

Personal Safety Guidance for Students Undertaking Placements and Home Visits

1. Home visits - what you should do

Arranging the first visit

- Any first visit to a service user in their own home should be first undertaken with the Placement Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor who will assess the situation and formally introduce you to the service user. However, if the service user is known to the agency and they have been previously visited or the Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor has assessed the situation and feels it is safe, then an accompanied visit would not be necessary. Only if a risk has been identified would an accompanied visit be necessary.
- Obtain as much information as possible about the service user, her/his relatives, the environment etc., before making an appointment. Ask the name of the service user, care/support voluntary staff, nurse/other professionals involved in that person's care, where appropriate, with the consent of the individual; complete an initial assessment.
- Always telephone to check with a service user if it is alright to visit them in their home even if they have previously agreed. There may be occasions when students are undertaking visits that service users do not want, but that are a statutory requirement (students should not be undertaking safeguarding work on their own).
- Ensure that the new service user's details (i.e. name, address and telephone number) are documented and kept in a safe place e.g. at the office or your placement where others know where it is kept.
- Ensure that your Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor is aware of the visit. If they are not available inform someone else
- Work out your route before you leave the office, including all routes and potential parking areas.
- Review the visit afterwards with your Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor to plan for subsequent visits.

Before going on a home visit (first or subsequent)

- Document on white board, or other, your visiting schedule documenting client's name and expected time of return.
- For students who are working within Supported Living Projects, or where there is no base office, a weekly programme of activities with the service user will be worked out in partnership with service users and community living volunteers and agreed and signed by the Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor. Any changes to this programme must be agreed by the Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor.
- Carry a personal alarm at all times; personal alarms are free from the Student Union
- Leave your mobile phone on at all times to enable you to be contacted if you don't return at the stated time.

Making a home visit/visiting a service user by foot or public transport

- Wherever possible arrange to meet the service user at a suitable time.
- Avoid consulting an A-Z, or other obvious map, in public; a photocopy of the relevant map is less obvious.
- Carry only what is necessary.
- Keep your personal alarm handy and carry a mobile telephone, telephone card or change for the public telephone at all times.
- Avoid dangerous shortcuts like quiet or badly lit alleyways, underpasses or isolated car parks.
- Avoid empty train compartments and isolated bus stops.
- Keep to busy, well-lit roads/streets and walk facing the oncoming traffic.
- If a vehicle pulls up alongside you, turn and walk in the opposite direction; people on foot can change direction faster than a car.
- Cross over to the other side of the street if you feel you are being followed.
- In the unlikely event that you are attacked, make as much noise as possible.
- Be prepared to give up your bag, or other possessions, if necessary, rather than risk personal injury; personal possessions in handbags should be kept to a minimum if carried on visits.
- If at all possible, avoid late afternoon visits in winter when it gets dark early; there will be some situations when this will not be practical.
- Return to the office to do your paperwork/work in the university library.

Using you own transport

- Some students may use their own transport to carry out their duties while on placement. If this is the case, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that their or the policy holder's motor insurance covers them for this kind of work and their vehicle is road worthy.

Driving to a home visit

- Keep doors locked and windows closed when you are driving and when leaving your car parked.
- Ensure that your vehicle is insured for business purposes.
- Ensure your car is in good working order and maintained regularly.
- Ensure you have enough petrol.
- Park in well-lit, safe and obvious place with a quick escape route e.g. park facing out of a cul-de-sac. Motorbikes/scooters must be parked with the front wheel facing outwards.
- Have the keys ready and check the back seat before getting into the car.
- Do not stop if you are waved down, carry on to a safe place e.g. a petrol station; phone the police if appropriate.
- Always carry a personal alarm, mobile phone, phone card, small change for the public phone and parking meters.
- Do not leave anything visible in the car.
- If at all possible, avoid late afternoon visits in winter when it gets dark early; there will be some situations when this will not be practical.
- Return to the office to do your paperwork/work in the university library.

On arrival at a client's/patient's home

- Check that you have arrived at the correct address and ask the client/carer for their name and address. Make sure you show your ID card.
- Follow the client/carer into the home.
- Ask the client/carer not to lock the door behind them (unless the door is the type that has to be locked to stay closed); if this should be the case ask them not to remove the key from the lock.
- Take note of the environment and make sure you know the way out.
- Insist on being introduced to other people present. Suggest, where appropriate, that the other person waits in another room, or another appointment is arranged at a more convenient time.

- Make an excuse and LEAVE if you feel at all uncomfortable. An explanation or apology may be made later.
- Keep yourself between the door and the person, particularly on a first visit or until the service user is known to you.
- It is sometimes appropriate to ask for dogs to be shut away, particularly if your care or treatment means touching the dog's owner.
- Politely leave if anyone (parent, carer or other visitor) is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or is agitated.
- Play for time if put 'on the spot' and avoid making sudden rash decisions or promises. This may be when there is a demand for inappropriate treatment or equipment. Say that you must check with your tutor/mentor before a decision is made.
- Do not share any personal details about yourself which could put your safety at risk.
- Do not share personal details about your clients to others which could compromise Data/Client Confidentiality.

2. Visiting a residential home/hostel/hospital/prisons etc.

- When visiting a client/carers you must liaise with the appropriate staff first and arrange the visit.
- Document on white board, or other, your visiting schedule documenting client's name and expected time of return.
- For students who are working within Supported Living Projects, or where there is no base office, a weekly programme of activities with the service user will be worked out in partnership with service users and community living volunteers and agreed and signed by the Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor. Any changes to this programme must be agreed by the Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor.
- Try and see the Service User/Carer where others can see you.
- Carry a personal alarm at all times; personal alarms are free from the Student Union
- Leave your mobile phone on at all times to enable you to be contacted if you don't return at the stated time.

3. Lone Interviews

- On some occasions you may have to see the service user/carers on your own in an interview room or another appropriate room.
- Try and see the Service User/Carer where others can see you. Let someone know where you are undertaking the interview and how long you think it will take.

- If possible leave the door slightly opened.
- Sit as close to the door as possible do not let the service user/carer get in between you and the door.
- Find out if there is a panic button in the room.
- Carry a personal alarm at all times; personal alarms are free from the Student Union.
- Leave your mobile phone on at all times to enable you to be contacted if you don't return at the stated time.

4. Personal safety - what you should do

Dealing with the threat of violence and minimising risk

- The University acknowledges that students may face risks of violence and abuse whilst carrying out their jobs, but consider that it should not be an accepted part of the job. It is being aware of events that have arisen out of a growing culture of violence in some of its localities.
- Health/Social Work staff can sometimes face a dilemma with regard to the risk from violence. They have a duty of care to their clients/patients often without a continuing relationship. Additionally, some may feel that coping with a certain amount of aggression is 'part of the job'. However, professional codes of conduct, such as the NMC Code of Professional Conduct for the Nurse, Midwife and Health Visitor, and the HCPC Conduct and Ethics for Students. The health and safety of students and staff is paramount to the University which is committed to doing all it can to provide a safe working environment for students and staff and taking appropriate action against anybody threatening them verbally, physically or committing violent acts. Part of the purpose of risk management by employers is to develop safeguards, or alternative ways of delivering care so that students and staff do not feel that they have to jeopardise their own safety in order to provide care for their patients.

Minimising the risks and effects of street attacks

To minimise the risk of street attacks and car jamming the following advice should be kept in mind:

- **Street attacks**
 - Primarily, your personal safety depends largely upon you and you react in a potentially hazardous situation. The best advice is to go with your gut feeling. What does this mean? Well, if you see a person or a group of people you consider to be acting suspiciously, if they are hanging around or trying to hide making you feel uncomfortable, avoid them. Turn around and go in another direction, go with your gut feeling.

- When walking about **be aware**, most of us can see at least 36 metres in front of us. Do not put yourself in a position that makes you feel uncomfortable. There are four basic rules:
 - **Think**
 - **Look**
 - **Be aware**
 - **React to your feelings**
- Choose routes that are most populated, avoid alleys and passageways, dark streets, underpasses or any area where you feel at risk. Walk assertively and be prepared to change direction or even turn back if you feel at risk.
- If in the unlikely event you are attacked, it is of paramount importance that you put your own safety first. However, if it is possible, get the best possible description of your assailant. A quick ID list would be:
 1. Gender - male or female
 2. Hair - colour, style
 3. Facial characteristics
 4. Skin colour
 5. Height
 6. Weight
 7. Distinguishing marks, scars, tattoos
 8. Jewellery
 9. Clothes
 10. Other
- **Do not carry:**
 - All your belongings in one bag or obvious pockets - split them up.
 - Your work keys together in one bunch with your personal keys in your handbag or briefcase.
 - Your driver's licence with you. If the police wish to see it, you have seven days to produce it.
- It makes good sense not to carry anything in your bag or briefcase that has your address or telephone number on it. Be aware, that it is not unknown for muggers to search people's pockets.

- If an attacker demands your possessions it is sensible to hand them over, **they can be replaced, but you cannot.** It is not unusual for muggers to carry weapons, even if it is not obvious, these may be concealed. It is a criminal offence to carry a knife, but this may not be a sufficient deterrent for a mugger.
 - If you are a woman who carries her handbag on a long strap round her neck as a protection against having it snatched, wherever possible, conceal the bag beneath your coat or jumper. A bag hanging free could be snatched causing injury to the owner.
- **Car Jamming**
 - Car Jamming is when a person or persons try to gain entry into your car while you are in it, either when you are just starting off, stopped in a traffic queue, at traffic lights or stop signs. The main objective is usually to steal any possessions that are within reach. Most car attacks are based upon what the attacker can readily steal - car phones, handbags, briefcases or other possessions. If they are not in view, the attackers may look for easier pickings. The following guidelines may help reduce the risk of attack:
 - Be aware of your surroundings, especially when stopped in traffic. Is anyone in your vicinity appearing to be acting suspiciously?
 - In potentially risky areas, keep your car doors locked, including the boot or tailgate.
 - Keep all possessions and goods out of sight. Don't make your car a shop window by leaving your property lying around on the front passenger seat or the back seat, because that is just an invitation to a car jammer.
 - When stopping in traffic, at lights and stop signs, try not to get too close to the vehicle in front of you. Leave sufficient room to move if only a short distance; a sudden movement can be a deterrent.
 - Use your horn to attract attention/help if needed.
 - All incidents must be reported to the police with the minimum of delay.

5. Returning to office base

If you have been delayed or are unable to return by the stated time, you must telephone the office/contact your Practice Educator/On-site Practice Supervisor.

6. Incident Reporting

Reporting and recording of accidents and incidents whilst on placement

Students and staff within the University must report every accident/incident when it occurs or as soon as possible thereafter. If applicable, the students must report any accident/incident to their Practice Educator/Supervisor on placement and also ensure that they follow, where applicable, the placement settings policies on reporting accidents and incidents. The student must report and complete an accident/incident report form as per the University's procedure and hand to their personal tutor. A nominated Faculty individual must investigate the accident/incident further. A record of the accident/incident must be kept, a copy of this form to be sent to the Faculty's Health and Safety Representative, where it will be logged centrally.

Post-accident/incident support

Students and staff should not feel that they have to cope alone when an accident/incident occurs. Should you be involved in an accident/incident you must:

- Seek proper medical attention for any physical injuries and if you have been distressed by an incident, would like some advice or counselling or just feel the need to talk it through with someone, take the opportunity to talk to your colleague, personal tutor, Practice Assessor/Supervisor or a member of the University's counselling team.
- Make sure that you have the opportunity to debrief with your Practice Educator/ On-site Practice Supervisor and personal tutor.
- Attend any meetings arranged to review working practices.

The University will support students when they report an accident/incident. Support may cover:

- Post-trauma support such as counselling and debriefing.
- Practical assistance such as medical attention, if appropriate.

7. Training

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in a situation of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual/unexpected situations; managing personal safety training will therefore be **mandatory** for all students working in the community. Four key themes will be addressed through training:

- The lone worker has knowledge of, and understands how, to manage a violent/aggressive situation.
- The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.

- Someone else knows the whereabouts of a lone worker and what she/he is doing.
- Awareness of personal safety.

The training sessions will cover the following:

- Personal safety including accident/incident reporting on placement and on campus using the University's and Faculty's procedures.
- Understanding behaviour including violence and aggression.
- Safe moving and handling.
- Communication, participation and engagement in defusing conflict situations and building rapport.
- Awareness of local, high risk areas.

8. Financial Implications

Personal alarms are free of charge from the Student Union. Students using their own cars and/or public transport may be able to claim for travel expenses.