

Health and Safety Policy Series

Personal Safety and Lone Working

Document Number	Document Title
HSSP11	Personal safety and lone working policy

Author	Approval Dates			
Jill Cross	Head of HSS:		UHSWC:	N/A

Document Reviews					
Date	Version	Reviewer name & signature		Approver name & signature	
10/08/11	1.1	Print	J. Cross	Print	L. Wright
		Sign		Sign	
24/01/12	2	Print	J. Cross	Print	L. Wright
		Sign		Sign	
11/07/13	2.1	Print	J. Cross	Print	P. Roddis
		Sign		Sign	
		Print		Print	
		Sign		Sign	
		Print		Print	
		Sign		Sign	
		Print		Print	
		Sign		Sign	
		Print		Print	
		Sign		Sign	

Personal Safety and Lone Working Policy

1. Aim of the policy

The aim of the policy is to clarify the arrangements for dealing with violent or aggressive behaviour at Sheffield Hallam University or towards members of staff where this relates to their employment. The University does not tolerate violent and aggressive behaviour on its premises. It should be noted that violent incidents rarely occur at the University and that the education sector is not considered to be in one of the high risk industry sectors for violence⁽¹⁾.

It is recognised that lone working activities may pose a risk to the personal safety of the individual and should be avoided as far as is reasonably practicable. Where such activities cannot be avoided, suitable and sufficient risk assessments must be undertaken and adequate control measures introduced in order to reduce the risks as far as is reasonably practicable. These arrangements are part of Sheffield Hallam University's Health and Safety Policy.

This document is supported by detailed guidance and is intended to act as a guide for those responsible for developing local policies within their operational areas.

The policy applies to members of staff, students and contractors on site.

2. Duty holders

Pro-Vice Chancellors and Directors

- 2.1. Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVCs) and Directors are responsible for implementing the policy in their areas.
- 2.2. PVCs and Directors are responsible for ensuring that sufficient Local Managers are nominated to implement the policy and any recommended control measures.
- 2.3. Where PVCs and Directors have responsibilities for students carrying out courses of study within their faculty, they should ensure that any risks to personal safety as part of the course are minimised by carrying out a risk assessment and applying suitable control measures. These risks may be included in a lone worker risk assessment.

Local Managers

- 2.4. Local Managers, as defined in the University's Health and Safety Policy Statement will be expected to ensure that the requirements of the policy are applied in their area.
- 2.5. Local Managers are responsible for identifying individuals who could be involved in work that might put them at risk of violence or threat of violence (including but not exclusively lone working). They must make sure that a suitable risk assessment is carried out.
- 2.6. Local Managers are responsible for ensuring that suitable controls are put into place in order to maximise the personal safety of their staff. These might include:
 - Suitable procedures for periodically checking on the safety of lone workers e.g. making a mobile telephone available or vehicle tracking devices in University Transport vehicles.

⁽¹⁾ **Preventing workplace harassment and violence** Joint guidance implementing a European social partner agreement 2011 (ACAS / CBI / HSE / TUC / Department for Business Innovation and Skills / Partnership of Public Employers)

- Training in the recognition of risky environments so that danger can be avoided, such as that offered by The Suzy Lamplugh Trust. This should include advice on ensuring personal safety (see **Appendix A**).
 - Emergency procedures to implement if a lone worker is unable to be contacted.
- 2.7. Where academic tutors act as student supervisors they are responsible for the health and safety of the research assistant or research student, both undergraduate and postgraduate.
- 2.8. If members of staff are involved in an incident where they have been subject to threats, abuse, aggressive behaviour or actual violence, the local manager should carry out an investigation. Where appropriate they will offer counselling to the individual and instigate disciplinary procedures for the perpetrator (if they are a member of staff). See [Disciplinary procedure and process map](#). If a student is involved reference should be made to student regulations and procedures.

Staff

- 2.9. Staff are responsible for following any local policies or procedures. E.g. If they are required to make contact with a named individual at a set time they should do so.
- 2.10. Staff are responsible for reporting any medical conditions or ill-health that might have an impact on their ability to work alone.
- 2.11. Staff must report any incidents involving threats, abuse, aggression or physical assault whether they result in injury or not. If there is more than one incidence of abuse from an individual it would be good practice to keep a log detailing these, including dates and times.

Students

- 2.12. Students are responsible for following advice given by their faculty during their academic course of study.
- 2.13. Students should behave in a responsible manner. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being instigated. See [student disciplinary regulations](#).

Contractors

- 2.14. Where any contract work requires lone working the contractor should consider this in the risk assessment for the project work and put suitable controls into place.
- 2.15. Contractors should be informed about expected behaviours at a local induction before they begin work on University premises.

Health & Safety Service

- 2.16. The University Health and Safety Service will provide advice and support as necessary.

Human Resources Directorate

- 2.17. The Human Resources Directorate will provide information and advice about staff disciplinary procedures and stress, where this becomes an issue for members of staff who are subject to threats or abuse.

3. Guidance on Requirements

3.1. What are the threats to personal safety?

Personal safety can be compromised in a number of ways ranging from harassment, threats of violence and actual violence. These can be physical, psychological or sexual and occur amongst staff or by third parties such as students or members of the public. Individuals can react differently to threats; some may shrug them off whilst others can suffer high levels of stress as a result.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as:

'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.'

3.2. What is lone working?

Lone working can be defined as any work which is undertaken in isolation from another member of staff. This does not include individuals who are in the company of other people on University premises, for example lecturers or members of sports staff teaching a class. The term includes those who might only work for a short period of time each day on their own and those who work whole shifts alone on a regular, temporary or occasional basis. At the University lone working might be on University premises or away from the site.

Lone working can take place when people:

- Work as individuals at a fixed site E.g. In hazardous areas such as laboratories;
- Are separate from others, e.g. In large buildings or plant rooms.
- Work away from their base or at remote locations, e.g. Maintenance, repair and cleaning workers, carrying out fieldwork
- Work at home
- Work outside normal hours, e.g. Cleaners, library or security staff
- Travel as part of their work, e.g. Delivery workers, travel to conferences off-site

There are some occasions where lone working is not acceptable. These include:

- Working in a confined space
- Working at or near exposed live electricity

3.3. Risk Assessment

All activities where there might be risks to the individual's personal safety should be risk assessed, including lone working. However, a common sense approach should be used when deciding on the formality of any assessment carried out. It should be noted that it is not always practical or possible to fully avoid some work activities. Carrying out a risk assessment will determine how high the level of risk is and should allow an informed decision to be made as to whether the activity can be safely managed, using suitable working procedures, with minimum risks to the workers health and safety. As with many tasks it is sometimes difficult to completely eradicate any risks, but this must be recognised and acceptable to the individuals involved.

3.3.1. Potential hazards

Violent or aggressive behaviour is generally more likely to occur where the work involves contact with members of the public, involves cash transactions or involves providing a service. At the

University this could include lecturers, receptionists, security and catering staff. Specific areas to consider in a risk assessment are:

- **Workplace and environment** - Identify hazards specific to the place where the individual will be working that may create particular risks. For example remote or unknown areas, confined spaces. It should be noted that this is likely to vary depending on the time of day, with work during hours of darkness generally carrying the highest level of risk.
- **Travel** - How will the individual get safely to the location, if this is offsite? This will include considerations regarding the mode of travel, whether this is on foot, by car, taxi or public transport, as each will have associated risks.
- The **nature of the work** being carried out. For example, working in laboratories or workshops is likely to carry a higher level of risk and would require a higher level of supervision. Out of hours work may also carry a higher level of risk, as there will be fewer people around.
- **Age and experience** of workers - If this is deemed to be insufficient, then lone working should not be allowed. Students carrying out research might be at particular risk due to inexperience.
- Where **research** involves **contact with members of the public**, particularly when this is away from University locations.
- Means of **communication** - How will it be known that an individual working alone is safe? Where this is offsite, the faculty or department should make arrangements to confirm that the individual has returned safely to work.
- **Risk of violence** - Does the evidence suggest that there is a history of violence with particular individuals or a more general threat?
- **Emergency arrangements** - What will the member of staff do if they are injured or in danger? If the main door is locked can the individual still get out of the building in an emergency?
- **Medical conditions** - Will an individual's medical condition mean they are unable to work alone? If in doubt seek medical advice.

Try to predict activities that might result in aggression and include these in the risk assessment.

For lone working activities it is suggested that the lone worker risk assessment pro-forma that accompanies this policy is used. It is also available in the Health and Safety page on the staff intranet <https://staff.shu.ac.uk/healthandsafety/LoneWorking.asp>

3.4. Supervision

Although it is difficult to provide constant supervision for lone workers there is still a legal obligation to ensure their health and safety. Supervisors can provide guidance on how to deal with particular situations where there is uncertainty.

The level of supervision is dependent on the findings of the risk assessment and would depend on the experience of the individual required to work alone and the level of risk associated with particular types of lone working. For example, new or inexperienced members of staff or students would require a higher level of supervision to ensure that they can carry out the work safely.

Procedures need to be developed to ensure the safety of lone workers, including:

- Regular contact between the lone worker and the supervisor, either by telephone or radio
- Emergency procedures to be activated if the lone worker fails to make contact within an agreed period of time or cannot be contacted
- Checks that a lone worker has returned to base or home if working away from site.

3.5. Information, instruction and training

Individuals should have sufficient knowledge and experience to recognise the risks associated with lone working and be aware of what action to take if they feel threatened (see **Appendix B**). This is of particular importance as there will be limited supervision to provide guidance in new or unfamiliar situations.

Local managers should assess the potential for lone working in their area of responsibility and ensure that potential risks are identified and addressed. Where necessary, details of required precautionary measures should be made available and/or explained to any individuals who may undertake lone working. Additional training, for example in the use of any control systems or locally developed procedures may also be required. **Appendix A** details good practice guidelines for personal safety.

As indicated in section 3.3.1. there are a number of potential hazards faced by lone workers, depending on the nature of the task, its location and the individuals undertaking the task. In most cases individuals undertaking this type of work can benefit from personal safety training, particularly where there is the threat of personal violence. Many of these courses include training in the recognition of the type of body language that precedes violence and methods of defusing potentially violent situations. A brief overview of the types of action to take is given in **Appendix D**.

There are a number of commercial courses available, including one run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust that has been trialled by the University and could be made available to all University faculties and departments - see **Appendix C**.

3.6. Post-incident action

If a member of staff has been involved in an incident where they felt threatened or were assaulted the local manager should obtain a clear account of what happened, including:

- Who was involved - details of the victim, perpetrator and any witnesses
- Where the incident occurred - including the time of day

If violence was involved it is likely that the Police would be called and take their own statements.

Even if the Police are not involved, the victim should be given an opportunity to talk about their experience, including verbal abuse, which can be upsetting. The following should be considered (not all may be required, this depends on the severity of the incident):

- ◇ **Debrief** - speaking with the individual involved
- ◇ **Time off and/or access to counselling**
- ◇ **Information and possible training for other members of staff** - so they know how to react in a similar situation. If the perpetrator is an individual who has also threatened other members of staff, any subsequent risk assessments and controls produced as a result should be communicated to staff.

Appendix A - Guidelines for safe working

Guidelines for safe working

Lone working may occur both on University premises and away from the site.

1. Travel to off site locations

a) On foot

- When it is dark, stick to well lit busy streets where ever possible and walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Avoid shortcuts, unless you know they are as safe as the longer route
- Keep hands free when walking, don't walk with hands in pockets.
- Avoid groups of rowdy people
- If you see anyone suspicious, stay in well lit areas or places where there are more people
- If you are visiting an unfamiliar area, plan your route carefully so you don't appear lost
- Walk purposefully in the street (avoid looking bemused)
- If a car pulls up beside you and you feel uncomfortable with the situation, turn and walk in the opposite direction
- Hide portable, valuable property (e.g. Laptop in a rucksack)
- Keep expensive (looking) watches and jewellery out of sight and keep wallets in an inside pocket. Ideally, personal items of value should not be worn.
- Bags should be worn across the body, so they open facing the body. Wearing over the shoulder presents an easy target.
- Keep house keys in a pocket, different from your bag or wallet, as this might contain details of your home address
- Do carry a torch if dark
- Do have a personal alarm readily at hand
- Be aware of your surroundings and don't switch off to the world by wearing a personal stereo
- Ensure mobile telephone is fully charged and readily available
- If you are attacked, your safety is more important than your property: You are less likely to be hurt if you let it go without a fight
- Try to avoid using your mobile phone openly in the street or at railway/underground stations; if you have to make a call, find a secure place such as a shop

b) Taxi/minicab

- Use a black cab where possible, unless you have directly telephoned for a minicab
- If you feel uneasy with the driver, ask him to stop at a busy familiar place and get out
- Confirm the driver's details when they arrive, so you know that it is the cab you ordered

c) Car

- Ensure your car is kept in a roadworthy condition and there is always enough fuel
- If your car starts to play up, stop in a busy well-lit area
- If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station, or busy place to get help
- If you are parked up in traffic and approached by someone, lower the window only sufficiently to hear what he/she is saying
- If bumped from behind, stay in the car and keep the doors locked. Wait for the other driver to come to you. If you are suspicious ask the driver to follow you and drive to the local police station or use a mobile. Sound your horn or flash your lights to summon help.

d) Parking

- Park only in well-lit areas where there are already people around (as close as possible to the location you are visiting) and have your keys ready on returning to your car so that you can get in quickly
- Keep valuables (e.g. bags, mobile phones) out of sight - never leave them on view when you leave your car
- Check the interior before getting in and lock the door immediately you get in. Keep car doors locked whilst driving around town.
- If you are a woman driver, don't advertise the fact – put spare shoes and the like in the boot before leaving the car
- Reverse into parking spaces

2. Working alone on-site

Faculties or directorates should develop local procedures for on-site lone working. These arrangements should include the relevant principles outlined in other parts of this document as well as:

- ensuring that staff have an efficient way of accessing help in case of an emergency (e.g. coded signals/panic buttons)
- staff informing colleagues/line manager of their intention to work out of hours and for how long
- as far as possible, letting other users of the building know the situation and arrangements
- ensuring the outer doors to the building are locked out of standard working hours (security door entry systems in place)
- ensuring proper arrangements in connection with fire and emergency procedures are considered

3. Offsite visits

- Staff should inform their line manager or colleague about where they are going, how long they are expected to be and when they have returned, whether this is back to work or home.
- Be aware of the effect you create by the clothes that you wear – e.g. Be culturally sensitive and professional.
- Provide clients and members of the public with a good courteous service. An employee who is perceived as polite, helpful and reasonable is far less likely to receive a hostile response than one who is perceived as unfriendly, awkward, unreasonable or officious
- Be aware of your possible escape routes and position yourself accordingly
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact of any kind with the person being visited however innocent such contact may be.
- If you feel unhappy about the way an interview is going terminate the interview as soon as possible, even if it is not completed.
- Avoid after hours meetings or the development of anything other than a strictly professional relationship with the person concerned
- Do not spread your belongings around; you may need to leave in a hurry
- Politely refuse food and drink if you are concerned about the level of hygiene or for about safety (E.g. sedatives being added), bearing in mind cultural sensitivities.
- Avoid direct questions about your personal life
- Do not give your home telephone number or address to the person you are visiting

a) Danger signs:

- The visit unexpectedly includes a person or people on the premises other than those with whom you have the appointment, who may interfere with the interview in a manner which causes concern
- The interview becomes argumentative or aggressive to an extent that you are unable to be in control
- Open hostility
- Unwanted personal attention, either verbal or physical
- Evidence of a weapon or equipment which is obviously there for that use e.g. a baseball bat or sharp knife

IF YOU SENSE SOMETHING IS WRONG IT PROBABLY IS (if in doubt, do not enter the premises or if already inside, leave immediately)

NEVER ASSUME: it won't happen to me / it's only a short journey / they look respectable

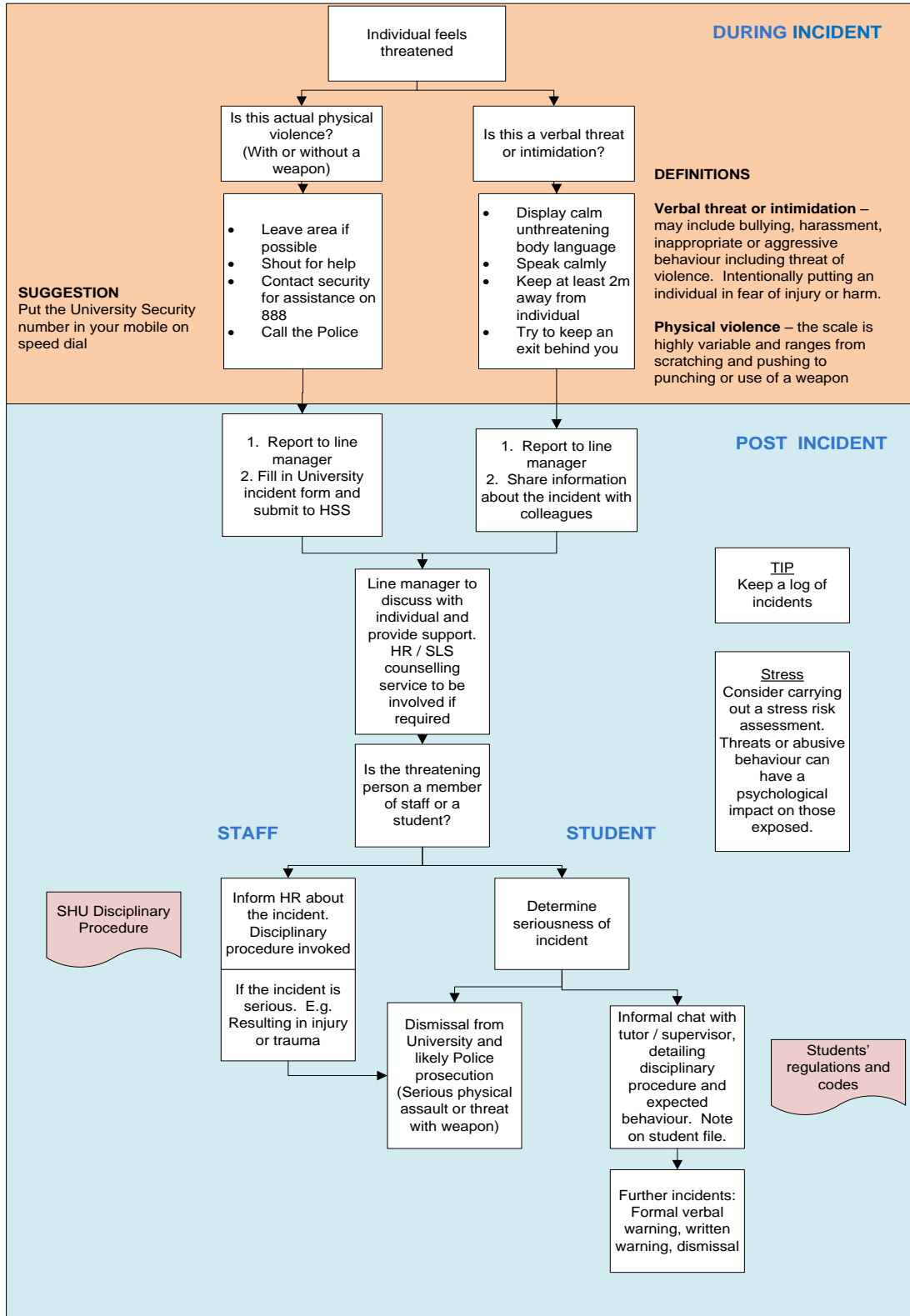
4. Dealing with aggression/violence

If you find yourself in a situation where a person is being aggressive, try to:

- Stay calm - your body language, voice and response can help to diffuse a situation
- Take a deep breath, keep your voice even and try to help
- Listen to what the person is saying. Do not interrupt or be enticed into an argument
- Try to defuse the situation by talking things through; offer the person a range of options so that they can choose the one that they prefer
- Do not hide behind your authority or status, or use clever jargon
- Do not make any physical contact with an angry person
- Keep yourself between the angry person and the escape route

Appendix B - Process map

PERSONAL SAFETY – STAFF RESPONSE TO THREATS



Appendix C - Personal safety training

Lone worker training is available through the Health and Safety Service and can be booked via [Core Portal](#). Alternatively personal safety training can be provided by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. See details below:

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is a registered charity and is recognised by many to be the leading authority on personal safety. The Trust provides professional and bespoke training courses. The Faculty of Development and Society have trialled one of the personal safety courses with positive feedback from delegates.

Appendix D - General guidelines for dealing with aggression

The following information is by no means exhaustive.

If an individual has a grievance (this is likely to be a student or member of staff):

1. If you think that they are likely to become violent, suggest they speak to you at a later time and specify when. This might give them a chance to calm down.
2. Listen to what they have to say without interruption.
3. Empathise and show that you are listening by nodding etc.
4. Summarise what they have said so that you are clear what they are saying.
5. Don't tell them to calm down - this is likely to have the opposite effect.
6. Think about your body language. Folded arms or frowning might imply that you are disinterested. This could inflame the situation.
7. Try to keep an exit behind you.

If the situation looks likely to become violent:

1. Retreat.
2. Call for help. Contact Security if you can. Ring 888 on an internal phone and leave if off the hook if you are unable to speak.
3. If you are unable to leave the room, stand sideways on to protect your internal organs.
4. Have your feet in a wide stance to create stability.

Supporting guidance and assistance

The following documents provide more detailed guidance:

- **Working alone: Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working** INDG73(rev3) HSE 05/13 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>
- **Preventing workplace harassment and violence** Joint guidance implementing a European social partner agreement 2011 (ACAS / CBI / HSE / TUC / Department for Business Innovation and Skills / Partnership of Public Employers) <http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf>
- **Violence in the education sector** Education Service Advisory Committee, HSE Books 1997 (reprinted 2003). <http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/saleproduct.jsf?catalogueCode=9780717612932>
- **Violence at work: A guide for employers.** Leaflet INDG69(rev) HSE books 1996. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

Further information about personal safety training and lone working can also be obtained at [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

Information on how to obtain the above documents and more information on lone working and violence and aggression can be found on the Health & Safety Web page at:

<http://staff.shu.ac.uk/healthandsafety/LoneWorking.asp>

<https://staff.shu.ac.uk/HealthandSafety/Violence.asp>

General guidance and assistance can be obtained from the **University Health & Safety Service**.

For information about dealing with stress please see the Human Resources webpage: <https://portal.shu.ac.uk/departments/HRD/polproc/stress/Pages/home.aspx> [Intranet Homepage](#)