



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

Health and Safety Guidance

COMMUNITY VISITS

GUIDANCE/20/CV/01

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INTRODUCTION

Staff and students in certain Budget Centres have to make 'community' visits as part of their research. Usually this will be to a person's home but it could also be elsewhere. The people being visited may be well and co-operative but they could be unwell and mentally unstable.

Personal Safety is of paramount importance. The University Health and Safety Policy (UHSP/0/99) states that Heads of Budget Centres are responsible for ensuring that all risks to their staff and students are properly identified and controlled, including activities away from University premises.

This guidance sets out suggested protocol to be followed. It may have to be adapted to meet individual circumstances. Further information and advice may be obtained from the Health and Safety Unit.

PROTOCOL

1 General

Visits should be planned in advance and not carried out on the spur of the moment.

2 Before the Visit

- A risk assessment should be carried out and outcome recorded.
- A visit sheet should be completed and left with a 'reliable' person. This sheet should include details of the location, purpose and timing of the visit and contact arrangements. During working hours the 'reliable' person will usually be in the Budget Centre. However, if visits take place out of hours suitable arrangements will have to be made to contact the 'reliable' person.
- If relevant, a history should be obtained about safety issues, e.g. history of violence, current mental state etc. It may be necessary to refer to general practitioners, psychiatrists, community nurses, family members etc.
- An attempt should be made to try to talk to the subject on the telephone. This builds up a relationship and allows verification of the person's mental state. Specific enquires should be made about safety aspects of the visit (e.g. where car should be parked etc.)

- If a visit to a person's home is considered a risk for one person then other arrangements should be made, e.g. two people should go, invite the subject to University, hospital or other public accommodation etc.
- Other items to consider include the location and time of day of the visit, transport and parking arrangements, experience of the visitor etc.

3 The Visit

- Avoid wearing clothes that could be deemed as provocative.
- Avoid giving the suggestion that you are carrying money, drugs etc.
- Always carry a personal attack alarm.
- Always carry a mobile telephone with the speed dial set for the police.
- Contact the 'reliable' person immediately before and after meeting with the subject.
- If the visitor fails to contact the 'reliable' person at the agreed time, the 'reliable' person should initially attempt to contact the visitor on their mobile telephone and, failing that, on the subject's home telephone. If contact cannot be made the police should be informed.
- Tell the subject at the start of the visit of the contact arrangements.
- Beware of possible dangers in the subject's home, e.g. dogs, needles etc.
- **If, at any time during the visit the visitor is concerned about their safety, they should leave immediately.**

4 After the Visit

- Make sure that the 'reliable' person knows you have returned to the University, home etc safely.
- Pass on any relevant information to the Budget Centre, which will be useful when planning future visits.