

**Safety, Health & Environment  
Information Sheet**

# **Personal Safety A Guide for Councillors**

## **The Role of Councillors and their Personal Safety**

There are two areas covered by this guidance:

- general health and safety; and
- managing risks when working in the community.

In the first instance, *'Health and Safety in the Council - Councillor Workbook'* published by the Local Government Association is recommended reading. It is concise but wide-ranging and touches upon personal safety and details how decision making may influence risk areas. A copy is embedded here – click on the icon to open it:



LGA Councillor Workbook Health and Safety in the Council.pdf

## **Personal safety**

Contacts with the public usually are rewarding and non-adversarial you may find yourself having to calm down angry and frustrated residents, possibly face-to-face and alone.

This information sheet sets out what personal safety measures can be taken to prevent and deal with those circumstances when you may feel at risk.

## **Surgeries**

Try not to hold surgeries in an otherwise empty building. If you are currently holding surgeries alone consider teaming up with other councillors or holding joint surgeries with your district counterparts.

The layout of the room should suit you, i.e. you should sit nearest to the door with the constituents seated on the other side of the table.

If there is no separate waiting room, try to ensure that waiting constituents are as far as possible away from those whom you are talking to. Make sure there are no heavy items in the room that readily could be used as weapons.

## **Home Visits**

Most Councillors trust their own instincts as to whether to meet someone alone. Sometimes you might prefer to be accompanied by a ward or other colleague or obtain an initial report from council officers or invite the person to a more public or neutral place.

## **Lone Working**

If you are working alone you might consider the following options:

- leaving details of where you are going and how long you will be with a friend or relative;
- carrying a personal alarm or have one fitted in the meeting room. Other staff should know how to respond if the alarm sounds;
- making regular check-in calls to a friend or relative;
- teaming up with another person to make visits.

Note: On the market there are various BS approved 'lone worker' apps for smartphones (e.g. Guardian 24, stay Safe) which can send discreet emergency alarm to contacts, and be set up to ring you if you have not checked in. Other functions typically include pin pointing your exact GPS location and automatically record abusive conversation direct to central station.

## **Persistent Complainants**

Although nuisance calls are rare, you might become the target of a persistent, calls, letters or emails. If this happens, seek advice from Democratic Services who can advise you on the steps you should take. The Council has a protocol for dealing with persistent complainants and, if necessary, specific contact arrangements can be put in place.

## **Driving and Parking**

You need to take the same precautions as most car owners would take:

- have your keys in your hand or easily accessible;
- consider whether an area will be dark and isolated when you return to your car;
- park where possible, under street lighting;
- lock the car doors when you get into the car.

## **Reporting incidents**

In the first instance, seek advice from Democratic Services.

## **Sources of further information**

<http://www.suzylamplugh.org/>

<https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/staying-safe/keeping-yourself-safe/>

For further advice and guidance:

Tel 01452 425350 or email [she@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:she@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Also, see the SHE webpages at [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/she](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/she)