

Volunteering - Keeping safe Working alone

Potential harms

- Physical or verbal abuse by a third-party person causing severe, short and long term, physical and mental injury
- Medical condition, illness or injury whilst alone preventing you from communicating, seeking assistance or being identified

Best practice and controls

To help secure your safety when volunteering for us it is always recommended that the activities you undertake in the public domain are done so with at least one other person. However, there are times where this will not be possible and, in these cases, it is important to take all reasonable steps to ensure your safety.

General

If you have any concerns about working alone prior to, or during the activity such as the location, environmental conditions, medical condition, illness or disability, speak to your Guide Dogs manager.

- Have a mobile phone for use in emergencies which has enough battery to cover the time you will be alone
- Keep some form of identification on you
- If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, move locations, stop the event/activity and seek assistance

Out and about alone

- If you are going to be out and about on your own, make sure that someone knows where you are, what you are doing and what time to expect you home

Walking

- Carefully plan your routes, avoid known 'hazardous' areas
- Avoid walking through 'deserted' or ill lit areas
- Try to avoid walking alone at night

- Use busy routes
- Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings
- Walk facing oncoming traffic
- Keep hands free to defend yourself
- If you see an incident, it is advisable that you do not stop to help, but to report it to the police as soon as possible
- If you are approached by someone unknown, keep walking and try to enter a shop or somewhere where there are other people. If the person does not leave you alone call the police or ask someone else to do it for you

Using public transport

- Avoid travelling alone late at night on any form of public transport if at all possible
- Only use a reputable company
- Stay away from isolated stops and stations
- Have your fare ready in your hand or pocket or use contactless
- Sit near the driver, conductor or near exits
- Sit in an area where there are several other people if possible
- In taxis always sit in the back
- Check to see where the emergency controls are located
- Don't doze off - stay alert

Driving

- Keep valuables, bags etc. out of sight and out of reach of open windows
- Keep your car locked when inside
- Don't display items that indicate the presence of a female driver
- Lock the car when paying for petrol
- Reverse into the space so that you can pull away if you are approached whilst parking
- Consider where you should park your car for a speedy exit
- If you park in daylight think what it will be like returning at night

Unfamiliar surroundings

On entering unfamiliar surroundings:

- Be aware of exits
- Be aware of the layout, which way the doors open, if the doors lock behind you, know where keys are or how to unlock
- Be aware of anything that may impede/obstruct a quick exit
- If you sit, choose a chair that is as near to the exit as possible

- Be aware of a person's body language or change in attitude/behaviour
- If you feel threatened, uncomfortable or sense a risk of danger, leave immediately. Do not give a warning

In the event of a verbal or physical attack

- Give in - hand over whatever they want
- Try to get away
- Shout for help

Self-defence or attempts to restrain should be an absolute last resort.

Personal alarms

The purpose of a personal alarm is to shock and disorientate an attacker, giving you vital seconds to get away.

If you have one:

- Ensure you have it ready to use i.e. around neck or in hand
- Operate it near the ear of the assailant and then throw it away so that the attacker has to reach it to stop it
- Don't rely on it to summon help, to get help shout an instruction such as 'call the police'

Cash handling

If at any time you are in a situation where you are threatened or your money is taken we advise that you hand the money over/don't fight to keep hold of it/retrieve it - concentrate on trying to get away to safety. Report it to the police immediately.

When going to the bank it is advisable to go in pairs, carry the cash in a holdall that looks inconspicuous so that it is not easy to identify that you are carrying cash and make sure that any coins are not making a noise as you move. Try to park as close to the bank as possible.

In case of emergency (I.C.E.) - Mobile phone emergency procedure

I.C.E. is a method of contact for use by emergency service personnel and hospital staff during emergency situations. It can ensure that they are able to contact the right person by simply dialling the number you have stored under I.C.E.

You need to store the details of a person or persons who should be contacted during emergency under the name 'I.C.E. name' i.e. I.C.E. Clare Wife.

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