Lone closing in a pub: designing the check-in plan

A lone-closing check-in works when someone receives it, knows what a missed contact means and can follow an agreed response.

Practical staff guidance; adapt the suggested workflow to your venue and current procedures.

Describe the closing task

List the work that may take place alone, including clearing, locking up, cash-related tasks and leaving the premises. Consider who may still be nearby, the condition of exits and communications, and whether the arrangement is suitable for the worker. The employer's risk assessment determines the controls and any tasks that need different staffing.

Agree two sides of the contact

Name the worker and the person monitoring them. Specify the check-in method, expected contact points and a backup if the normal channel fails. Agree who covers the monitoring role if the first contact becomes unavailable. A message sent to an unmonitored group creates uncertainty about whether anyone has acted on it.

Write down the missed-contact response

Set the response sequence in the local plan, including who attempts contact and who escalates. Tailor timing to the risks rather than adopting a generic interval. Explain the circumstances that require immediate emergency help. HSE guidance addresses training, monitoring and contact arrangements for lone workers; staff should know their own venue's plan.

Practise the handover

Run through a hypothetical missed message while everyone is present. Check that numbers and contact methods work and that the monitoring person understands their role. After the first closing shift, ask what was awkward or unclear. Use changes in staff, equipment or operating hours as prompts to review the arrangement.

Worked example

Fictional example: a closing supervisor discovers that the usual monitoring colleague is unavailable. Before working alone, they contact the duty manager, who confirms a replacement contact and the agreed check-in arrangements.

Your next steps

- Confirm the assessed tasks and staffing.
- Name worker and monitoring contact.
- Check primary and backup communications.
- Brief the missed-contact response.
- Confirm the end-of-shift handover.

Specify what happens after a missed contact

A check-in plan needs an active recipient, a defined time or trigger and a sequence of actions if contact is missed. The recipient must know who is working, their location and how to obtain help. Check communication coverage and the backup arrangement. Decide how the plan changes if the designated contact becomes unavailable. The worker should know which tasks are prohibited or need additional staff under the assessment.

Rehearse the contact chain

Fictional exercise: the closing worker misses a check-in and their usual contact is driving. Work through the approved escalation chain using a tabletop discussion. Who notices, who takes over and what information do they have? The objective is to find an unassigned action before a real incident. Record the improvement and repeat the briefing with both the worker and the monitoring person. Never run an exercise that leaves someone believing a real emergency has been ignored.

Does sending a text complete a check-in?

Only if it meets the agreed system. The plan should explain acknowledgement and escalation. A message sent to an unmonitored phone provides little assurance that help will follow.

Check the plan against the closing sequence

Walk through the closing tasks on paper: cash handling, customer departure, waste removal, equipment checks and securing the building. Identify where staffing or assistance is needed and when the contact method might be unavailable. Match the risk assessment and local controls to each task. A worker who cannot follow the agreed arrangement needs a clear route to pause the task and ask for help. Review the monitoring side as carefully as the worker side: who sees a missed contact, what backup exists and how the next shift knows the worker has finished safely? Record changes after an exercise or incident, then brief everyone whose action is required.

Define an end-of-shift acknowledgement

The plan should explain how the monitoring person knows the worker has completed the agreed closing process and no longer requires monitoring under that arrangement. A vague “all done” message can be ambiguous if it is sent before the person has left the task or reached the agreed safe point. Use wording and timing that match the assessment. The recipient should understand when their responsibility ends and what to do if the final acknowledgement is missing. Keep personal travel or location information limited to what the arrangement needs.

Account for an unexpected customer

A closing plan can be disrupted by a customer who remains on site, a threat, an equipment failure or an alarm issue. Staff should know which situations require additional support and which tasks must pause. Practise a conversation that sets a boundary and obtains assistance without putting the worker into an isolated confrontation. The process should identify a safe place and a way to call for help. A worker should not be encouraged to complete a closing checklist while the conditions that made lone work acceptable have changed.

Make a review record that leads to action

After a missed contact or exercise, record the timing, whether the expected recipient was available and which action caused delay. Identify a change that can be implemented and checked: a backup contact, clearer location information or a revised task allocation. Assign an owner and review date. Share the revised instruction with everyone who monitors or closes. Keep the review focused on making the arrangement work in normal operating conditions. A plan that depends on one person always noticing an unlabelled message is difficult to rely on.

Closing shift: the final check-in goes unanswered

The closing supervisor expects a call at 23:15 from a lone colleague locking a satellite kiosk. The call does not arrive. The kiosk phone rings out. What should the supervisor use to decide the next step?

Compare your decision

Follow the agreed missed-contact procedure, including escalation times and emergency arrangements. Use the last confirmed location and task. Do not send another lone worker into an unknown situation without assessing the risk.

During a rehearsal, identify who holds the kiosk location details and who takes over if the supervisor also becomes unavailable.

Sources and editorial basis

- HSE — Protect those working alone

Guidance checked on 19 October 2026. Examples and worksheets are original suggested workflows; adapt them to your operation.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details