

Lone Volunteering and Personal Safety Guidelines

Last updated 270821

These guidelines are designed to ensure the volunteer's safety and welfare while in the community and, in particular, when lone volunteering. This is intended as an aid to volunteering to make the volunteer's experience as safe as possible. Although these guidelines are aimed primarily at volunteers involved in befriending services, please read carefully as these could apply to other situations when you are volunteering alone. We will go through these guidelines with you before you visit clients in their homes.

Befriending

Befriending generally involves one to one contact with a client without direct supervision. This can be over the phone or in person. Visits can occur within client's own homes and in community settings if agreed in advance. Activity must only take place during Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 5.00pm (including visits and telephone calls) and these will have been agreed in advance with the Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC). All home visits and where possible, visits in community settings should have undergone a risk assessment prior to the volunteer and client meeting up.

Home Assessment

Prospective befriending referrals are risk assessed by seescape who will consider various factors:

- Does the client live alone, with other family members or with pets?
- If they live with other people, will be they present, before, during of after the visit? During the pandemic we ask that other members of the family outwith the household do not visit if a Volunteer Befriender is present.
- Has the client any physical, mental health, mobility or communication difficulties?
- Are there any personal care issues that require a carer to be present?
- Are there any difficult or unsafe issues regarding the home or environment?
- Are there any hazards or physical barriers which make a trip to the home or environment to be aware of (e.g. steps leading to front door, entrance and exit routes clear of clutter, suitable seating where the volunteer can sit)?
- Is the client involved in any other community activities or are they socially isolated and to what degree?
- What are the client's wishes and expectations of the service?

Volunteer's General Personal Safety

- Volunteers, like paid members of staff are requested to use their common sense and look after their health and safety at all times. This includes cancelling a telephone call and/or visit if they are unwell and making sure they can be undisturbed for the duration of the call.
- seescape will always respect your wishes and will never ask you to do anything you feel uncomfortable with or unsure about. Do not continue the interaction if it becomes too difficult to engage with the client, i.e. is someone else in the room with them making a lot of noise, do they have a TV or radio playing loudly in the background, or a barking dog interrupting the telephone call which is making it difficult to converse with them? Ask if just now is a good time to have a conversation. **Inform seescape immediately if a call or visit has to end due to any difficult situation (see more in details below).**
- **For telephoning:** it can help if you make the call in a comfortable location at home (not out in the community) with no distractions such as other people in the room or music or televisions playing in the background. Tell those who live with you that you are making a confidential call, how long you expect this to last and you don't want to be disturbed (this protects your befriender's confidentiality also).
- **If visiting:** always tell a relative or friend you are visiting the client and when you expect to return. Keep your personal mobile phone charged, switched on, and with you at all times.
- If you are **travelling by car**, plan ahead, make sure you know where you are going, have enough petrol to get there and back, ensure your car is parked safely (preferably not in the client's driveway if available), and in the direction you will be driving away when leaving.
- After your first interaction please make sure to contact the Community Engagement Coordinator to let them how this has gone.

A note on COVID-19:

As guidance and restrictions change we will aim to update this as necessary with the latest guidance (see link here: check out the latest advice at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) protection levels: what you can do - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/topics/health/coronavirus-covid-19/protection-levels-what-you-can-do)). At present we ask Volunteers to do the following:

- please carry hand-sanitizer and use it before entering and leaving the client's home. Wear a face covering, if you can, in and outside the home and avoid touching surfaces (e.g. door handles if possible).
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- Preferably use another seat/sofa from the one the client will be sitting on to maintain a safe distance.
- Avoid using handwashing/toilet facilities in client's homes, or accepting refreshments (you can take your own bottle of water if you prefer).

Outings in the community:

If it has been agreed you will take your befriender out to places in the community (e.g. a coffee shop, garden centre, activity group, etc), this will involve seescape carrying out a risk assessment. For example:

- How will you travel there and back?
- What sighted guidance does the person require, has the befriender had appropriate level of training for this?
- Do they have a Guide Dog or are there other considerations for mobility?
- If driving, places to park your car, does the befriender have a Blue Badge, etc? If taking public transport, ability to use, particularly if face coverings mandatory, and distance from bus stops to venues if walking.
- Hygiene measures to keep both you and the befriender safe.
- Accessibility of venues attending, including availability of handwashing facilities and toilets.
- Is it indoors or outdoors (i.e. is participation dependent on weather)?
- Food and beverage consumption (i.e. coffee shop or café)?
- Any other barriers or considerations e.g. bookings to be made in advance or not?

Travelling

- **When is the best and safest time to visit?** Plan your journey. If **travelling by car**, ensure your vehicle has tax, MOT and suitable insurance cover for transporting a client (if applicable).
- **If travelling by public transport**, ensure your visit timings fit in with transport arrangements and are on well-lit routes if possible.
- **If there's an accident/breakdown and the client is travelling with you.**
Minor incident – ensure the client is comfortable and offer reassurance. Carry insurance details with you and emergency breakdown cover if you have it. Contact seescape. **Serious incident** - dial 999 for the emergency services.

Client's Home

- **Who else is in the home and are you comfortable with the situation?** Do not enter if the client isn't available or you feel uncomfortable.

- **Is there an uncontrolled animal?** Request the animal to be restrained or put in another room. Don't feel obliged to stay if this doesn't happen.
- **What if the client becomes ill?** If you have an emergency first aid certificate, follow the guidance you have received during your training. In an emergency call 999. If your befriender becomes ill please contact seescape asap. If the client has their GP details you can ask for their contact details. You are not expected to accompany the person to hospital or their GP's surgery, nor are you expected to track down family and friends: the emergency services will do that as part of their duties and/or seescape will follow up also.
- If a person uses threatening, offensive or abusive language on the telephone or in person you can ask the person to refrain from using this, try to remain calm yourself, but if this fails then you can tell the person you are going to end the interaction. This is very unlikely to happen but please report this to CEC immediately if you experience this situation on).

For visits:

- Do not enter the house if the client appears to be **under the influence of alcohol, drugs or appears aggressive or agitated**. This can be harder to decipher over the telephone. However, if the client sounds agitated and aggressive, ask them if you can contact them at another time. Inform seescape immediately.
- Anyone faced with a violent or potentially volatile situation **should withdraw from the premises immediately**. Make sure you know your exit route and ideally have your car facing in your return direction if possible (if you drive) or get to the nearest place you can easily get a bus or contact a local taxi company (have these stored in your phone). If you feel at risk when visiting, you should make this known to CEC as soon as possible.
- If you observe any **obvious safety issues**, you can point them out to the client as part of visit, but please inform the Community Engagement Coordinator of this and we can speak to the client on your behalf. For example, if there is an over-friendly or aggressive dog, we ask the client to restrain or restrict their dog to another room. If there is a smoker in the household, we ask the client to refrain from smoking for at least an hour before arrival and leave a window open both before and during the visit.
- Volunteers, like paid members of staff are requested to use their common sense and look after their health and safety at all times. This includes cancelling a visit if they are unwell (including **coronavirus symptoms**: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): General advice | NHS inform](#)), which also extends to members of the same household of the volunteer. Weather warnings and adverse conditions should also be taking account of. It's suggested that all

- volunteers arrange to call the client in advance of the visit to make sure they are also OK to have a visitor/not unwell or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms (loss or change of sense taste or smell, high temperature, persistent cough (more information here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): General advice | NHS inform](#)).
- The Community Engagement Coordinator will assess level of risk prior to any face to face meetings being arranged. If when lone volunteering you feel your own health and safety is being compromised you are encouraged to leave the premises quickly and safely. If you are unable to leave the premises please alert seescape by calling (not texting) the main switchboard (01592 644 979) and ask for '**Veronica**'. Admin staff will then attempt to determine location and if appropriate call emergency services.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with advice in a risk assessment if issued to you.

Following any incident contact the CEC or seescape office immediately on 01592 644979 and provide the information needed for an incident/accident form to be completed.

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