

LONE WORKING SAFETY GUIDANCE

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Introduction

This guidance is to support Safeguarders exercising the duties of their role. It aims to highlight safety issues relating to lone working and how Safeguarders can organise support when engaging in this activity. The guidance is not intended to be prescriptive, however, there is an expectation that Safeguarders will take the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the guidance and implement its contents.

It is acknowledged that there is already a considerable amount of awareness and experience of these issues amongst Safeguarders. This guidance seeks to consolidate and build on this. It is advisable for Safeguarders to reconsider their practice and approach to health and safety issues on a regular basis.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as;

“those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”.

Examples given by the HSE which seem to most closely apply to Safeguarders are;

“those who work away from a fixed base” and/or “are self-employed”.

Remember.....

As independent practitioners, Safeguarders are responsible for their own safety arrangements, however, the Safeguarders Panel Team are available for discussion as required. This guidance should assist Safeguarders when considering and making lone working and safety arrangements.

Lone working activity

In order to fulfil the role, Safeguarders will often carry out associated tasks in the homes of individuals and at other venues. It is the responsibility of each Safeguarder to assess the circumstances and associated risks when carrying out the role and have an appropriate support system in place at the time of the lone working activity.

The likelihood of a negative incident associated with lone working is low but the potential severity is high enough to require some control measures such as those listed below under the section on support arrangements and the Safety Checklist.

Assessment of risk and safety issues

It is the responsibility of each Safeguarder to assess the level of risk and to consider safety issues involved in visiting someone in their home and to have an appropriate support system in place at the time of this activity. It is recognised that any assessment of risk cannot account for every possible situation, however, it should help manage foreseeable risks and safety issues associated with lone working activities. Safeguarders should avoid making unannounced visits

for this reason. When considering risk and safety issues, Safeguarders are advised to consider the general safety guidance included in this document and appendix 1, Safety Checklist for Safeguarders Prior to Home Visits.

i. issues to consider

When making an assessment of risk, the following issues should be considered as appropriate to the circumstances:

- the environment – location, security, access
- the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances
- the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk
- history – any previous incidents in similar situations
- any other special circumstances

ii. information from other sources

A risk assessment should include checking with those agencies that have knowledge of the individuals, location or venue to be visited before arranging the visit. It may be that there already exists a relevant risk assessment relating to person/s and circumstances that will be beneficial to consider. This information may highlight safety concerns, such as identifying visits which should not be carried out in the evening or alone.

iii. Collaboration with colleagues

If a Safeguarder concludes that there are concerns about making a lone visit then arrangements should be made to use an appropriate neutral venue. If a Safeguarder felt that it would be beneficial to have an additional person in attendance, that person should be a professional who is already involved and not a colleague or friend. This decision will require discussion with the professionals involved as in some instances the presence of a particular professional or representative of that discipline may exacerbate the risk rather than reduce it.

If a Safeguarder determines that it is not appropriate to meet an individual in their home, place of work or other location proposed by that individual (whether this determination is based on advice from any source or the Safeguarder's own assessment of risk to the health and or safety of him or her self or others or for any other reason), when arranging to meet at a venue operated by a third party, such as Local Authority offices, the Safeguarder should consider what information may be relevant to that third party in order that they can make a decision about whether they can accommodate the meeting and what, if any, arrangements need to put in place.

Consideration of General Safety Guidance

The following general guidance (which is not exhaustive) should be considered before engaging in activities which take a Safeguarder away from their home or other work base and an appropriate response is put in place. This is particularly important before visiting properties to interview people in connection with safeguarding role.

Before undertaking a visit:

- As outlined in the section above, Safeguarders should contact organisations who are already involved with the person/s to be visited or have relevant information about them e.g. Social Work Department /Children's Reporter. Where a risk assessment has been completed by other agencies, consider how this applies to the activities associated with the role and carry out an assessment of the situation as outlined above.
- Consideration should be given to the location and timing of the visit/ meeting, taking into account any relevant issues/ risk factors. If there are risks to personal safety, Safeguarders should consider using a neutral venue and whether it is necessary to carrying out a joint visit with another party.
- Safeguarders should plan their route, both ways, by either vehicle or public transport. It is not recommended that Satnavs be relied on as the sole method of navigation, other facilities such as Streetmap are also available <http://www.streetmap.co.uk/>.
- Safeguarders should establish whether car parking is available and consider whether or not they wish the identity of the car used to be available to the child or family.
- As part of pre-interview contact, it may be advisable to call in advance to clarify the Safeguarder role, manage expectations and determine who should be present. Unannounced visits are not encouraged or recommended. It is also advisable to check regarding any pets that may be in the household. For example, ask that dogs are kept in another room during the visit. Even if they do not show any signs of aggression, they may react in response to upset or aggression shown by their owners. Pet allergies should also be considered.
- Safeguarders should be prepared to change arrangements if at all uncertain and advise 3rd party contact / Children First Support Line (if using the recommended home visit protocol option) of any last minute changes.
- Safeguarders should ensure their mobile phone is fully charged and check signal coverage of the planned area. The mobile phone should be accessible during the visit and switched to silent.
- It is strongly advised that lone working support arrangements are used to allow monitoring of the visit (*see Support Arrangements section*).

On Arrival/During Visit:

- Safeguarders are advised to park safely in a well-lit area and in position for a quick exit (if possible reverse in to the parking space so the car is facing the direction of travel). Personal possessions should be kept to a minimum and out of view.
- Safeguarders should park close to the place to be visited unless there is a reason not to e.g. the Safeguarder does not wish the identity of their car to be known. Safeguarders should be aware of the area around the home and any people present in the immediate area and have a reason to explain their presence if challenged.
- Safeguarders are advised to avoid carrying any valuables or using a mobile phone when walking to the location of their visit.
- If no-one answers the door of the home being visited, Safeguarders should refrain from walking around the house and looking in windows and should only enter a house if they are satisfied regarding any risks or concerns.
- Safeguarders should establish that the person they have arranged to see is home and only enter if that person is available. If there are children on their own, any child protection issues will have to be considered and may need to be acted upon. Further information is available in [Child Protection Policy and Procedure for Safeguarders](#).
- Before and on entering the property, Safeguarders should make an initial assessment of the attitude, demeanour, and behaviour of the person being visited for signs of aggression, violence, substance use, or other unusual or suspicious behaviour.
- Safeguarders should consider the principles of 'safe contact' when meeting children in their home and may wish to get advice/ guidance on this from relevant professionals/organisations. If a confidential discussion with the child is thought to be appropriate, alternative arrangements may be required, with the child being accompanied by another professional/trusted person who is known by the child.
- When inside the house, Safeguarders are advised to adopt a position to allow maximum vision of the area and an unobstructed exit and, if possible, sit closest to the exit (do not allow internal doors to be locked after you).

During the interview:

- Safeguarders are asked to have considered and planned for how and when to deliver any unwelcome information and anticipate any reactions and plan how this will be managed.
- Safeguarders should have an awareness of how to deal with/ defuse aggressive or potentially violent situations.

- It is advised to remain alert and observant to all behaviours. Should newcomers enter the home, be prepared to end the visit at this stage.
- Safeguarders should consider ending the visit where they feel their safety is being threatened or compromised.
- Safeguarders should be prepared to raise the alarm if safe to do so or call for assistance from the police if necessary.
- Prior to any visit, Safeguarders should consider support options and put necessary arrangements in place.
- If the Safeguarder has any doubts or feel ill at ease with in a situation they should seek out advice and support from the Safeguarders Panel Team.

Support Arrangements

Safeguarders should consider a basic arrangement which will promote safety by making sure a 3rd party is aware of a lone working activity. Depending on individual circumstances, a Safeguarder may be able to access and use an existing system through their workplace; may have made arrangements with a family member/ friend to take on the role of the 3rd party contact or have engaged the Children First Home Visit Protocol. There should be a very clear agreement and arrangement with those acting as the 3rd party contact about what steps they should take should the Safeguarder not return/check in with them at the expected time.

These types of arrangements are designed to summon help, should that be necessary. They don't replace the need to take a planned and preventive approach to safety issues when arranging a home visit.

It is strongly recommended that Safeguarders use the **“check-in/out” arrangement** put in place by **Children First and details of this Home Visit Protocol are outlined below.**

Children First¹ Out of Hours Support – Home Visit Protocol

Children First Support Line¹ (a national helpline operated by Children First) can be contacted by a Safeguarder in advance of a home visit to instigate a check in check out procedure. Children First Support Line is open Monday-Friday from 9am to 9pm and the Home Visit Protocol service is available during these times.

¹ Children First Support Line is a free helpline and email service for anyone with a concern about a child. More details about the service offered by Support Line are available on the Children First website.

Please note that Support Line does not operate at weekends and therefore the Home Visit Protocol service is not available. Should Safeguarders wish to instigate a check in check out procedure at weekends they are able to do so by contacting:-

Lisa Goodman **Service Manager, Safeguarders Panel Team**
Work mobile: 07539 429167

Sarah Louise Davies **Service Manager, Safeguarders Panel Team**
Work mobile: 07738 642618

The procedure detailed below will then be followed.

Check in

Safeguarders wishing to use this service should telephone Children First Support Line on 07739257546. If the call is not answered immediately, a message should be left identifying name, telephone number and role as a Safeguarder.

It is important that the initial call to request this service is made on the day of the visit and at least half an hour before the visit is due to start. This will give sufficient time for Support Line to call the Safeguarder back and take the relevant details.

The information listed below is necessary for Support Line to be able to instigate the 'check in check out' procedure:-

- the name and address of the person/s to be visited (there is no requirement to give names unless they are not the sole occupants at the address and these details are kept, mindful of confidentiality, and only shared when necessary in the interests of the Safeguarders safety);
- the car registration along with make/model/colour or other method of transport to the visit;
- the time the visit will start;
- the expected duration and finishing time (Support Line must be notified if this time is to be extended);
- alternative contact details for use in emergencies (e.g. friend or relative).

This checklist may also be helpful for use if you decide to use a family member or other person as the 3rd party instead, however consideration will need to be given to what information about the individuals to be visited is shared with 3rd parties. Children First/ Support Line recognise that information relating to names and addresses of person/s being visited would normally be treated as confidential information which should not be disclosed. However, in the context of

Safeguarders using this service, this information is provided specifically for health and safety purposes and will be only be used by Support Line for the 'Home Visit Protocol' for that particular visit on that day. The record of these personal details will be destroyed once the protocol is concluded. The only record that will be kept will be when the service was used and the name of the Safeguarder who used it. No other details will be retained by Support Line/Children First.

Check out

The Safeguarder should contact Children First Support Line or the 3rd party at the given finish time to close the visit safety arrangements. The Support Line telephone number can be saved on a Safeguarder's mobile phone for ease of use.

If a Safeguarder does not make contact to close the safety arrangements, Support Line will start an escalation process which will consist of:

- contacting the Safeguarder;
- if there is no response, the alternative contact person will be contacted;
- if there is no answer to this and a further attempt is unsuccessful, the emergency services will be contacted.

The Safeguarders Panel Team would strongly recommend the use of the Support Line out of hours support over and above any arrangements with 3rd parties, particularly when risk has been identified.

Safety elsewhere:

It is recognised that for many, certain Safeguarder tasks can be undertaken in your home such as making telephone calls or reviewing information and writing reports. In the main, this takes place without incident and to ensure that practice continues to be safe, a Safeguarder may wish to seek personal safety advice guidance from the police. There are issues (listed below) which are also worth considering:

- Meetings with the child and/or others involved with the child should always take place away from the Safeguarder's home.
- A Safeguarder may prefer to have their home phone number listed as ex-directory and consider a separate mobile for the purposes of Safeguarder duties. To avoid the telephone number being displayed on the receiver's phone, a Safeguarder can alter the settings or use pre dial code.
- Safeguarders who use social media sites for personal use should ensure that the privacy settings are set high to ensure that personal information cannot be accessed and should not share any information whatsoever relating to their safeguarding role on such sites.

- Safeguarders may choose to use a PO BOX to receive mail. As standard practice, there are systems in place with SCRA and the Scottish Court Service to ensure that personal addresses are only used for the purposes of the distribution of papers.
- Safeguarders should have immediate safety arrangements in place, should an individual connected to their Safeguarder role turn up at their home, particularly if this would cause alarm and/ or distress.
- Safeguarders should advise the Safeguarders Panel Team of any incident which has caused concern about personal safety.

Incident Reporting and Recording

Any incident which occurred while a Safeguarder was exercising their duty that has caused personal injury; fear or alarm; or damage to property (or had the potential to do so) should be reported to the Safeguarders Panel Team. This is in addition to any workplace system (where applicable) that may be in place. The Safeguarders Panel Team will complete a Significant Incident Form (appendix 2) and this information will be monitored and reviewed with the Scottish Government if necessary and appropriate support offered to the Safeguarder.

In addition, the Safeguarder may wish to consider the implications of any incident with regard to their ability to continue with the Safeguarder appointment. The Safeguarder should discuss this with the Children's Reporter and with the Safeguarders Panel Team in order to alert other relevant professionals of the incident/ issue of concern and decisions regarding continuation of appointment. This would allow for alternative arrangements to be made.

Safeguarders should be aware of and implement local child and adult protection procedures when, in the course of their duties, they identify protection issues. Further information is available in the Child Protection Guidance for Safeguarders.

Debriefing

It is acknowledged that Safeguarders face challenging situations and absorb difficult and distressing information. Options for support can be discussed with the Safeguarders Panel Team and Safeguarders are encouraged to contact the team.

Review of guidance

Relevant information and feedback will be used to review this guidance and for it to be re-issued as necessary.

Appendix 1

Safety Checklist for Safeguarders Prior to Home Visits

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and should be adapted as required;

*NA is an abbreviation for not applicable.

Issue	Yes/No/NA*	Action Required
Have you contacted any other organisations who have previous knowledge?		
Have you received any information which causes you concerns or highlights risks?		
Have you assessed the location/venue and can it be judged to be safe?		
If you are travelling by car have you identified a safe place to park?		
Is your mobile phone fully charged and does somebody know where you are? (Support Line number 07739257546)		
Have you considered meeting at a neutral venue.		
Are you aware of the precautions to take during the visit? • Park safely and in a position to make a quick exit • Minimise and hide any personal possessions • Only enter the house if you feel safe to do so • Take a position in the house with an unobstructed exit		
Are you confident that you are aware of how to conduct the interview? • Being aware of how to deal with aggressive situations • Being alert to behaviours of others • Being prepared to end interview • Knowing how to raise the alarm		
Are you happy that your privacy arrangements are adequate and there could be no unwelcome intrusion in to your private life due to your safeguarding duties?		

Appendix 2

Significant Incident Reporting form – Children First Safeguarders Panel

Date of Incident:	Safeguarder: SCRA ID No:
Name and role of person completing form:	
Details of incident: -Location and time of incident: -Description of incident: -Outcome/Action taken: -Debrief and Support offered:	
Notifications: Internal - when and by whom: External – when and by whom:	
Comments by line manager: Signature: Date: Comments by Assistant Director/ Senior Manager: Signature: Date:	