

The Royal Air Forces Association Volunteer Programme

Personal Safety and Isolated Activity Policy for Volunteers

This policy applies to all volunteers involved in isolated activities for the RAF Association. For the purposes of the following policy, both Branch and Association volunteers will be referred to as 'volunteers'.

Statement of policy

Personal safety is a priority and the Association has a duty of care to all its volunteers. Operating alone in itself is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce any associated risks. The Association will not tolerate violence, aggression or abuse against its volunteers and will take reasonable steps to ensure that volunteers are safe.

There are many situations which occur in everyday activity or whilst volunteering for the Association in which volunteers may be concerned about their personal safety, for example, being out of the house at night, undertaking home visits, fundraising and travelling. This policy provides advice on planning ahead, assessing risk and coping with difficult situations.

Responsibilities

The Association is responsible for:

- Identifying any risk associated with isolated activity and evaluating, minimising or removing and documenting these in a general risk assessment.
- Providing any resources identified in the risk assessment as being necessary for the role, for example, a mobile phone or personal alarm.
- Ensuring that those they supervise who are operating alone are aware of this policy.
- Reviewing risk assessments regularly including at times where there are any significant changes and updating the Volunteer Manager at Head Office with these so volunteers can be informed.
- Ensuring volunteers have the right information and know how to report their concerns.
- Ensuring that support is provided in an incident.

Volunteers are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with the risk assessment for their activity and abide by any actions required to mitigate any risks. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to note any specific applications of the general risk assessment for their activity.
- Using any resources provided to them to keep them safe.
- Following the guidance for operating alone in this policy.
- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions.
- Reporting all incidents and concerns to their manager.
- Taking part in any training required.

Definitions

Work-related violence

Is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work' or in this case, their volunteering activity. Verbal abuse is the most common type of incident and physical acts are rare.



Operating Alone – Guidance to Minimising Risks

If you have concerns or are worried about being alone then please let your manager know. You do not have to do anything you are uncomfortable doing in terms of your volunteering activity.

You should:

- Take responsibility for your own personal safety and if a situation has too many potential hazards or you are worried, do not go.
- Never presume it won't happen to you. Take every precaution you can to safeguard your safety.
- Never ignore your gut feeling or instinct that something isn't right. Leave or get away as quickly as possible.
- Look confident.
- Check your car is serviceable and in good repair.
- Be aware, at all times, of your surroundings.
- Take someone else with you if you are uncomfortable. Please check this with your manager first.
- Make visits during daylight hours where possible.
- If you meet a person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, terminate the contact.
- Ask the person you are visiting if they can secure any pets or animals they may have.
- Wear comfortable and easy-to-wear shoes in case you need to make a quick getaway.
- Only carry essential items and do not carry lots of bags. Try to always keep one hand free.
- Avoid confrontation. If anyone makes provocative, offensive or challenging remarks, terminate the meeting.
- Everyone has their personal buffer space, do not encroach on it.
- Avoid aggressive body language; do not touch anybody.
- Show that you are taking the person's concerns seriously and give them space to back down without losing face.
- Immediately report any threatening or challenging behaviour.
- Use the 'buddy system' described at Appendix 1 of the policy.

Planning

With all activities you must assess the risks to your personal safety and take steps to minimise them. The best strategy for keeping safe at all times is to plan well-ahead of time. Thinking things through and planning for the unexpected helps you feel confident and react well in an emergency.

Training

Caseworkers and Befrienders undertaking home visits or carrying passengers in their cars receive training which includes how to protect themselves when undertaking isolated activity. A separate risk assessment is available from the Area Welfare Officer.

Medical Fitness

If you are a volunteer and suffer from a medical condition please ensure your manager knows of this so that we can consider if isolated activity is suitable for you.

Reporting an accident/incident/near miss

All incidents/accidents/near misses are to be formally reported to the manager of that volunteer and these will then be recorded on a Royal Air Forces Association Accident/Incident (Near Miss)/ Report. These will be followed up with appropriately and the volunteer involved will be updated with the outcome.

Buddy System

Who Is a Buddy?

A buddy can be a colleague, family member or partner. Make sure your buddy knows who to call at the RAF Association or call a family member in an emergency.

A buddy is someone who will support you and act as your ‘checker in and out’ of your isolated volunteering activity.

General – Lone Activity

Before your activity	<p>Pass the following to your buddy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Name, address and phone number of anyone you are visiting.*➤ Estimated time of departure or arrival.➤ Details of who to contact in an emergency.➤ Confirm your name, home address, home phone number and mobile number. <p>Keep your buddy up to date of any change of plan.</p> <p>Check your mobile is charged.</p>
After your activity	<p>Let your buddy know you are safe – phoning is preferable but you can text.</p> <p>If you text, your buddy must text back an acknowledgment.</p> <p>*Ensure your buddy deletes or destroys the address and name of the person you are visiting, in line with the Confidentiality Policy.</p>

Home Visits

Before entering a house	<p>Wear identification</p> <p>Carry contact details for the Association</p> <p>Check you have your mobile and it is charged</p> <p>Don't take valuable items with you unnecessarily</p> <p>Reverse into a parking space making it easier to leave</p>
In a house	<p>Check you have a clear exit</p> <p>Be ready with an excuse to leave if you feel uncomfortable or there is a problem: example – 'I need to go and check I have locked my car'</p> <p>Watch for body language and if you feel in danger leave.</p>
On exiting	<p>Let your buddy know you are safe</p>

Emergency Procedure for the 'Buddy'

If your lone volunteer does not contact you to confirm their whereabouts or return home, please do not panic. It might be that they have simply forgotten to let you know, or there has been a change in plans that they didn't tell you about or they might have been delayed. It might also be because of problems with their mobile phone signal.

You should:

- Phone their mobile number to confirm they are all right. If you receive no answer then phone the point of contact at the Association the buddy has provided to see if they have any more information and to discuss next steps.
- Try the mobile again.
- Phone the person they were visiting.
- If you cannot get hold of anyone – phone the police.

Support for Volunteers

The Association will ensure that appropriate post-incident support is available.

The Association will aim to respond quickly to reports of violence and/or other personal safety related incidents to avoid long-term distress to volunteers.

Where a volunteer has concerns about their personal safety and/or is a victim of violence whilst undertaking Association business, additional support will be made available. (e.g. personal safety assessments, time off from volunteering duties, guidance from their volunteer manager/ Area Welfare Officer and training).