

Home Visit Guidelines

This protocol is guidance for those making home visits. It is for the safety of the employee/volunteer and for the person being visited. Managers/leaders should support staff/volunteers in understanding and using the guidelines.

Before the visit

Check your home visit risk assessment, if necessary do a new one

Check details of name, address, phone number etc Do you know the area that you are going ? Will you be safe especially in the evening?

Check who else will be there including any pets, family, children, other visitors. Ask for any pets to be secured before you arrive

Ask if they smoke, if you have asthma decide how you will deal with this

Dress appropriately and professionally. Wear comfortable and sensible shoes. Make sure you don't smell of cigarettes or alcohol

Call to remind the person that you are coming

For an initial home visit, try to schedule the appointment by telephone or letter so that the person will know to expect you and be prepared. If you speak to the person ahead of time, you may be able to get vital background information or an update on their current situation, which may have changed.

Collect as much information as possible about the person you are visiting

Whenever possible and when needed, conduct home visits accompanied by colleagues or employees from other agencies who are also working with the same person. If you feel uncomfortable going alone find someone to accompany you – this could be from another part of All Saints or a volunteer

Request a joint home visit with a police officer if you think the situation could become extremely dangerous.

Depending on the case and any confidentiality issues, you can possibly get a client's trusted family member involved and conduct a joint home visit with that person.

Depending on the nature of the case, some people can come to the centre/church, rather than have you meet them in their homes. Consider neutral meeting place if you feel home isn't safe.

Have a contingency plan with others e.g if you're not back within an hour then they will ring you.

Be sure to inform your supervisor, other colleagues or someone of your whereabouts. Tell them address, time going, time expected back. Ensure this is written down. Make sure that people back at All Saints or home know what to do if you don't return on time e.g phone you, phone the police

Have a key word for use if you are in danger that can be used over the phone or by text

Carry a personal alarm

Always carry a charged mobile telephone

Take a torch if evening visit.

Wash hands before and after visit (hand cleaner).

Never take valuables with you, leave them in the workplace.

Always take your ID badge. or other ID but do not wear it around your neck.

During the visit

Park your car close as possible, under a light, unobstructed, facing the way out.

Don't park in unlit car parks at night

Always be vigilant and assess the surroundings—both inside and outside the person's home.

Never stand too close to a front door. People may open their doors and allow their dogs to run out and jump on you. Request that they put the dog or other pet in another room. It is also possible that they could try and harm you, so stay back. It is rare but it is always better to be safe than sorry.

Make sure you show your identity badge

Know where the exits are in a home and in the building and hallways.

Always survey nearest exit, position yourself between client and exit and maintain clear access to an exit at all times. Don't let anyone sit between you and exit.

Don't have hot drinks, try not to offend anyone, perhaps ask for glass of water

If client locks door ask them to leave key in lock

If you believe they are under influence of drink or drugs don't conduct the interview. Don't confront alcohol or drug use – just leave

In a multiuse buildings be aware of risks including not using hand rails (where hypodermic needles may be left). If the front doors are open still use the bell.

If at all possible don't use the lift use the stairs. Do not enter a lift with people who make you feel uncomfortable in any way. If you are in a lift with someone who frightens you, immediately press the button for the next floor so that you can get off.

Do not enter the premises if you can hear any fighting, yelling, screaming, breaking glass, gun fire. Send for police

Act calm, confident, observant and in control. Remember everything you know and have learnt about handling difficult or aggressive behaviour. Always remember to keep your cool. Never show them

that you are scared. Always remain professional and if the situation gets out of control or dangerous—leave.

Remember that you are there to help the them. If you show that you are scared, the client might try to take advantage of the situation by being manipulative.

If you feel unsafe during an interview and believe you are or might be in danger, you should immediately end the interview and leave—run if necessary! Be aware of surrounding, leave if your instincts tell you to leave.

If you see any weapons leave

Do not get too comfortable and let your guard down .

Don't accept any gifts or money while you are on visit

Try not to meet in a kitchen where there may be knives/ glass weapons

Sit on hard backed chairs. Avoid sitting on upholstered couches or chairs where there may be hypodermic needles, weapons or infestations

Wash your hands regularly. If you are constantly touching door knobs, shaking hands and on public transport, it is easy to catch germs and spread them. Keep a hand sanitizer or wipes in your coat or bag.

If you are highly allergic to certain domestic animals then you should take that into account before conducting home visits. Many people live with cats, dogs and other pets. If being around a particular animal triggers an allergic reaction, necessary precautions need to be taken into account ahead of time

After the visit

When you exit be aware of surroundings.

Wash hands or use sanitiser

If leaving a building don't let the client be behind you downstairs etc.

Don't make phone calls until out of sight

If you feel unsafe on the street seek help/shelter in a shop

Before entering your car check around, under and the back seat

Lock car doors immediately

Record the visit properly. Ensure you report straight away to your manager/leader if there has been any issues etc during the visit.

Ensure you report any safeguarding issues immediately

If the client has complained in any way about you or your service during the visit then report this immediately (even if you were at fault)

Make sure you return back at the time you say, don't get distracted. If you are held up on journey back inform someone

In our policies:

- 'All Saints organisations' refers to the 5 members of the All Saints family
- 'Board' refers to the Boards, committees or legal entities that govern those All Saints organisation.
- 'Manager/leader' refers to people who are in charge of various activities across the All Saints organisations. They may be paid staff or volunteers

