



BARROW UPON SOAR GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

LONE WORKER & PERSONAL SAFETY GUIDANCE

G002

1. Introduction

We very much appreciate you volunteering your time and energy to the Barrow upon Soar Good Neighbour Scheme (BGNS) and we are keen that everyone should get as much as they can from volunteering. This guidance is necessary as the majority of volunteers will be “working” alone and your safety and welfare and that of the person you are supporting are of paramount importance to us.

A few precautions can reduce the risk of any incidents occurring. We are an entirely voluntary service and are not here to replace the statutory services. If a job is better suited to those agencies we should not be undertaking it and potential members can be informed of this if necessary. If you have any immediate worries about the safety of the person you are supporting or possible abuse please contact the Police or Adult Social Care urgently.

This guidance is aimed at reducing any risk to our lone working volunteers by:

- identifying some of the associated risks
- giving you practical advice and clear guidance on how to anticipate, avoid and manage these risks

If you experience any “incidents” or “near misses” please report them to the BGNS Steering Group as we may be able to help avoid recurrences on future occasions. If you think any activity is unsafe or you have any concerns, the BGNS Steering Group would be pleased to hear from you to explore these further. This document is intended for use as a reference guide only, the advice it contains is not exhaustive.

2. What Is Lone Working?

Lone working describes any situation where someone is not working alongside or near to others whom they know. Due to the nature of BGNS volunteering there may be frequent occasions when you will be working alone and without easy access to others who could help if there are any problems or there is an accident.

a. **Basic requirements for all lone workers**

- take care of your own safety and that of others affected by your actions or inactions
- report any incidents or concerns to one of the BGNS Steering Group for further review
- always carry a switched on, fully charged, mobile phone and, for pay-as-you-go, ensure you have sufficient credit but remember not to use it whilst driving unless you have hands free

b. The “Buddy” system

Please could you make sure that a family member or friend (or if necessary ask the Telephone Co-ordinator to act as your buddy) is aware that:

- You are going out on a volunteering job
- Where you are going
- Who you are meeting
- What you are doing (generally only, e.g. driving to Loughborough Hospital)
- When you are going
- How long you expect to be
- They must be told when you return after volunteering
- If you are delayed, let your buddy know

It may be worth having a “trigger word” for your buddy to alert them if you are in trouble or in personal danger. If you find yourself in a difficult situation and want to be “rescued” and if you are unable to speak freely, you should emphasise that you are expected to make a phone call and that, if you don’t, the alarm will be raised. Then make the phone call to your buddy using the “trigger word”.

If you do not check back with your nominated buddy and they cannot get directly in contact with you they will need to pursue matters to ensure that you are safe and well.

Please remember that these procedures are there to protect you.

3. Volunteer Reminders

- Be fully informed about the task and the person you are supporting before you set out
- Don’t take on ANY task beyond your capabilities
- Always tell your “buddy” where you’re going, how long you’ll be, and when you’re home
- Take a switched on and fully charged mobile
- Remember the member you are supporting may be worried, stressed or ill
- Check out the surroundings and exit routes
- Keep yourself and the member you are supporting safe, stay alert and aware
- Leave the situation if you feel threatened (park car for easy departure)
- If you, or the member you are supporting, is in immediate danger: dial 999
- For any Urgent safeguarding issues: alert Police and or Adult Social Care
- Possible abuse: discuss with BGNS Safeguarding Officer

4. Assessing The Risks And Preparing For Your Tasks

Remember that many of the members with whom you are so kindly volunteering may be anxious, stressed, unwell and vulnerable so they may not be “at their best” or able to show their appreciation and the manners they might usually display.

a. Think about where you will be going and what you will be doing:

- Consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an isolated farm, adverse weather conditions for driving, an unknown dog to walk etc.)
- Do you know what relevant information you will need to obtain from the member when you meet them in order to complete the job?

- Wherever possible arrange volunteering so that it is completed during daylight hours

We recommend that you do not give your personal phone number or address to the member unless you wish to personally befriend them outside the BGNS.

If you have any particular anxieties, before you undertake a job, discuss them with the Telephone Co-ordinator and your buddy (see above re “buddy” system) before setting off. This is a voluntary service and we don’t want you to undertake any task at risk to yourself or others.

b. Falls

If a member has a fall while you are there and is unable to get up by himself/herself, do not attempt to lift or move them. Make the member as comfortable as possible and call 999. Paramedics are trained to check for injuries and to lift people correctly.

c. Accidents

If you or the member has an accident or a significant problem while you are volunteering you must inform the Telephone Co-ordinator by phone initially and in writing as soon as possible.

d. Helping someone to stand or to get in and out of a car

Only help someone if that person specifically requests assistance and you are absolutely confident in your ability to help the person safely. You must say “no” if you are not sure about how to help or about your own capacity to help.

5. Visiting Members In Their Own Homes

Always show your identity card to the member

- Note the name, address and contact number where you are going, carry your identity card
- Don’t enter if the person you are visiting is absent and an unknown person invites you in
- Remember you are visiting someone else’s home, wait to be asked in, invited to sit, etc.
- Remain polite, friendly or neutral as much as possible, if you feel you might lose your temper, for any reason, if necessary excuse yourself and leave
- Familiarise yourself with the surroundings and exits in case you need to leave quickly
- Don’t block the other person’s line of exit, but make sure your own isn’t blocked
- Let the other person enter a room first and make sure you have a clear line of escape
- Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting
- If you feel threatened by dogs etc., ask politely if they can be moved

6. Physical Or Verbal Assault, Aggression Or Any Abusive Behaviour

This may be the result of dementia, alcohol, drugs, etc. and may not be deliberate or in fact directed personally against you, but you must leave the situation as soon as you can

- Try to stay calm and appear relaxed, don’t become rooted to one spot
- Never be aggressive back, this is how anger can escalate into violence
- To reduce frustration respond promptly, don’t be patronising and show that you care
- Pay attention, listen and hear members out, even if you have heard it all before
- Carry a personal alarm (if you have one) in an easy place to access and practice using it

- Phone the Police if appropriate, if you do then make a written, dated and signed record
- Access support for yourself if you have had a difficult experience

Please let the BGNS Steering Group and Telephone Co-Ordinator know by phone and in writing of **any such incidents** as soon as possible

7. Travelling By Car

Always show your identity card to the member

This might include travelling as far as hospitals in Leicester and Nottingham or Derby

- Plan your route and take appropriate maps etc.
- Ensure that you have sufficient fuel; take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather
- Carry a mobile phone for emergency use
- Carry a torch if it might get dark
- If you see an incident, stop only if it is safe to do so otherwise drive on and summon help
- If you are ever forced to stop by an unidentified person, keep your engine running, lock the windows and doors and stop so you can pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened. If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash lights etc., dial 999

If you break down

- Park as near as possible to an emergency phone if on a motorway or dual carriageway
- On a fast road climb out of your car by the passenger door, wait behind any barrier, beside your vehicle if this is safe
- Wear high visibility clothing if possible
- Inform anyone you contact for help if you have a vulnerable adult in the car with you
- Ask for ID from uniformed persons to ensure they are bona fide

8. Travelling By Public Transport e.g. Bus

- Plan your route including walking to your destination from the bus stop - know where you are going so you don't have to ask for directions and accidentally end up lost
- You are safest where there are other people and where it is well lit
- If you are at a bus station try to wait in a busy area
- If you are on the bus sit close to the driver
- If you being made to feel uncomfortable, or feel threatened by someone, move your seat

9. Dogs/Animals

- If you are allergic to animals ensure that the Telephone Co-ordinator is aware of this
- Do not enter a home if an unfamiliar dog is aggressive towards you
- If a dog or cat etc. causes you to feel uncomfortable, politely ask a member to remove it
- Before you walk a dog check you know how to attach its lead or harness and any behavioural problems / quirks that the dog might have. As a general rule do not let the dog off the lead during your walk
- Before you walk a dog ensure you have poo bags and please remember to pick up all waste

10. Gardening/Diy/House Hold Tasks

Take and use any personal protective or other equipment you might need such as gardening gloves, goggles, gardening boots and familiar tools that you might need to use for a task if they may be better for you than those provided by the member.

Be especially careful with the following:

- When lifting; only lift or carry items that you can easily manage (use a wheelbarrow or trolley if available). If in doubt do not attempt to lift but seek assistance or delay the task
- When using ladders or machinery, especially any you are unfamiliar with
- When using solvents, bleach, cleaning liquids, weed killer etc. (use gloves and wash your hands after)

11. Key Considerations For The Different Roles In BGNS

BGNS recognises the need to consider the safety and welfare of all its volunteers and members. You need to take reasonable care of yourself and those affected by your work as a volunteer. Therefore:-

a. EVERYONE involved MUST

- Maintain the confidentiality of the members within the scheme unless statutory agencies require any information.

b. Volunteers should

- Look after your own health and welfare and that of the member, as far as possible
- Be sure you are healthy and easily able to undertake the requested task
- Let the Telephone Co-ordinator know of any changes to the agreed task or timings etc.
- Have your buddy contact number with you as well as that of the Telephone Co-ordinator
- Always carry a switched on and fully charged mobile phone
- Report “incidents” / concerns directly to the Steering Group or via the Telephone Co-ordinator
- Understand the need to follow any guidance offered by the Steering Group

c. If you are acting as the Telephone Co-ordinator when allocating a task you should

- Consider if tasks require 1 or more volunteers e.g. handling any required equipment such as managing a personal wheelchair (in rare situations the use of personal wheelchairs may be difficult)
- Give the volunteer(s) all the information they will require about the task and the member, including any relevant problems with mobility or health issues, where identified
- Ensure access to a member’s property or pets etc do not present any problems for the volunteer
- Log all tasks in detail, to ensure BGNS knows the whereabouts of the volunteer and member and to ensure the volunteer and member are properly insured by BGNS

d. The BGNS Steering Group should always consider the following points in relation to welfare and safety decisions regarding volunteering

- That BGNS volunteers nearly always work alone
- Whether there is adequate supervision of, and support for, volunteers and when might it be required
- Whether the information or training given to volunteers is adequate
- Whether there are systems in place if a volunteer becomes ill, has an accident or if there is an emergency