

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Version No. | 2.1 |
| Version Date | March 2023 |
| Review date | March 2026 |

**Guidelines for Research involving Lone Working**

# Introduction

The Guidelines for Research involving Lone Working draw from the University of Stirling’s [Safety, Environment, Security and Continuity A-Z](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/estates-and-campus-services/safety-environment-security-and-continuity/safety/a-z/report-an-accident/) and are not intended to replace that guidance but to draw out research specific factors that should be considered while undertaking research involving lone working. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with, and in addition to, the University’s Health and Safety guidance, including the University’s [Off Campus Activities Policy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/estates-and-campus-services/documents/Off-Campus-Activities-Policy-Rev2-Apr-22.docx).

For research, examples of lone working may include but are not restricted to individual researchers ‐

* Undertaking fieldwork in remote locations
* Conducting interviews in participants’ homes or on the streets
* Office/lab working in areas of the University that are rarely frequented
* Office/lab working outside of standard office hours.

There may be some situations where researchers are undertaking lone working but there is minimal risk involved – including:

* Working from home
* Working as a lone researcher in a community centre or location where many people are present.

# Risks

The types of hazards that may pose increased risk to lone workers include but are not limited to:

* Violence
* Manual handling
* Hazardous substances
* Equipment and machinery
* Locality e.g. river
* Confined spaces
* Transport
* Weather
* Sudden illness

# Areas to consider when completing a risk assessment

As per the University’s Health and Safety guidance risk assessments should be conducted to ensure suitable and sufficient evaluation of the health and safety risks posedand by implementing any remedial action required to remove or reduce the identified risks.

For lone working a risk assessment should identify and mitigate the hazards of being alone in addition to the hazards of the research itself. This assessment may indicate that lone working is inappropriate.

Factors to consider include:

* Location and whether there will be sufficient mobile phone reception to make a phone call?
* Do you require a personal alarm – what are the procedures for the use of this alarm?
* How will you ensure the mobile phone/personal alarm is fully charged?
* If working in a country where you are not a native speaker what arrangements will you make in advance to ensure you could communicate clearly in event of an emergency.
* The times of home visits and whether these could be arranged during daylight hours.
* Fully communicate the purpose of the visit to participants, especially where there might be sensitive emotive subjects being discussed.
* If conducting fieldwork what are the conditions? Is it safe to carry out the work e.g., tide levels, weather etc.?
* If working in an area with no postal address (e.g., seashore, moorland, farmland, etc.) can you determine and record the OS grid reference prior to travelling to allow emergency services to locate you if necessary? Or use a service such as [what3words](https://what3words.com/pretty.needed.chill).
* How will you be travelling to and from your research location?
* If using a personal car, is it in good working order? What procedures are in place in case of a breakdown, accident, or theft? Familiarise yourself with the location of well‐lit car parks and do not leave valuables in your car.
* If using public transport be sure to familiarise yourself with timetabling and route information.
* If transporting hazardous materials what extra precautions should be taken and what warning notices should be displayed?
* Are you more vulnerable than others are and put at more risk by working alone (e.g. young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee)?
* How you will get emergency assistance
* What are the risks associated with your research participants?

# Appendix One: Example Procedures

1. **Background**

This appendix serves as an example of the types of procedures that Faculties could implement to mitigate some of the risks of lone working. The University recommends that all Faculties have in place ‘report in’ procedures for all lone working scenarios that allow staff and students to

report the successful completion of their activities and that these are detailed on the risk assessment. This information should also allow office staff to cancel appointments/fieldwork when the researcher is unwell or unable to attend. Procedures to be followed should be detailed and noted in the risk assessments.

# Example procedures:

Procedures will vary dependent on the types and levels of risk that have been identified; however, these could include a central record of visits/fieldwork, contact and geographic details. Information should include; time and expected duration of the visit and where applicable name, address and contact details of person/place visiting. Those carrying out fieldwork should provide where practical, as specific as possible, details of expected locations.

The daily diary sheets should be held securely due to the confidential information they contain and deleted as per the Faculty’s data retention schedules.

*For out of hours working Faculties should consider adopting a buddy system. Each researcher should choose a buddy responsible for establishing that a visit has been successfully completed out of hours. The Principal Investigator and office staff should be aware of*

*everyone’s buddy. Procedures put in place should be fit for purpose for each Faculty.*

It would be expected that before and after each visit, researchers should contact the Faculty office (within standard working hours) **OR** their nominated buddy to confirm that they have arrived and subsequently that the visit has been completed.

During office hours, Faculty office staff will check the visit log at set times to ensure that each researcher has checked in.

If the researcher has not returned to their base location or contacted their nominated buddy [immediately/appropriate time identified within the risk assessment] after the expected end time of the visit escalation procedures should be in place, this should be detailed in the risk assessment.

Records of any incidents or near misses should be logged on the University Accident Management System (AMS)[[1]](#footnote-2)

# Additional guidance

[The Suzy Lamplugh Trust](https://www.suzylamplugh.org/)

[A‐Z of Health & Safety Information](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/estates-and-campus-services/safety-environment-security-and-continuity/safety/a-z/)

[Responsible Research: Managing health and safety in research guidance for the not‐for‐profit sector](https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/publications/Responsible-Research-Managing-Health-and-Safety-in-Research/)

[SafeZone](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/estates-and-campus-services/safety-environment-security-and-continuity/safezone/) – a free app-based system for students and staff that enhances their personal safety

Universities and Colleges Employers Association document: [“Guidance on Health and Safety in](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/policy-and-planning/documents/guidance-on-health-and-safety-in-fieldwork.pdf)

[Fieldwork: including offsite visits and travel in the UK and overseas”](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/policy-and-planning/documents/guidance-on-health-and-safety-in-fieldwork.pdf)

1. <https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/estates-and-campus-services/safety-environment-security-and-continuity/safety/a-z/report-an-accident/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)