



Older People Active Lives

# Lone Working

## Information for Staff and Volunteers who;

- May from time to time be working / volunteering on their own away from other staff and volunteers
- This may for example be in an office, a member of the public's home or a venue used for OPAL's services.





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# Aims of this information sheet

This Information Sheet forms part of OPAL's training of staff and volunteers about Lone Working. It covers a section on Before you go; Visiting premises on your own; Visiting people in their own homes; and Taking people to /from their home, as well as a section on Further Reading.

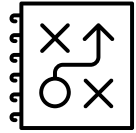
## **Please note**

Everybody must take responsibility for their own personal safety and be aware of how to keep as safe as possible, taking note of the training and procedures they receive from OPAL. Your safety is the top priority.



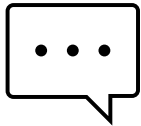
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# The 5 rules for Lone Working



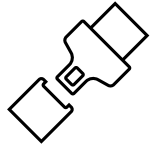
## Plan Ahead

- Think about where you are going before you leave.
- Are there any risks involved? If yes, how can you reduce those risks?
- Would it be prudent to take someone with you?



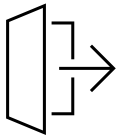
## Keep in Touch

- Have a charged mobile phone with you.
- Have a nominated person/work buddy to inform where you are going.
- Tell them where you are going when you leave and when you expect to be back – send a text.



## Don't take risks

- Don't put yourself in situations where you feel unsafe.
- Trust your 'gut reaction'.



## If in doubt leave



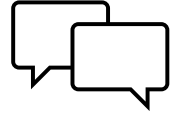
## Always report Incidents

- Complete OPAL's Accident & Incident form.
- Tell other staff/your Organiser/Line Manager if you have any concerns, in order to prevent others having the same experience.

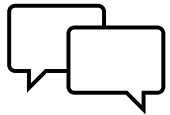


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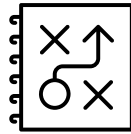
# Tips for reducing risks



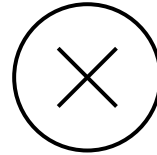
**Before you go** – Tell/inform your buddy where you are going, when you expect to be back and full address, telephone number and name of person you are going to meet. Check that your mobile phone is fully charged.



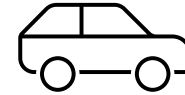
Keep your buddy informed if your plans change & when you have completed your visit.



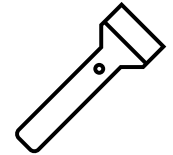
Plan your journey including where you will park. Ensure you have enough fuel in your car.



Don't park in lonely, isolated car parks or unlit ones if at night.



Park close to the entrance/destination or near where other people are.



Take a torch if you think you will be out after dark and park if possible where there is good lighting.



**Before you go** – Make sure your Organiser (volunteers) / Manager (staff) has your upto date contact information & they know how to contact you.



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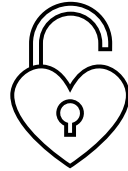
# Tips for reducing risks



Before you set off, ensure any valuables are in the boot of your car, not left on a seat.



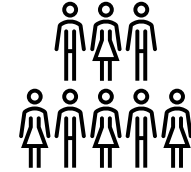
Ideal if you have a First Aid box in your car.



Keep your car doors locked whilst travelling.



Avoid wearing valuable items or carrying expensive items eg laptop.



Whenever possible meet people in public places (e.g. cafes, pubs) where there are other people around. Never hold meetings or invite people to your own home.



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# Meeting someone in their own home

- Always make an appointment before you visit someone in their own home. If you have any doubts or concerns ask someone else to be present or go with you.
- Make sure you know as much as you can about them as you can before you leave, eg
  - How mobile are they?
  - Do they have any health issues you may need to be aware of eg epilepsy?
  - Do they have any mental health issues?
  - Do they have pets?
  - Are they a smoker?
- If there is a history of aggression, you should not visit on your own.
- Act in a confident manner while you are out.
- DO NOT give out your personal details (home address, phone number).
- If they want a contact number then for Volunteers provide your Organiser's OPAL number and for Staff your OPAL mobile number.
- Before you go, think about any risks that may occur and how you might reduce them.



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# Visiting buildings where you will be on your own

- If possible, park your car within sight of the front door of the building and avoid parking in an isolated part of a car park.
- Have the building's keys ready before you get out of your car and your mobile phone, switched on and readily to hand.
- Once you are in the building, lock the door behind you, so that no-one else can get in unbeknown to you. Don't open windows that people could use to get into the building.
- If there is a building register, make sure you sign in (and out when you leave).
- Know where the emergency exits are and how to raise the alarm in case of fire.
- Do not undertake any high risk activities while you are in the building alone e.g. carrying heavy items down stairs.



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# Visiting buildings where you will be on your own

- While you are there, be mindful of the risks that have been identified in the building during OPAL's risk assessment.
- If it is dark, draw curtains/blinds so that you are not visible from outside. Only let people you are expecting into the building.
- Do not hold public meetings or public fund-raising events on your own. Always arrange for another colleague or volunteer to help you. When you arrive, wait for them in your car in the car park, and go into the building together. At the end of the meeting, leave the building together and drive out of the car park one after the other. You or your colleague should not be left on your own.
- Before you leave the building, make sure you have the building's keys and your car keys ready, as well as your mobile phone easily accessible.



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# Visiting an older person and/or carer in their own home

- If possible park your car within sight of the front door of the dwelling you are visiting, or at least within easy reach, and not in an isolated part of a public car park.
- Before you get out of your car, have your mobile phone, switched on and readily to hand.
- Show your ID before you enter their home.
- Do not go into the dwelling if the person you expect to visit is not there. The appointment can always be re-arranged.
- When you enter the dwelling, ask the person you are visiting to lead the way, making sure the front door is shut but not locked behind you.
- Make a mental note of the route out of the dwelling, as well as how the front door opens.



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# Visiting an older person and/or carer in their own home

- Be aware of any hazards in the building e.g. holes in the carpet, trailing wires, wet floors.
- If they have pets, and you are concerned about them, ask for the pets to be put in another room.
- When you sit down, make sure you sit between them and the exit to the room, so that they cannot get in the way if you wish to leave the room.
- Do not spread your belongings out in the room, because it makes it more difficult to leave quickly.
- Do not accept offers of food or drinks.



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# Visiting an older person and/or carer in their own home

- During the visit, look confident and should you start to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, make an excuse and leave promptly. Don't take risks. Trust your "gut reaction". In particular watch out for changes in people's behaviour.
- Before you leave the older person's /carer's home make sure you have your car keys ready, as well as your mobile phone easily accessible.
- Report any incidents (including any aggressive behaviour) to your Line Manager/Organiser and write it up on an OPAL Accident and Incident Form.
- For Volunteers – your Organiser will have done a risk assessment of the premises prior to your first visit. Please make sure you are aware of any risks they have identified each time you visit, and tell them of any others you identify during your visits.



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# Taking some-one from or to their home

- Please refer to the points under the section on “Visiting Someone in their own home” and in addition consider the following;
- Try and park somewhere where it is easy for the person you are collecting/returning home to get into/out of your car. E.g. park with the passenger door next to the pavement.
- To get into/out of your car, they may need your car door to be wide open and for you to provide some assistance. Do not attempt to lift anyone. Refer to the Information Sheet – Helping People Move Safely for more guidance.
- If there is no-one else in the car, do not leave your car unlocked while you go to collect the person from their house or escort them into it.



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# Taking some-one from or to their home

- Make sure they have their house keys with them and that they lock their front door as they leave.
- Make sure all fires etc. are turned off before you leave the house.
- On returning people home, make sure they are safely in their house before you leave.



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# Further reading

- OPAL's Lone Working Policy and Procedures.
- Susie Lamplugh Trust leaflet – Personal Safety at Work- Lone Working 2017.
- Helping People Move Safely Information Sheet.
- Driving on OPAL Business – Information for Staff and Volunteers.
- Driving on OPAL Business – Volunteers' Sheet.