strategies have been attempted.

May be required if a child:

- Attempts to leave the site
- Moves toward a field of horses
- Poses a risk to themselves, others, or animals

Any intervention must be:

- The **gentlest and safest** means possible
- Aimed at **soothing and containing**, not restraining
- Time-limited
- Recorded afterwards

WILTS-EAL does **not** work with children assessed as **high flight risk** due to the open nature of the site.

Children prone to dysregulation will be **individually risk assessed**, and a parent/guardian may be required to remain on site.

6. Safeguarding and Professional Boundaries

Staff must never:

- Use touch that is sexual, aggressive, or punitive
- Engage in play fighting or tickling
- Use touch to meet their own emotional needs

Any concern about inappropriate touch must be reported immediately to the **DSL**.

This policy must be read alongside the **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**.

7. Lone Working and Safe Touch Combined Expectations

When working 1:1:

- Staff must take extra care to ensure touch is appropriate
- Touch must be explained verbally where possible
- Staff should remain visible or audible to others when feasible
- Any incident involving distress, dysregulation, or positive handling must be **recorded**

8. IT and Information Security for Lone Workers

Staff working remotely or alone must:

- Use only WILTS-EAL-approved devices
- Keep data secure and out of sight
- Ensure devices are password-protected and updated
- Prevent others from overhearing or viewing sensitive information
- Report any data breach immediately to the DPO

9. Record Keeping

WILTS-EAL maintains:

- Lone-working risk assessments
- Incident logs involving touch, dysregulation, or positive handling
- Safeguarding records (stored securely in line with KCSIE 2025)

- Communication logs for remote or off-site activities
- Training records for staff on safe touch and lone working

Records are stored securely and retained according to statutory guidance.

10. Review and Approval

Written by: Hannah Lindsay, Managing Director

Review Date: 1 September 2025

Next Review Due: 1 September 2026