**Division of Health Research, Faculty of Health and Medicine**

**Core Principles of Lone Research Working**

This document has been produced to accompany the DHR Lone Research policy. The key aim of the two documents is to make lone research working practices as safe as possible for members of staff and students in DHR.

‘Lone researching’ can be distinguished from ‘lone working’ in a number of ways, as follows:

* Researchers may not actually be alone, in that there is likely to be a research participant present during fieldwork;
* The context of lone researching is where the researcher is remote from their employment base, support structures and collegiality;
* They are likely to be in unfamiliar surroundings with degrees of unpredictability in their circumstances;
* Research participants cannot and should not be relied upon to provide support to researchers, and may in fact pose a threat to researchers or be in need themselves.

This document is intended as a guide for all members of DHR involved in lone research working. This may include, but is not restricted to, Principal Investigators, researchers and research teams, students and their supervisors, and lone researcher safety partners.

Members of staff and/or students should work together to address each core principle in relation to the particular research context. Finally, an implementation plan should be produced, informed by the core principles and tailored to the specific context. Please refer to the DHR Lone Researcher policy for further details and guidance.

| **Research stage** | **Core principle** | **Responsibility** | **Action**  | **Questions for consideration** |
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| Research design | Necessity | Principal Investigator Project team Student Supervisor  | Give careful consideration to whether lone research working is necessary | Is it necessary that the programme of research entail lone research working? Are there alternative ways of gathering the required data?   |
| Grant application | Costing | Principal Investigator Student SupervisorResearch Support Office  | Calculate the cost of lone working resources and include in the grant application and/or arrange appropriate resources for required technology if there is no grant funding.  | Having decided that lone research working is a necessary requirement of the research programme, what resources are needed to support this? (e.g. a mobile phone, lone researcher technologies such as SkyGuard; regular training opportunities) |
| Ongoing | Training | Principal InvestigatorResearcherProject team Student Supervisor  | Identify the training needs of all members of staff and students involved in the research programme relating to lone research workingEach member to engage in regular lone researcher training Review training outcomes in the PDR process and team meetings  | What are the training needs of the members of staff and students involved in the research programme relating to lone research working? What training would address these needs? Can this be costed into the grant application? Is there training required for any lone researcher technology e.g. Skyguard.What are the team’s ongoing training needs in relation to lone research working? Could this be a regular agenda item in team meetings? |
| Research Ethics approval  | Risk assessment (prior to lone research working) | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor FHM REC | Conduct a thorough risk assessment prior to lone research working. Complete the DHR Risk Assessment proforma.  | What are the specific risks associated with the lone research working context? What situations might arise for the lone researcher and how as a team do you think these could these be managed? Can consideration be given to the timing (within office hours, if possible) and location (with mobile phone signal, not remote areas) of lone researching where commensurate with the project. What might the researcher do if s/he senses that something is wrong while engaged in lone research work?  |
| Research Ethics approval  | Checking in and out  | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor Lone researching safety partner  | Establish a clear procedure for checking in and out of the research activity | What will be the procedure for the lone researcher when checking in and out of an activity?Will lone working technology be used? DHR currently has access to SkyGuard technology, and its appropriate use is encouraged. Will there be a lone researcher safety partner? Who is this person, how have they been briefed, and are there any GDPR/Security concerns for them?How will information be shared between the researcher and safety partner? How does this meet any GDPR/Information Security requirements for access to/destruction of confidential data? What method of communication will be used while the researcher is lone working? If mobile phone technology is to be used, has the signal been checked, the phone charged? How can the researcher alert the Lone Researcher Safety Partner quickly (e.g. use of an agreed code word). What is the agreed timescale for the research safety partner if there is no check-out logged?DHR has access to SkyGuard technology held in DHR office. Where possible and available, this is to be used to support lone researchers.  |
| Before Fieldwork Commences | Creation of an implementation plan | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor Lone researcher safety partner  | Implementation plan created, and appropriately logged.  | Where will the implementation plan be logged so that those who may need access to it can do so in a timely manner (e.g. paper copies, stored in secure LU Box file) |
| Fieldwork  | Risk assessment (ongoing throughout the period of lone research working) | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor Lone researcher safety partner  | Continue to assess the risks during the process of lone researcher working | What risks have been identified for the lone researcher as fieldwork has been underway? How have these been managed and addressed? Has any accident/near miss been noted and reported?Is there any learning which can be used to improve future lone research working?  |
| Research Ethics approval  | Emergency procedure and response | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor  | Establish a clear emergency procedure and response  | What is the agreed emergency procedure and response while the researcher is lone working? Who is aware of this procedure? Who needs to know any emergency contact details, and where are these safely stored so they can be accessed appropriately?Does this rely on anticipated timings and/or a pre-agreed code word? Who holds these timings/code word? What are the limitations of the agreed emergency procedure and response and how might these be minimised? What is the escalation procedure if required? |
| Fieldwork | Debrief | Principal Investigator ResearcherProject team Student Supervisor  | Provide regular opportunities for / participate in regular debriefs following lone research working  | Has the researcher had to deal with any difficult situations while undertaking lone research working? Has this had an impact on the researcher? Is it clear how and with whom the researcher can engage in a debrief? Is there any learning which can be used to improve future lone research working? Does an accident/near miss incident form have to be completed? |

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