

CRIPACC Lone Worker Policy for Researchers

Version 8

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4	April 2015	
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Lone Working

The following information is to be viewed as **guidance** for staff/researchers/research students who are working alone either offsite, within the office or at home (which may be of particular relevance if you live alone).

Staff/researchers are expected to use their professional judgement at all times.

If in any doubt, please discuss any issues or concerns about lone working with your Line Manager/project lead.

Personal safety should be placed above the undertaking and completing of ANY research activity.

Lone workers/researchers

Lone workers are defined as those who often work by themselves without close or direct supervision. These individuals are likely to require additional guidelines to be in place to ensure their health and safety. Lone workers include people who work alone on premises, work separately from others or work outside of normal hours. Lone workers also include mobile workers such as people visiting patients/participants in their own homes as part of a research project. It might also include staff living alone who are working from home. It is the employer's duty to assess the level of risk to lone workers and to take steps to minimise or control the risk where necessary. Further information with regarding to lone working can be found on HertsHub at

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/HealthSafetySustainability/SitePages/Lone-Working-Guide.aspx>

Who is this guidance for?

Staff/researchers/research students who will be travelling alone, either by private car, public transport, by bicycle or on foot, to unaccompanied offsite visits (a summary of the process can be seen in Figure 1 below).

Staff who live alone and are working from home and all those conducting research using remote methods.

Safe working arrangements for those who work alone offsite

It is your responsibility to ensure that you alert a named co-ordinator/colleague, when your work involves you:

- working alone,
- working alone offsite in vulnerable situations e.g. home visits or underpopulated areas.

KEY INFORMATION

Staff should ensure that all personal information is maintained on their HR CORE portal which is accessible by line managers to include:

- Contact telephone numbers – including home and mobile numbers
- Details of your next of kin to include contact phone numbers

In addition, line managers should be given and retain:

- UK based contact details of someone that be contacted in the event of an emergency if next of kin details are for someone living outside of the UK
- Car details – including make, model, colour and registration number.
- Medical information relating to any health issues that may affect you whilst lone working

Keeping recent photos of all staff in a team could also be considered by managers.

Items to have with you

All researchers are recommended to carry the following items each time they conduct research away from their place of work:

- A **mobile telephone** (with charged battery)
- An **official identity card** (with photograph)
- If you are likely to be visiting in an area with variable mobile signal, consider having a printed **map of the area**

The following items might also be useful:

- A **torch**, if travelling during hours of darkness (and spare batteries) although mobile phones will usually have access to a torch
- A **personal alarm** (to be kept in an accessible place); this can be purchased through your SBU/department.

Planning a fieldwork visit

Maintain a visit proforma (see **Appendix 1**) as a means of logging visits. The visit proforma must be made easily available to colleagues who are monitoring your visit.

A formal [risk assessment](#) should be undertaken prior to new staff undertaking lone working.

Further Higher Education Sector Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork and Travel can be found here

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/HealthSafetySustainability/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FHealthSafetySustainability%2FShared%20Documents%2FSafety%20and%20Health%2FTravel%2FSafety%2Din%2DFieldwork%2DGuide%20USA%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FHealthSafetySustainability%2FShared%20Documents%2FSafety%20and%20Health%2FTravel>

Other points to consider:

- Do you carry many bags or lots of paperwork –how do you think this affects your personal safety and ability to move quickly? Can you find a way to carry less? Try to keep at least one hand free whenever possible
- Think about what you have with you and avoid overtly displaying valuables, e.g. mobile phone, laptop expensive jewellery etc.
- Consider carrying a personal safety alarm
- Remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times
- Try to avoid danger rather than confront it – e.g. keep to well-lit or busy streets and avoid danger spots as much as possible
- If possible, have familiarisation sessions on home visits during your induction period with an experienced member of staff, and only complete a home visit on your own when you, and your more experienced colleague, agree that you are ready

- Where possible, try to arrange visits to people in public places rather than at home. If this is not possible, ask a colleague to accompany you if you feel at all uneasy about conducting a home visit on your own
- obtain information about where you are visiting before the visit. Ask how many people will be present at the visit. On arrival, familiarise yourself with exit routes and avoid going upstairs
- risk assessment: ensure that there is opportunity to feedback relevant information from a lone visit – e.g. if you felt at risk or if there was an incident. This should be formally recorded and reviewed with your Manager/Supervisor and other members of your team to ensure appropriate follow up action is taken and to minimise any risk in subsequent visits
- Further information on how to stay safe can be found via this Metropolitan Police link <https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/personal-safety-how-to-stay-safe/>

Pre visit planning

- Make and keep pre-arranged appointments and notify the participant if you cannot keep them
- Try to arrange home visits during daylight hours whenever possible. During winter months, weekend visits may be more suitable than evening appointments
- Consider the purpose of the visit; does it pose a higher than usual potential of bringing about a violent response, e.g. an interview in connection with emotional matters? If so, consider asking a colleague to accompany you or arrange to interview the person at your place of work
- Ensure that an appropriate room is available and there is financial support to cover participants' travel expenses.
- If you have concerns about animals / pets or any situations which may adversely affect anxiety or allergy issues, please enquire in advance and discuss with your line manager as appropriate.

Travelling for fieldwork

Use of private cars – must haves and recommendations:

- Car users must have the appropriate level of insurance cover to use their car for work purposes
- Put together an emergency kit for your car. This might include an extra coat, a torch, bottled water, spare change and an emergency mobile telephone charger
- Staff are encouraged to become a **member of a national breakdown service**.
- Make sure that your car (or rented car) is regularly serviced, and check tyres, oil, petrol, especially before a long journey
- Plan your route in advance
- Drivers should travel with **doors locked and windows closed**. If windows are open, handbags and briefcases should ideally be kept out of sight
- Always lock your car and ideally put anything valuable in the boot
- Attempt to park as near to your destination as possible
- At night, try to park **in a well-lit and busy place**
- When returning to your car, be aware of your surroundings, have your keys ready and before entering, quickly check that no one is inside
- It is not recommended to offer participants a lift under any circumstances

Public transport or on foot/bicycle - recommendations

- If you are using **public transport consider all options in advance**
- Take the most direct route to your destination with minimal amounts of walking, particularly if you are in an area unfamiliar to you
- If you need to catch more than one bus to reach a fieldwork site, consider booking a taxi instead
- Do not use public transport if there is no safe walking route to the destination (use a taxi)
- Avoid using public transport after dark. Consider pre-booking a taxi if you know you will be travelling after dark
- If on a train try to sit with other people and avoid empty carriages
- If you feel uneasy, don't be afraid to move to another seat or carriage, get off at the next stop or phone a friend/colleague so you're in contact with someone
- If you feel threatened or there is an incident, act immediately:
 - alert the driver, guard or conductor by making as much noise as possible
 - pull the emergency alarm
 - look for station staff, transport police or a 'help point' if there's an incident on the platform
- Always call 999 in the event of an emergency / you are in immediate danger

Bicycle - recommendations

- Only use if your destination is a reasonable distance from home / starting destination (a 'reasonable' distance will be dependent on your cycling proficiency and fitness level)
- Only cycle when the route after dark is along well-lit routes (not country lanes)
- Ensure your bicycle is roadworthy and has working lights for cycling after dark
- Wear reflective clothing and a bike helmet
- Only use your own bicycle if you have insurance to cover damage/theft – this is unlikely to be covered by the University's insurance

Taxi

- If you are leaving from the University to undertake fieldwork - check with the CRIPACC admin office for preferred Taxi providers
- Only use Licenced Taxis
- If you cannot hail a licensed cab, carry the telephone number of a reputable company
- Whenever possible, book by telephone and ask for the driver's name and make and colour of car
- If possible, take a photo of the Taxi licence plate and registration number and send to the person who is monitoring your fieldwork visit

During a home visit

Your safety is your primary concern and should be placed above completion of research tasks.

- If you are late arriving for your appointment, advise your nominated colleague who will record the revised time on the visit proforma
- **Do not** enter someone's home, if you do not feel comfortable or safe
- **Do not** enter someone's home if the person you have arranged to see is not there
- Be aware of, and maintain, personal safety at all times during visits
- Be aware of and respect cultural norms/traditions e.g. ask whether you should remove your shoes

- A professional and friendly attitude should be adopted but over-familiarity must be avoided
- Carry identification and present this to the participant prior to entering the property
- When visiting people's homes, try to let the resident lead the way. Avoid being the first to go into any room
- After entering the property, try to stay in communal living areas. Never undertake an interview or assessment in a room/location where you don't feel comfortable
- You should always make sure that the exit from the room is clear
- Make yourself aware of the way out of a property in case it becomes necessary to make a quick exit
- Always explain your research role clearly, and the conditions of confidentiality
- Remember that the interviewee may also feel anxious about the interview and your visit. You should bear this in mind whilst also ensuring your own safety
- If the participant is anxious, consider encouraging them to have a carer/friend within sight/hearing
- Animals in the home: if you are in any doubt about the behaviour of animals in the home, ask for it/them to be locked away while you are visiting
- Do not give your personal telephone number or address to participants
- You should not interview anyone who is clearly under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Be extra careful when alone with participants, e.g. fetching something from a handbag, comforting participants if they become distressed
- If you feel uncomfortable while in a person's home, you should make your apologies and leave
- When leaving an interview/visit, if you think you are being followed then keep driving/make your way to a busy area, a police station or a garage, etc and then telephone for assistance from a colleague, family member or the police
- Take personal responsibility for accepting food and drink, being mindful of personal safety / allergies

Be alert for signs of DANGER

- Be alert for body language / changes in voice tone and pitch – this may suggest rising tension, anger/frustration or impending violent behaviour
- Keep your distance; each of us has a personal space, which we defend when we feel it is being invaded
- Do not meet aggression with aggression

Awkward or potentially threatening situations

- If the interview will involve a discussion about sensitive topics, anticipate strong feelings from respondents and decide in advance upon appropriate ways of dealing with this situation
- If, for any reason, you are concerned for your personal safety once you arrive at your appointment venue, then do not hesitate to cancel your appointment. On return to the office, make alternative arrangements for when another member of staff can accompany you

Process for monitoring researcher visits

[Also refer to process and flow chart for nominated colleague - Appendix 2]

- When visiting the home of a participant, you should leave details with a nominated colleague
- The onus is on you, the researcher, to ensure that a colleague is aware of the details of your visit and has agreed to monitor during the visit and when the visit is completed
- Ensure that your nominated colleague is available on the phone and contactable by you for the duration of your visit

- Complete a visit proforma and go through the details with your nominated colleague before you leave:
 - It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that he/she has clearly stated the details about the visit on the proforma.
 - It is the responsibility of the nominated colleague to ensure that s/he is available to receive a call and monitor the time when the visit should be over. If circumstances change, they should arrange for another colleague to monitor the visit
- If you are late for your appointment, contact your nominated colleague who will note this on the visit proforma
- Also contact your nominated colleague if your journey plans change en route e.g. if you take a taxi because a train/bus is cancelled
- If an appointment or the deadline for contact is after 5pm, the researcher must make other arrangements for someone (colleague/partner/friend/family) other than staff in the CRIPACC administration office to monitor the researcher's whereabouts. Your nominated person should also be briefed on these safety procedures and given details of whom to contact in the Unit (Line Manager, Head of Department or nominated Deputy - for research students this should be one of your supervisors) in the case of your failure to return on time
- Leave your mobile telephone switched on (but on 'silent' mode) during the interview
- If the interview is still in progress as the deadline for contacting the Department approaches, the researcher should excuse themselves and call their nominated colleague to inform them that they are continuing
- If the researcher decides that they are not going to return to the office after their last visit, they should ensure that the appropriate person in the office knows about that by telephoning in. The visit proforma can then be completed accordingly

Remote fieldwork

It is possible that fieldwork (e.g. interviews) be conducted remotely through the phone, video-calling or text-messaging exchanges. This is likely to pose different risks to face-to-face fieldwork. However, similar precautions still apply, and researchers should contact their line manager with any questions.

- To conduct remote fieldwork, researchers should not use their personal accounts (e.g. social media accounts, personal private phone number, etc.). Researchers should use accounts provided by UH
- It is recommended to block the number from which you are calling from when phoning participants – this can be done entering '141' prior to entering the phone number being called
- Researchers must keep a similar log to that of home visits for interviews or remote fieldwork. This should be adapted to include elements relevant to remote fieldwork (e.g. platform used for contact, usernames, emails, etc.). These records should be kept in accordance with the instructions above
- Researchers should be careful to follow the same safety precautions and procedures outlined above as they apply to encounters with participants. In particular, researchers should be careful about disclosing personal information

Remote fieldwork still poses risks for the researcher. Your safety is the main priority.

Other considerations

Returning to the office

- If you have any concerns about returning to the office, ring Security (01707 285555 or internal 5555) and identify the help required
- Security can arrange for one of the security guards to accompany you back to the office and ensure that the environment is safe

Emotional well-being

- Staff making home visits should have the opportunity to discuss any issues arising from an interview with a member of their research team
- If required, ensure you arrange a de-brief with your line manager / project lead / supervisor following your interview. This may be required if you found the interview to be of a sensitive nature or it became difficult / fractious. Discussing any concerns openly will be of benefit to your health and wellbeing

Retaining proformas

- Proformas contain personal details of research participants and should always be kept in a secure place where confidentiality can be maintained
- Proformas should not be retained as a record for longer than needed, and normally will be destroyed after the visit has been successfully completed, unless they have also been used to record untoward incidents

Fieldwork overseas

If you are undertaking fieldwork including overseas, then please see the following guidance on this:

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/HealthSafetySustainability/Shared%20Documents/Safety%20and%20Health/Travel/Safety-in-Fieldwork-Guide%20USHA.pdf#search=fieldwork>

Working from home

The below guidance is NOT about micro-managing but being alert to staff safety and well-being

- Do not give out your personal mobile or landline number to participants in research or others. Give your work number which can be redirected to your personal number. Your number can be blocked when making calls by entering '141' before dialling the number
- Consider if your team want to set up a 'check in button' to use every working day or 'check in' on Teams.
- Line managers will take a more individual approach which takes into account the current context for individuals working from home but establish expectations of regular contact

Unable to contact a member of staff - raising concerns for their safety and wellbeing

If a line manager is concerned on any given day if they are not able to contact someone who is working [i.e. not on annual leave], a deadline will be issued e.g. 'If i don't hear from you by 5pm, I will have to take action'

Steps taken will then be as follows:

- Ask other colleagues if they have been in touch with the staff member
- Consider visiting the home of the member of staff or arrange for a colleague to do so
- Phone their next of kin

If there are still concerns, the police should be contacted.

Additional useful guidance

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/personal-safety-at-work>

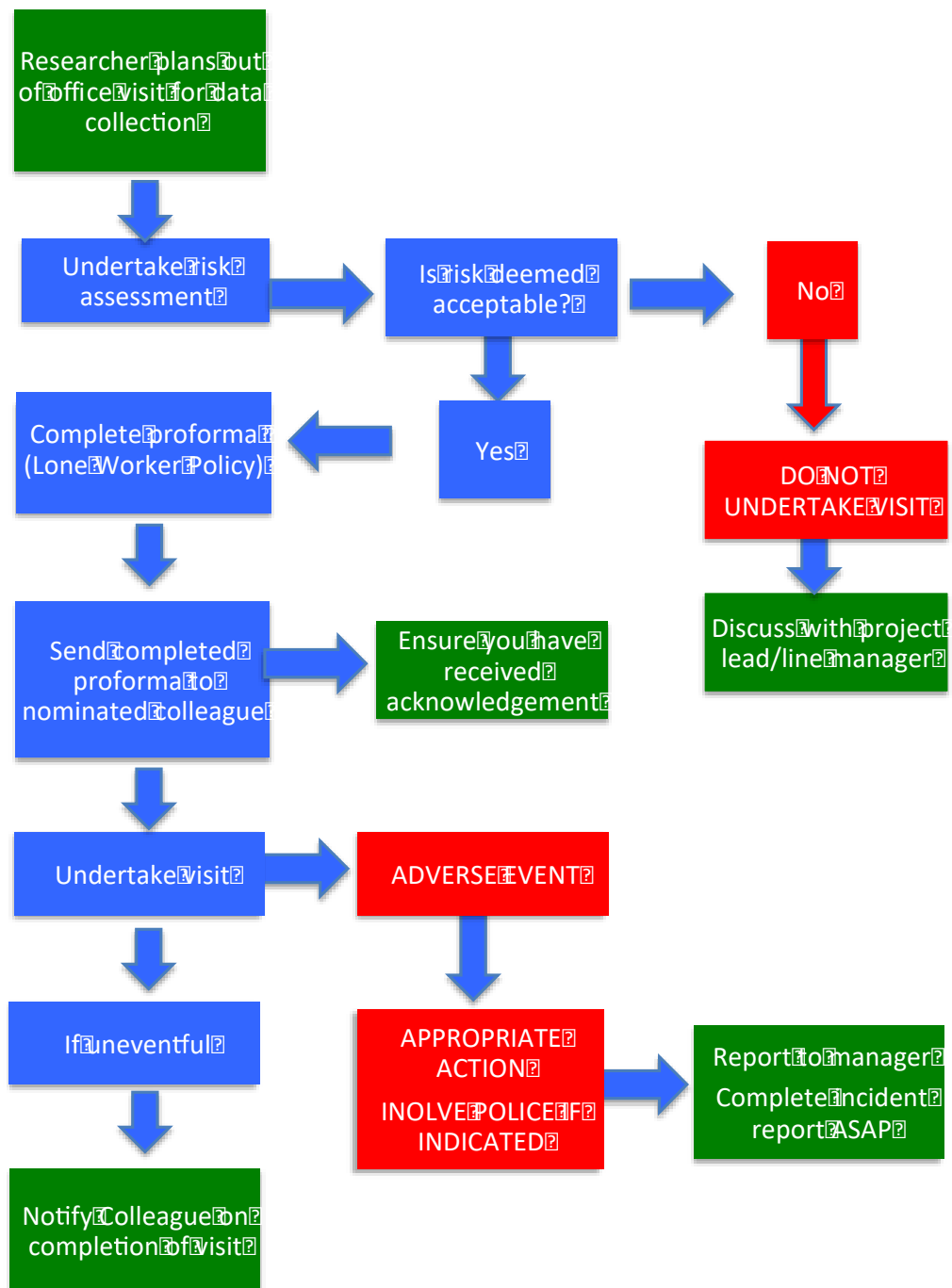
Key points

- No colleague should be left to decide on the next steps /course of action without support and guidance from line management
- It is equally important for the lone worker to know exactly what to expect in the way of help or assistance
- The protocol (Appendix 2) for raising the alarm (and whether that be taken as far as calling the police) should be put in place and agreed before a lone worker sets out
- Protocols such as these must be enforced and failure to follow them should be grounds for disciplinary action

Appendix 1 - Visit Proforma

INTERVIEWER SAFETY INFORMATION	
Researcher's name	
Mobile phone no.	
Home address (if working from home)	
Car registration	
Make of car	
Model of car	
Colour of car	
Next of Kin (Name and contact details)	
INTERVIEW VISIT INFORMATION	
Name of nominated colleague	
Date of interview	
Time of interview	
Time will ring in	
Time expected to be back in office or back home	
Mode of transport and route to be taken to and from interview	
INTERVIEWEE CONTACT INFORMATION	
Name of interviewee	
Address of interviewee	
Place of interview (if different from the address of the interviewee)	
Phone number of interviewee	

Figure 1: Flow chart for lone researcher.



Appendix 2 – process for nominated colleague

- Check you have all relevant details on the pro forma from the researcher
- If there are gaps in the information you need, please ask for the details before the visit takes place
- Set a timer on your phone for the time the researcher says they will check in with you. Once the researcher checks in and all in OK, you can delete the visit proforma

What to do if the researcher does not contact you on time

- Attempt to call the researcher
- If there is no answer from the researcher, attempt to call the participant and ask to speak to the researcher
- If there is no response from the researcher or participant after a second attempt:
 - Report to line manager and/or Director of CRIPACC
 - Telephone the police and give the contact details of the last known whereabouts of the researcher (i.e. the participant's name and address)
 - If there are immediate concerns, you may wish to telephone the police before reporting to line manager or Director of CRIPACC
- Your line manager should discuss with the Director of CRIPACC to discuss further action such as contacting nominated next of kin
- Complete an incident report ASAP

Figure 2: Flow chart summary for nominated colleague.

