

PERSONAL SAFETY WHEN HOME VISITING

1. PREPARATION

- gather all information about the client/family/relatives/neighbours
- remember it may take some time to get records through on new referrals
- check with colleagues, GP, other disciplines
- wherever possible make appointments, is the time of day or day of the week significant?
- inform the client about your role and the planned appointment so that they know what to expect

2. VENUE

- do you have to visit the home
- can you use another venue, e.g. clinic, GP practice
- check the address
- consider the geographic area
- know exactly where you're going
- check any one way systems or no vehicle access routes

3. BEFORE SETTING OFF

- check equipment
- dress appropriately, do not wear expensive looking jewellery
- remember to leave your itinerary and notify colleagues of any changes
- is there a protocol for requesting assistance or other staff to accompany you on the visit
- brief anyone covering your visits
- have some change and/or a phone card available
- have you been trained in recognising aggression, de-escalation techniques

4. THE VISIT

- remember you have a choice – visit or withdraw, if in doubt don't go in
- remember your own behaviour can trigger or prevent aggression, treat patients courteously and allow them to retain optimum control and dignity, you are a guest in their home
- do any of the family members (or cohabittees) give cause for concern

- remember the dynamics of the visit can change, e.g. if someone else comes into the house or room
- consider the need for peer support, return with a colleague if necessary
- who knows where you are and when you're due back, leave an itinerary at your base
- follow the client in, noting locks and access
- try to dissuade clients from locking you in
- note the layout of the house, in particular the way out
- always try to sit between the client and the exit
- if violence is threatened, leave immediately unless medical requirements make this impossible
- ask for pets to be removed from the room during the visit, stress the safety aspects, e.g. getting jostled when carrying out treatment
- show your identity card/badge (but don't wear it while travelling)
- ensure all parties are satisfied with the treatment or interaction that has occurred, if there are problems be able to explain the complaints procedure
- leave when you are finished, it's not a social call
- whenever possible return to base or phone in
- notify any changes in plans or delays
- recognise the limits of your own ability to deal with a situation and the time when it becomes prudent to leave; trust your instincts

5. HIGH RISE FLATS

- always use the door entry system so that the client you visit knows you are on your way up
- be confident and know what floor you want before you get in the lift
- do not get into a lift if you feel unsure about its condition, e.g. doors not closing properly or the lift or lights aren't working correctly
- trust your instincts, do not get into a lift with a person you feel unsure about
- if someone gets into a lift and you do not feel safe get out even if it's the wrong floor
- always try to stand near the doors close to the control panel/alarm button (or intercom) in the lift

6. EQUIPMENT

- be prepared to give up equipment/bags "without a fight", things can be replaced, you can't
- don't carry too much, if necessary make two journeys
- keep a list of emergency contact numbers, including those for out of hours
- make sure your mobile phone is charged and that you know how to use it
- mobile phones should be programmed for the local police number and your base number
- remember the limitations of mobile phones, they are unlikely to work properly in basements, lifts and high rise buildings
- if you have a personal alarm, check the battery – remember it's useless in the bottom of your bag

7. ACTION FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

- allow yourself time to recover, seek practical support from your colleagues and manager
- contact the police, if appropriate
- seek proper medical attention for any physical injuries
- contact your manager
- return to base if practical
- report all incidents through the formal reporting procedures
- share information with others who work in the area or visit the particular address or client, if appropriate add information to patient notes
- be prepared for natural post trauma reactions. Even after very minor incidents, feelings may be difficult to control and may affect your ability to deal with any further problems that arise. This is a perfectly natural reaction – if in doubt – take time out
- ask for de-briefing and further counselling if post trauma reactions persist
- whenever appropriate institute a formal case review
- try to identify where control was lost and how, so that practice and training can be improved accordingly

PERSONAL SAFETY WHEN TRAVELLING

1. TRAVELLING BY CAR

- consider time of day
- plan your route in and out
- lock your car while travelling, if possible
- don't leave any items on view in your car, even while driving
- keep equipment in the boot and plan it for easy access
- don't run out of petrol
- in cases of road rage do not make eye contact or gestures and drive to a place of safety
- consider places of safety on the route, e.g. garages, shops, police stations
- beware of faked 'accidents' and other ploys to get you to stop

2. TRAVELLING BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- plan your route in and out
- don't carry too much
- on buses try to sit near the driver, remember he has a radio to summon assistance
- on metros or trains try to sit in the middle of the carriage
- on trains or metros try to sit where there is another person, if possible women should sit near other women
- if you feel uneasy in a particular carriage for whatever reason get off at the next stop and change to another one
- have change for your fare ready and easily accessible

3. WALKING

- don't carry too much
- plan your route, avoid waste ground, subways, or other places where people loiter
- keep to well lit routes and paths, shortcuts are rarely safe
- be alert and look confident, don't switch off to the world by wearing a personal stereo

- wear shoes and clothes that don't restrict movement
- know where you're going
- consider places of safety on your route, e.g. garages, shops, pubs
- walk facing oncoming traffic, you cannot be kerb crawled by traffic coming towards you
- keep to the outside of the pavement
- never accept lifts from strangers
- keep at least one hand free
- if you must carry a handbag make sure it is small, holds little of value and can be worn diagonally across the shoulder
- keep your car and house keys and a small amount of money separate from your bag
- don't walk with your hands in your pockets
- continually assess the situation, if in doubt be prepared to abandon or postpone the visit

4. PARKING

- lock your car
- close all windows and the sunroof
- don't leave anything on view
- well lit, when parking in daylight consider what the area will be like in the dark
- observable/busy road
- do not use 'doctor on call', 'nurse on call' signs, they may attract rather than deter crime
- reverse park so you can drive straight out
- never leave car registration documents in your car
- have your car keys ready when returning to your car
- check the interior of your car before you get in
- be particularly careful and vigilant when getting equipment into and out of the boot

Personal Safety When Travelling & Home Visiting