

Lone Working Policy

Jealott's Hill Community Landshare CIC

VERSION 1.0	STATUS Approved	POLICY OWNER H. Bates
APPROVED BY Board of Directors	DATE APPROVED 15/10/2026	NEXT REVIEW DUE 1/11/2027 (annual)

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Jealott's Hill Community Landshare ("the Landshare") manages the risks of lone working across its 6-acre site, which includes the sensory garden, the 300-tree orchard, polytunnel, toilet block, storage/tool areas and pathways. It applies to anyone – staff, volunteers, directors or contractors – who may be on site working by themselves without another person present or within easy reach.

Lone working is not banned by law and is often perfectly safe. Our duty, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, is to think through the risks in advance and put reasonable, proportionate measures in place – and to apply the same standard of protection to volunteers as to any employee.

2. Why a 6-acre site changes the risk picture

Most lone-working guidance is written for offices or single-building sites. A 6-acre garden and orchard is different in ways that matter:

- **Distance and time to help:** someone injured at the far end of the orchard may be several hundred metres from the gate, the first-aid kit or a phone signal, and out of sight/earshot of the road or neighbouring properties.
- **Uneven and changeable ground:** mole hills, tree roots, wet grass, ladders in orchard rows, and soft ground near the polytunnel or ponds/water butts increase slip, trip and fall risk.
- **Tools and machinery:** pruning saws, loppers, strimmers, mowers and hand tools can cause significant injury with no one nearby to call for help or apply first aid.
- **Working at height:** ladder work in the orchard (pruning, netting, fruit picking) is one of the highest-risk activities on site.
- **Weather and exposure:** an open site means heat, cold, lightning and high winds are a real factor, especially for older or less mobile volunteers working for extended periods.
- **Variable mobile signal:** the garden site can have patchy signal – presence of a phone signal cannot always be relied on.

- **Public access:** as a community site, members of the public, dog walkers or children may be present when the site is open, which changes both safeguarding and personal safety considerations.

This means the standard “carry a phone and tell someone where you are” advice, while still the foundation, is not sufficient on its own – it needs to be built out with site-specific measures below.

3. What other sites do (summary of good practice reviewed)

This policy draws on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on lone working and on volunteers, and on lone-working policies published by parish councils, allotment associations and community garden risk-assessment guidance. The common themes are:

- A written policy that applies equally to paid staff and volunteers.
- A risk assessment that identifies which tasks may and may not be done alone.
- A “check-in / check-out” or buddy system with a nominated contact and a clear escalation point if someone doesn’t check out.
- Induction and training before anyone is authorised to work alone, including where the first-aid kit, and emergency exit/muster point are.
- A short list of tasks that must never be done alone (ladder work, chemical handling, power tools, working near water, lifting heavy loads).
- A signing-in book or log at site entry, used consistently – HSE case studies specifically flag charities that introduced this after incidents involving unsupervised volunteers.
- Regular review of the policy and of who is medically fit to work alone (e.g. not for anyone with a condition that could suddenly incapacitate them), without extra precautions.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all lone working on the Landshare site, including:

- Early/late arrivals or departures outside normal group session times.
- Maintenance, watering, pruning or harvesting visits made solo between organised sessions.
- The last person leaving after a group session has otherwise dispersed.
- Any volunteer or director who prefers to or needs to garden alone rather than during a scheduled group day.
- Group Growing Plot holders who may access in any daylight hours.

It does not remove the requirement for under-18s, or anyone with a relevant health condition, to be supervised or accompanied – lone working is not permitted for these groups regardless of task.

5. Who may not work alone

- Anyone under 18.

- New volunteers who have not yet completed a site induction.
- Anyone whose health condition could cause sudden incapacity (e.g. uncontrolled epilepsy, cardiac conditions, severe allergies with anaphylaxis risk) unless a specific individual risk assessment and additional control (e.g. more frequent check-ins, alarm device) is agreed with the Landshare Coordinator.
- Anyone who has been asked by a first aider, director or Landshare Coordinator not to work alone that day (e.g. due to visible illness, injury, fatigue, or being new to a task).

6. Tasks that must never be carried out alone, regardless of experience

These tasks are identified in the site activity risk assessment and include:

- Any work at height, including ladder use for pruning, netting or picking in the orchard.
- Use of powered tools: strimmers, mowers, hedge trimmers, chainsaws or similar.
- Mixing, applying or handling chemicals, pesticides or fertiliser concentrates.
- Moving or lifting heavy items (compost bays, timber, water butts, large branches).
- Any work near open water (pond, water storage) where a fall could lead to submersion.
- Felling or removing damaged/leaning trees, or dealing with storm-damaged branches.

These tasks should be scheduled for group sessions or arranged with at least one other person present on site at the same time.

7. What lone working IS permitted, with precautions

- Light hand-tool tasks: weeding, watering, planting, general tidying, harvesting from ground level.
- Low-level maintenance in the polytunnel or on defined paths.
- Site checks, watering rounds, or opening/locking up.

8. Control measures

8.0 First preference

- The first preference is for there to always be at least two people on site together.
- The Landshare Coordinator and Horticultural Assistant will almost always be on site together. Where there is annual leave or one staff member is not on site a director will always endeavour to be the second person on site.
- Volunteers will be briefed at induction and when they become keyholders of this policy.
- Group Growing Plot holders will be advised of this preference.

8.1 Before working alone

- Complete site induction covering hazards, first-aid kit location, water shut-off, gate/lock arrangements and known trouble spots (uneven ground, low branches, etc.).
- Tell a nominated contact (a director, the Landshare Coordinator, or a family member/friend) that you are going, roughly which area of the site, and when you expect to finish.
- Charge your mobile phone and check you have signal near the entrance or by the green shelter before heading further into the site; if signal is poor in the area you plan to work, tell your contact you may be uncontactable and agree a shorter check-in window.
- Check that the First Aid kit is available in the blue tool shed.

8.2 During lone working

- Sign in and out in the site log book kept in the blue shed or barn, noting arrival time, area of site, and expected departure time.
- Agree a check-in time with your nominated contact for visits over 2 hours (e.g. a text at the halfway point).
- Keep to ground-level, hand-tool tasks only (see Section 6/7).
- Stay within reasonable reach of the entrance/phone signal area where practical.
- If you feel unwell, notice a hazard, or conditions change (e.g. weather turns, ground becomes unsafe), stop and leave the site.

8.3 If someone doesn't check out

- The nominated contact should attempt to call/text the lone worker.
- If there is no response within 30 minutes of the expected finish time, the contact (or a second nominated person) should attend the site to check. If the gate is locked then they should call Syngenta Security to gain access followed by 999 if there is reason to believe the person may be injured and unreachable.
- The site log book entry should be used to confirm the person was on site and roughly where.

8.4 Emergency arrangements

- First-aid kit locations: tool shed, office and welfare cabin.
- Nearest point with reliable mobile signal: green shelter.
- What3words / site address for emergency services: arch.energy.pine.
- Emergency contacts board displayed on the Noticeboard by the blue tool shed, listing the Landshare Coordinator, Syngenta security and 999/NHS 111 as appropriate.

9. Weather and seasonal factors

- No lone working during high winds, thunderstorms, heavy snow/ice, or extreme heat warnings – these significantly raise the risk of falling branches, slips or heat-related illness with no one nearby to help.
- Reduce the check-in interval (e.g. to 60 minutes) during very hot weather or when working the far end of the orchard.
- In winter, consider daylight hours – lone working must end with enough time to leave the site before dusk.

10. Responsibilities

10.1 The Landshare (Directors / Landshare Coordinator) will:

- Maintain this policy and review it annually or after any incident.
- Carry out and keep up to date a site risk assessment that includes lone-working hazards.
- Provide induction, site log book for sign in, first-aid kits, and emergency contact information.
- Decide, with the individual, whether any additional precautions are needed for a given volunteer or task.

10.2 Volunteers, staff and directors will:

- Follow this policy and not carry out tasks listed in Section 6 alone.
- Sign in/out and keep their nominated contact informed.
- Report any near-miss, hazard, or incident to the Landshare Coordinator or a director as soon as practicable.
- Tell the Landshare Coordinator if a health condition may affect their ability to work alone safely.

11. Incident reporting and review

All incidents and near-misses during lone working must be logged, however minor, so that patterns (e.g. a recurring trip hazard) can be spotted. This policy, and the accompanying site risk assessment, will be reviewed annually, after any incident, and whenever the site or activities change significantly (e.g. new planting areas, new equipment, the “Access for All” garden development).

12. Related documents

- Site Risk Assessment
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- First Aid Arrangements
- Incident Report Form

This policy is a starting template based on HSE lone-working guidance and comparable community garden/allotment/parish council policies.

Version history

Version	Date	Author	Summary of changes
1.0	September 2026	Hannah Bates	Initial policy created.