

Lone Volunteering Procedures

In many cases, lone volunteering is low risk. However, depending on certain factors, it can create or increase risks that are already present. Lone volunteering should not be seen as the first alternative.

If you have concerns about lone volunteering, you should discuss this with your commissioner. Girlguiding does not expect you to put yourself in a situation where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Your safety is paramount. The following points are designed to help you keep safe.

Lone volunteering generally:

- Always carry out a sense check as per the flow chart below
- Do not enter into or remain in a situation where you feel unsafe
- Wherever possible, carry out meetings in pairs with another volunteer
- Wear suitable clothing that does not restrict movement
- Do not carry unnecessary bags or valuables
- If you have valuables on your person or in the building (e.g. laptop, phone, cash) keep them out of sight. Personal belongings and money are not covered under Girlguiding insurance so you should check if they are covered under your household policy
- Carry a mobile phone and assign speed dial keys for emergency numbers/home contact. Consider registering your device to a mobile phone tracker and have cloud backup in case of theft.
- Use the contact system that you have established so that someone knows where you are going and when you are expected back and what to do if you do not check in with them
- Consider carrying a personal alarm

Volunteering alone at a building/premises:

- Make sure you have easy access and exit routes in the building, including emergency exit
- Think carefully about anyone else you give access to - do you know them and feel safe with them
- Let someone know where you are and arrange to check-in by phone with them
- Where possible, volunteer at the premises when you know someone else will be there (e.g. other groups, caretaker etc)
- If an incident occurs or you have concerns (e.g. anti-social behaviour outside or inappropriate behaviour of other building users), take appropriate immediate action to keep yourself safe (e.g. call the police; call your home contact and leave the building, if safe to do so)

Visiting, Meetings and Travelling

- Wherever possible, meet in a public, reputable place
- Avoid meeting places where alcohol may be consumed
- Check out the area/route beforehand
- Plan your route ahead so that you do not need to stop to look at maps

- Where possible, keep to the safest routes e.g. good roads, less remote, good transport connections, well lit
- If travelling by car, ensure you have sufficient petrol. Consider having a first aid and breakdown kit
- If travelling by public transport, check alternative routes and be familiar with timetables etc and make sure you know where the emergency exits are once on board. Only use licensed mini cabs or taxis
- Avoid walking or waiting in isolated or poorly lit places

Health and wellbeing

You must take into account your own health and wellbeing. For example, if you are disabled or have a health condition, you must think about how this affects your lone volunteering and what you need in the event of an emergency. You should re-evaluate lone volunteering from time to time and especially when you experience changes to your physical and/or mental health.

In most cases, lone volunteering will be an uneventful experience. A key part of helping to keep everyone safe is to make sure that if something does happen, or could have happened, that Girlguiding responds appropriately and learns from it.

In the first instance, you should follow What to do in an Emergency procedures. Lone volunteering incidents or accidents must be reported on the Notification of Accident or Incident Form which can be found in the Emergency File. In the event of an accident it should be reported to HQ following the usual procedures. In the event of a near miss e.g. an incident occurred, but did not result in injury or damage, you should record this and report to your commissioner using the Notification of Accident or Incident Form, detailing the accident or incident that could have happened.

If you need support or advice following an incident you should contact the Safeguarding team or the insurance team in the case of an accident.

The commissioner's responsibility is to

- check what support the persons involved in the situation may need and seek support herself if required;
- review whether relevant risk assessments and practice should be revised in the light of an accident, incident or near miss.

Lone Volunteering Flow Chart

