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Safeguards  
Panel

# LONE WORKING SAFETY GUIDANCE

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## Introduction

This guidance aims to support Safeguarders undertaking the duties of their role. It highlights the support that Safeguarders can be provided with by the Safeguarders Panel Team (SPT) when lone working, and safety issues to be considered when making lone working arrangements. 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 consider the options available to them.

We acknowledge that there is already a considerable amount of awareness and experience of lone working amongst Safeguarders, and this guidance seeks to consolidate and build on this. It is also advisable that Safeguarders regularly reflect on and review 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”.**

An example of this given by the HSE which most closely applies to Safeguarders is:

**“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, SPT are available to discuss any requirements or queries. This guidance will support Safeguarders when considering and making lone working and safety arrangements.

## Lone Working Activity

In order to fulfil their role, Safeguarders will often work in the homes of individuals and at other venues. They will also travel to and from these locations. It is the responsibility of each Safeguarder to consider and assess the circumstances, or potential circumstances, and any associated risks when carrying out the role. Safeguarders must have an appropriate support system in place at the time of any lone working activity.

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

## Assessment and Management of Risk

It is the responsibility of each Safeguarder to assess the level of risk when considering any activity that they are involved in. Relevant activities can include, for example, visiting someone in their home, visiting someone in another location or travelling to and from these locations. Safeguarders should consider whether a support system is required and if so, 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.

If a Safeguarder has concerns about making a lone visit, then there are a number of arrangements that could be made to mitigate risk. It could, for example, be appropriate to use a suitable neutral venue.

## Home Visits

Whilst Safeguarders are required to consider all risks which they may encounter in carrying out their role, the most likely risks are when undertaking home visits. We therefore highlight some general considerations after drawing attention to the information and support other professionals could provide.

### Information and Support from Professionals and Other Sources

When making a home visit, it is advisable for the Safeguarder to inform the lead professional who has relevant involvement with the child and their family that they plan to make a visit before doing so (for example a lead Social Worker, Children's Reporter, or Advocacy Worker).

### Joint or Accompanied Visits

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, friend, or another Safeguarder. This decision will require consideration and discussion with the professionals involved as in some instances the presence of a particular professional or representative may increase risk, rather than reduce it. The potential impact of the perceived independence of the Safeguarder of having another person in attendance should also be considered.

### Visits in Protected Spaces

There may be occasions when a Safeguarder decides that it is not appropriate to meet an individual in their home, place of work or other location proposed by that individual. This decision could be based on advice from any source or on the Safeguarder's own

assessment of risk to the health and/or safety of themselves or others. 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. They can then decide about whether they can accommodate the meeting and what, if any, arrangements need to be put in place.

The primary concern in such situations is the safety of everyone concerned, as well as the confidentiality, comfort, wishes and needs of the person who the Safeguarder is intending to speak with.

### Consideration of General Safety Guidance

The following general guidance (which is not exhaustive) should be considered before engaging in lone working activity. This is particularly important before visiting the homes of individuals to speak to them about the safeguarding role. The suggestions below will not be required in every situation, and SPT understand that many visits will not present risks.

#### Before Undertaking a Visit:

- As outlined in the section above, Safeguarders should contact lead professionals or organisations who are already involved with the person/s to be visited or hold relevant information about them. Safeguarders should ask those agencies if they have any relevant information about the individuals, location, or venue to be visited **before** arranging the visit, which would inform any risk assessment. It may be that there already exists a relevant risk assessment relating to person/s and circumstances that will be important for Safeguarders to consider. This information may highlight safety concerns, such as identifying visits which should not be carried out in the evening or alone.
- Prior to any visit, Safeguarders should consider support options and put necessary arrangements in place.
- Consideration should be given to the location and timing of the visit or meeting, taking into account any relevant issues or risk factors. If there are risks to personal safety, Safeguarders should consider using a neutral venue, or whether it is necessary to carry out a joint visit with another party. As stated above, this should be a professional who knows the person being visited. Alternatively, consideration could be given to arranging a meeting online or over the phone.
- Safeguarders should plan their route, both ways, by either vehicle or public transport. It is not recommended that a Satellite Navigation (Sat Nav) device is relied on as the sole method of navigation in case of loss of reception or

difficulties with online connection. Travel planning tools such as [Google Maps](#) and the [AA Route Planner](#) can also be used to help plan a journey in advance, and can be printed so are available offline if needed.

- Safeguarders should establish whether car parking is available and consider whether they wish the identity of the car used to be available to the person/s being visited.
- As part of pre-interview contact, it is advisable for Safeguarders to call in advance to inform the child and family of the intention to visit, clarify the Safeguarder role, manage expectations and determine who should be present. Unannounced visits are not encouraged or recommended. Aside from questions regarding whether such visits are consistent with the Safeguarder's role, they are likely to increase risk. It is 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 emotion, 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 the Safeguarders Panel Team of any last-minute changes when using the check in/check out procedure.
- 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 mode.

### **On Arrival/During Visit:**

- Safeguarders should consider parking safely in a well-lit area and in position for a quick exit (if possible, reverse into the parking space so the car is facing the direction of travel). Personal possessions should be kept to a minimum and out of view.
- Parking outside the driveway of a family home to avoid becoming inadvertently blocked in by another family member is recommended.
- 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 on the street or in the immediate area and have a reason to explain their presence if challenged.

- Safeguarders are advised to avoid carrying 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 not walk around the house and look in windows.
- Safeguarders 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, consider if this is a child protection issue that requires action. If a Safeguarder has any concerns about the safety of any adults within the home, then adult protection issues will also have to be considered and may need to be required to be acted upon. Further information is available in our [Child Protection Policy and Procedure for Safeguarders](#), and local child and adult protection procedures should be implemented if necessary.
- Safeguarders should make an initial assessment of the person being visited for signs of aggression, violence, substance use, or other concerning behaviour.
- Safeguarders should consider their own presentation, tone and body language and ensure that this is appropriate to the context and likely to support a calm, appropriate conversation.
- Safeguarders should consider the principles of 'safe contact' when meeting children in their home and may wish to get advice or guidance on this from relevant professionals or 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 or trusted person who is known by the child.
- When inside the house, Safeguarders are advised to ensure they are in a position that allows maximum vision of the area and an unobstructed exit and, if possible, to sit closest to the exit point (do not allow internal doors to be locked after entering).

### During the Visit:

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

- It is advised to remain alert and observant to all behaviours. If someone new enters the home, then it would not be appropriate to continue, so be prepared to consider how to deal with this. This could mean the Safeguarder has to conclude the visit at this stage.
- Safeguarders should end 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.
- If the Safeguarder has any doubts or feel ill at ease within a situation they should seek out advice and support from the Safeguarders Panel Team.

### **SPT Out of Hours Support – Home Visit Procedure**

If Safeguarders know in advance that they are planning on making a home visit alone, then it is strongly recommended that our Safeguarder Panel Team Check-In/Out procedure is used. This will allow us to arrange for a member of our team to be available to the Safeguarder and put the Check-In/Out procedure in place.

This service is available Monday-Friday from 9am to 9pm. Weekend on call arrangements can also be made if needed, upon advance agreement with the team. Notice of one day is required for any support required before 5pm on a weekday, and two days advance notice is required for any support required after 5pm on a weekday, or for the weekend.

Giving prior notice ensures there will be a dedicated member of the team available to respond to the Safeguarder and is especially important if the visit is made outwith normal working hours.

If the home visit is cancelled or arrangements changed, it is important that the Safeguarders Panel Team are notified in advance, so the dedicated team member is updated.

The procedure for procuring out of hours support is as follows:

Contact the Safeguarders Panel Team (on [safeguarderspanel@children1st.org.uk](mailto:safeguarderspanel@children1st.org.uk) or 0345 60 44 296 in advance (ideally two days prior) to any planned visit, providing the following information relating to the visit:

- Date
- The time the visit will start
- Expected length of visit (please notify SPT if the time of the visit is extended)
- Location
- Name of person being visited (these details are kept, mindful of confidentiality, and only shared, when necessary, in the interests of the Safeguarders safety)



- Car registration along with make/model/colour, or other method of transport to the visit.
- Mobile contact details and emergency contact details (e.g., a relative or friend) should the SPT team member not be able to get in contact with the Safeguarder.
- Any other relevant information (for example, known risks)

The SPT will then provide the Safeguarder with contact details of the staff member who they can 'Check-In/Out' with, and the SPT staff member too will be provided with the details above.

### Check In

On the day of the planned visit, we ask that Safeguarders:

- Phone or text the SPT staff member to advise arrival at the planned meeting. The Safeguarder's text or phone call will be acknowledged by the staff member.
- Phone or text to advise the SPT staff member that meeting has ended, and that they have left the location. This text or phone call will be acknowledged by the staff member.
- If the home visit is cancelled or arrangements changed, it is important that the SPT is notified in advance, so that the SPT staff member is informed.

### Check Out

The Safeguarder should contact SPT at the given finish time to close the visit safety arrangements.

If a Safeguarder does not make contact to close the safety arrangements, SPT 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, a senior staff member of SPT will be alerted and they will implement an escalation policy. This may include contacting the Safeguarder's emergency contact, destination address and last meeting place, and if necessary, reporting the Safeguarder to the Police as a missing person.

### Other Safety Considerations:

It is recognised that for many, certain Safeguarder tasks can be undertaken in their own home, for example making telephone calls, 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, Safeguarders can alter the settings or use a pre-dial code.
- Safeguarders who use social media sites for personal use should ensure that the privacy settings are set high to ensure that their personal information cannot be accessed. Safeguarders should not share any information relating to their safeguarding role on such sites. Safeguarders should consider whether they state on social media that they are a Safeguarder.
- 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 occurs while a Safeguarder is exercising their duty that causes personal injury, fear or alarm, damage to property, or if the incident could have resulted in serious injury or ill health, even if that was not the outcome, 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 Report (appendix 2) and this information will be monitored and reviewed with the Scottish Government if necessary and appropriate support will be 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 will allow for alternative arrangements to be made.

### **Debriefing and Child Protection**

We know that Safeguarders will face challenging situations and hear difficult and distressing information. Options for support can be discussed with Support Managers, or the Safeguarders Panel Team. A free and confidential counselling service is available to Safeguarders if needed. Please contact SPT to ask for the details for this.

Safeguarders must also make themselves familiar with the child protection policy, as well as national and local Children Protection guidelines and procedures.

### **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.

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?		
Does somebody know where you are? (SPT number 0345 604 4296)		
Have you considered meeting at a neutral venue?		
Are you aware of the precautions to take during the visit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Park safely and in a position to make a quick exit</li><li>• Minimise and hide any personal possessions</li><li>• Only enter the house if you feel safe to do so</li><li>• Take a position in the house with an unobstructed exit, if necessary and appropriate</li></ul>		
Are you confident that you are aware of how to conduct the interview? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being self-aware and considered own tone, language and body language</li><li>• Being aware of how to build rapport with people you are speaking with</li><li>• Being aware of how to deal with challenging or even aggressive situations</li></ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being alert to behaviours of others</li> <li>• Being prepared to end the interview</li> <li>• Knowing how to raise the alarm</li> </ul>		
<p>Have you made the necessary checks and arrangements regarding any pets that may be in the household?</p>		
<p>Are you happy that your privacy arrangements are adequate and there could be no unwelcome intrusion into your private life due to your safeguarding duties?</p>		

## Appendix 2

### Significant Incident Reporting form – Children 1st Safeguarders Panel

<b>Date of Incident:</b>	<b>Safeguarder:</b> <b>SCRA ID No:</b>
<b>Name and role of person completing form:</b>	
<b>Details of Incident:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Location and time of incident:</b></li><li>• <b>Description of incident:</b></li><li>• <b>Outcome/Action taken:</b></li><li>• <b>Debrief and Support offered:</b></li></ul>	
<b>Notifications:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Internal - when and by whom:</b></li><li>• <b>External – when and by whom:</b></li></ul>	
<b>Comments by line manager:</b>  <b>Signature:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b></span>  <b>Comments by Assistant Director/ Senior Manager:</b>  <b>Signature:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b></span>	