

# S2

## workbook

keeping safe  
a self-study workbook for  
volunteers

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keeping  
**safe**  
self-study  
**pack**

for volunteers

# Keeping Safe

A self-study pack for volunteers

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A resource for volunteers - to ensure they keep safe while carrying out their volunteering.

Published & Printed by:  
Solutions Publications  
12 Emmerson Way  
Hadleigh  
Suffolk  
IP7 6DJ  
Tel: 01473 822559

# keeping safe

## Welcome!

You have applied to or are currently working with this organisation as a volunteer.

It is our policy that all volunteers have training to equip them to carry out their role successfully and enjoyably in safety. You may feel, as we all do, that you know all about keeping safe and how to avoid putting yourself in danger and yet it is sometimes the very simplest situations that can impact on our personal safety. There may be situations in your role which carry an element of risk and by working through this pack and having a follow-up session you are going to identify some of those situations, especially the less obvious ones. Volunteering is no more and no less risky than any other situation in life, but as volunteers are used more and more in front-line roles with vulnerable clients so the element of risk may increase. Volunteers are sometimes in a special, privileged situation where they are dealing with clients, some of whom are vulnerable, and that can hold an element of risk, both to their emotional well-being and to their integrity. We would stress that because we do everything possible to ensure your safety and prepare you for your role the situations where you may be at risk are few and far between, but we feel it is our duty to do everything possible to prepare you for your role.

You will be expected to attend any follow-up training or a one-to-one session to explore in more depth some of the issues raised in this pack and hopefully working through it will help you consider some of those issues.

There are some worksheets that you need to return to your co-ordinator and they will be the basis for any follow-up training or one-to-one session. Please do not worry if you do not know any of the answers, this is not a test nor are the questions set to trip you up, this is preparation and is designed to help you.

We hope you enjoy working through this pack and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any difficulty or there is anything you don't understand.

Through the pack there are some icons that mean -



An Activity for you to complete



Case Studies



Information to help you work through the pack

**Who you help** - some organisations call them service users, some clients - we have referred to people who use the service as both in the exercises.

## aims and objectives -

when you have worked through this pack you will:

- have defined 'risk' in general
- have considered the risks encountered by volunteers
- have identified situations in your role that may put you at risk
- have explored what the 'risk' might be
- have thought about ways to reduce the risk
- have devised a checklist for your personal safety
- have information about the organisations' responsibility towards your personal safety
- know who, within the organisation, will deal with your personal safety concerns



**‘To be alive at all involves some risk’.**

**Harold McMillian**

**risk is.....**

**Below is a list of situations and actions that are considered to carry risk - not all necessarily associated with volunteering.**

### **Situations**

- Being in a client's home
- Seeing a client in hospital
- Seeing a client at a community venue
- Working in an unknown area
- Walking to and from car or car park
- Being in an unhealthy environment – smoky, infectious due to bad personal hygiene or disease (on ward or at client's home)
- Allergies (animals if in client's home)
- Threat from anyone living with client (relation, partner, friend, carer)
- Working with equipment
- Working with hazardous substances
- Working from home
- Severe weather
- Work area – lighting, temperature, ventilation, fire safety procedures, possibility of slips or trips etc.

### **Actions**

- Threat of physical abuse
- Possibility of verbal abuse
- Unpredictable behaviour
- Accusations
- Sexual assault
- Stalking
- Verbal abuse on the telephone

### **Other**

- Aggressive pets if home visiting
- Client's phobias



## your turn

Use the box below to outline other situations and actions that carry risk.

risk

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick blue border, intended for the user to write their response.



**risk you have experienced**

Can you name a risk you have encountered in the last six months, whether volunteering or just going about your daily life, and say how you dealt with that risk?

My risks	
<p><b>my risk</b></p>	<p><b>I dealt with this by ...</b></p>



### summary of risk:

Below is a summary of the risks volunteers may encounter, which roughly fall into four categories.

**Physical health** - this can be affected by faulty equipment, working with hazardous substances, working in surroundings that are unsafe, poor training and not being aware of risk.

**Personal safety** - affected by dangerous situations and not being prepared, aware or trained.

**Emotional distress** - caused by dealings with aggressive or vulnerable clients, difficult situations (working with elderly or vulnerable youngsters, terminally ill) and not having adequate training/support.

### other people's risks

**Personal integrity** - working in situations that could expose the volunteers to misunderstandings or accusations. Not having adequate training to raise their awareness of this possibility or dealing with it effectively.



Read the Case Studies of the following pages, choose four & then complete the boxes identifying any risks the volunteer in the case study might face.

Case Study No.

Case Study No.

Case Study No.

Case Study No.



## Case Studies

1.

**Janet** is a volunteer in a popular charity shop. Her manageress (who is paid) is having difficulties with her small son and child care and is regularly leaving early to collect him from school, leaving the responsibility of cashing up and closing the shop to Janet, she does not mind this and is happy to help out. Recently the other volunteer who works with her two afternoons a week has been phoning to say she cannot come in or is saying she also has to leave early. This means that Janet is alone on those days to cash up and close the shop.

**Is there a risk for Janet here? If so, what is the risk?**

2.

**David** is a volunteer befriender to a young boy, Peter, aged 13. He meets with him once a week after school and spends about two hours with him. They do various activities – go to the library to do research for Peter's homework, play football in the local park or sometimes go fishing, an activity that Peter is becoming really interested in. The meeting usually ends with a trip to McDonald's. David has mentioned that he has a collection of fishing books at home and Peter has asked if they can go to David's home this week to look at them.

**Is there a risk for David here? If so, what is the risk?**



## Case Studies

**3.**

**Surjit** helps out at a local community centre one night a week, she gives support with IT – showing people how to use the computer and how to access the Internet. The session finishes at 9.30pm. One of the group members, a young man with learning difficulties, has on several occasions missed his bus home and has asked Susan for a lift (more so recently), which she has given him. During the drive the young man asks her lots of quite personal questions about herself.

**Is there a risk for Surjit here? If so, what is the risk?**

**4.**

**Svetlana** is a volunteer befriender to an elderly woman, Madge, who gets very confused and mislays things all the time. She has often accused the home help of taking things. Madge likes to show Alice her mementos and her collection of silver spoons. She has asked Alice if she would take some of the spoons to get them valued.

**Is there a risk for Svetlana here? If so, what is the risk?**



## Case Studies

5.

**Sarinder** is a volunteer with an environmental charity, mainly involved in clearing local areas and conservation work at a variety of reserves. He is responsible and likes the work. Lately he has been asked to do some tasks that involve using electrical equipment, some of which looks decidedly ancient. He is not sure how to use some of it and whether or not he should be wearing special clothes for safety. The co-ordinator is always very busy and tells Alex and the other volunteers what to do and then dashes off to another site.

**Is there a risk for Sarinder here? If so, what is the risk?**

6.

**Joan** is a befriender with MIND and one of her clients (Mary) is a young woman whom she has been befriending for 2 years. Joan has mentioned to her co-ordinator that she is concerned because Mary is becoming increasingly agitated lately and gets cross with Joan. The co-ordinator says it is probably 'just her way' and not to worry about it.

**Is there a risk for Joan here? If so, what is the risk?**



## Case Studies

**7.**

**Malika** helps in a day centre for the elderly, she makes and hands out drinks and chats to the clients. When the centre is short staffed she does help with things like bathing and personal care and is quite happy to do this. There are times though when she finds this difficult as she does have back problems; she has mentioned this to the supervisor who says she will make sure Alice does not have to do any lifting. The situation still arises though and Alice feels she is making a fuss.

**Is there a risk for Malika here? If so, what is the risk?**

**8.**

**Sarah** works in the office of an Alzheimer's & Dementia Support service. The organisation has sent her on a computer course and has asked her to maintain the information database, which she is happy to do. She has been given use of an old computer that the organisation was going to dump. It is sited on a small desk in a cramped corner and is positioned a bit too high for Sarah, who is short. She has mentioned how uncomfortable the set up is and the co-ordinator keeps promising to 'look into it'

**Is there a risk for Sarah here? If so, what is the risk?**



## all about you

Use the box below to describe your volunteer role ...

My role – what I do





## whose responsibility?

Whose responsibility do you think it is to ensure your safety while you are volunteering?

Complete the boxes to check your knowledge.

Statement	Yes ✓	No ✓	? ✓
The organisation has a duty of care to ensure my safety.			
It is up to the organisation to make sure volunteers are safe.			
My manager should do a risk assessment of the tasks I am asked to do.			
It is not up to me to make sure the equipment I am using is safe.			
Safety is everyone's concern – we all need to think about staying safe.			
The reception staff know where I am so they can check if I am safe.			
I should be given training to help me deal with risky situations.			
The organisation cannot afford to buy new equipment so we make do – even if it is a bit dodgy.			
I should be given an alarm if I am working in a risky situation.			
It is OK to give clients lifts in my car – most of them struggle with transport.			
I should be able to voice any concerns I have regarding my personal safety.			
Most volunteers don't need rules – they just need to use their common sense.			
Volunteers should take reasonable care for their own safety and not expose themselves to unnecessary risk?			

## **better safe than sorry**

Obviously it is better to think about any possible risks and have thought about ways of reducing or dealing with that risk and it may be that your co-ordinator issues you with guidelines to help. But assuming we are all responsible for our own safety it is good practise for you to develop your own personal safety checklist.

To get you in the frame of mind you are going to look at some volunteer roles and then at their checklist for keeping them safe.

### **Volunteer Roles**

- ✚ Volunteer Working in a Charity Shop**
- ✚ Volunteer Befriender to an elderly person, living on their own who sees their family (son & daughter-in-law) about once a month.**
- ✚ Volunteer driver – main duties driving elderly or disabled clients to hospital appointments.**
- ✚ Volunteer mentor to a 14 year old to give support with school studies and goal setting.**
- ✚ Volunteer working at a drop-in for a Mental Health Charity.**
- ✚ Office volunteer working in a large building used by various organisations**
- ✚ Volunteer working in reception of support organisation**
- ✚ Volunteer helping in a day centre for the elderly**

**On the following page there are examples of possible safety checklists for the first five volunteer roles. Read through them and then come up with some ideas for the last three.**

### **Volunteer Working in a Charity Shop.**

- Know the procedures for dealing with emergency situations including fire or bomb scare.
- Be aware of the people in the shop; watch out for actions that make you feel uneasy.
- Don't stick to a routine when cashing up etc.
- Try not to be alone in the shop when cashing up
- Treat aggressive behaviour calmly. Don't handle aggression with more aggression.
- Have emergency contact telephone numbers written clearly in a place near the phone.
- If a situation develops that worries you, make sure you are near a door or route of escape

**Volunteer driver** – main duties driving elderly or disabled clients to hospital appointments.

- Do not give lifts to client's friends or neighbours – 'Just this once'
- Do not accept gifts
- Record any concerns on appropriate feedback/contact sheets
- If you break down inform whoever you contact that you have an elderly/disabled person in the car.

**Volunteer Befriender** to an elderly person, living on their own who sees their family (son & daughter-in-law) about once a month.

- If the person offers any of their personal possessions as a gift – do not take them
- Only handle the person's money if has been agreed you will do shopping or pay bills
- Only handle money for agreed reasons, get receipts and make notes of bills you pay.
- Do not give medication, financial advice or any type of advice that will impact on the client's life decisions.
- If you have any concerns about the client (health etc.) report to your co-ordinator
- Do not offer to do chores not agreed on, decorating, gardening etc.

**Volunteer mentor** to a 14 year\old to give support with school studies and goal setting.

- Make sure you know exactly what you can and cannot do.
- Have clear boundaries and do not cross them
- Be aware of potentially risky situations, being alone with the youngster in an isolated place
- Do not give gifts
- Do not give medication
- Do not apply creams (i.e. suntan lotion) to the youngster
- Do not reveal too many personal details
- Record any concerns on appropriate feedback/contact sheets

**Drop-in Volunteer** for a Mental Health Charity (or any charity that operates a similar type of drop-in for clients).

- Do not accept lifts from clients
- Do not give advice, unless you are qualified to do so, refer to appropriate agency or to co-ordinator.
- Do not single group members out for special attention.
- If it is an evening drop-in make sure you park near other cars in a well lit spot, leave the building with other people if possible.
- Don't offer clients lifts home



your turn – come up with a safety checklist for the following

**Office volunteer** working in a large building used by various organisations

**Volunteer Receptionist** working for a support organisation

**Volunteer Helper** in a day centre for the elderly



## match the risk

Below is a list of common volunteer roles – on the next page a list of common ‘potential’ risks. Write in the second column one risk that the volunteer role might attract.

Role	Potential Risk
Advocate	
Befriender / Mentor	
Counsellor	
Helpers in children’s clubs/groups	
Helpers in social groups, clubs and drop-ins	
Administrative support	
Reception work	
Meet & Greet	
Carer	
Respite support	
Help line	
Driver	
DIY/Gardener	
Shopper	
Help with home tasks – ironing, cleaning etc.	
Charity shop	
Mediator	
Events helper	
Fundraising	
Committee member	
Treasurer/Auditor	
Newsletter compiler	
Sports coaching/assistant coaching	
Giving Advice & Information	
Awareness Raising	
Lunch Club Helper	

## potential risks

Look at the potential risks below and match them to the roles on the previous page – you may use a risk more than once. You may also come up with a risk that is not on the list.

Physical abuse
Emotional Abuse
Verbal abuse
Getting too close
Sharing too much personal information
Accusations of abuse
Accusations of theft
Injury to volunteer from faulty equipment or hazardous substance
Exceeding boundaries
Injury to service user
Breaking confidentiality
Misrepresentation of organisation leading to misunderstanding
Errors with money
Incorrect information given leading to complaints
Financial implications for volunteer
Risks from client's pets
Risks from other people living with clients
*Risks from service users' carers
Vehicle breakdown
Weather hazards
Isolated areas



## agree / disagree

One way the organisation has of ensuring your safety is to put in place various policies and procedures: Health & Safety – to lay down rules on how everyone conducts themselves safely, Confidentiality – to give guidelines on what information you should share with others, Risk Management – how identified risks will be managed, Adult Protection, Child Protection and of course Lone Working. You may have come across some of these policies, which will help you to complete the following table. You may of course have not in which case you will need to do some research. This is not just about working one-to-one with a client – it is relevant whatever volunteer role you perform.

**As a volunteer complete the table with Y or N depending on if you agree with the statement or not.**

### Agree/Disagree

You can give clients your address		It is OK to accept gifts from service users	
You can invite clients to follow you on Twitter?		You can give clients your mobile/home phone	
It's OK to share personal information		You can give a service user a hug	
You can give clients financial or lifestyle advice		You can invite clients to be your friend on Facebook	
You can give clients your private email		You can go out socially with service users	
You can lend clients money		You can borrow money from clients	
Discuss your personal problems with clients		Accept verbal abuse – they probably don't mean it	



## what you know

You should now have a good insight into the risks volunteers could face in their roles. None of the forgoing is intended to scare or put you off but merely to get you to take responsibility for your own safety and to think about keeping yourself safe. As an organisation we will take every step possible to keep you safe but we need you to be part of that plan. If you feel that any aspect of your role can cause you harm –tell us.

Check your understanding of what we do to keep you safe, you may have to do some research or ask other volunteers.

Statement	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	? <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the organisation have a lone working policy for volunteers?			
Does the organisation have a Health & Safety Policy?			
Does the organisation provide training to help volunteers keep themselves safe?			
Are there set procedures for volunteers carrying out home visits?			
Are there set procedures for volunteers opening and closing community venues?			
Is there a written risk assessment that volunteers can use when meeting with a service user?			
Is there a written risk assessment that volunteers can use when carrying out any other role?			
Is there a reporting procedure for any incidents regarding safety?			
Is there a system which records and tracks the movements of 'lone' volunteers?			
Is there a procedure for reporting any potential safety hazards?			
Is there a procedure for dealing with client complaints about volunteers?			
Is there a named person who volunteers can take safety concerns to and who will deal with safety issues?			



## reducing your risk

..... say how you could reduce the risks you may encounter in your role that you identified earlier

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



## Individual Risk Sheet:

Volunteer Role:

Possible risky situations:

The risk:

Ways I could reduce the risk:

What help do I need to reduce the risk?





## a word about risk assessments –

Risk assessments can be seen as yet another paper exercise in the bureaucratic mountain but a swift assessment can actually be the difference between being safe or not. If your organisation suggests or has one in place be thankful that they consider your safety to be paramount. In the main volunteers are free from risk, the nature of the work they do is welcomed by service users and statistics show they are rarely at risk, but that doesn't mean risk is not there and it is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation (you included) to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers.

Get into the habit of checking the level of risk attached to the action you are about to engage in.

Ask yourself -

- Is this safe?
- What could pose a threat?
- What can I do to reduce the risk?

There is a sample risk assessment on the following page - it is intended for a volunteer befriender.

Think about how you could adapt it for use in your volunteer role and discuss this with your co-ordinator when you meet to go through the pack.



## sample risk assessment for a volunteer befriender

Name of Client	Mrs Smith
Address	42 Any Street Anytown
Tel:	01234 567890
Volunteer Role:	Befriender
Describe – flat, house etc.	Bungalow
Environment Risk – is there any?	
Lighting	Street lighting OK
Parking	Parking difficult – rarely able to park near the address
Other	Early evening groups of young people gather on the nearby green – sometimes feel intimidated.
Personal Risk – has client ever shown or is known to have shown	
violence or aggression	No
volatile behaviour	No
alcohol/substance misuse	No
Other	Can be forgetful – write down any actions agreed.
Are there pets?	Dog – very old and docile.
Risk of infection?	No
Exit Strategy	Front and back doors both easily accessible. Client not mobile. No carer or relative living with client
Other notes	Has neighbour that is always giving advice on what Mrs Smith 'should' do – be wary of becoming embroiled in this dialogue, do not collude with neighbour.

**evaluation – how did it go?**

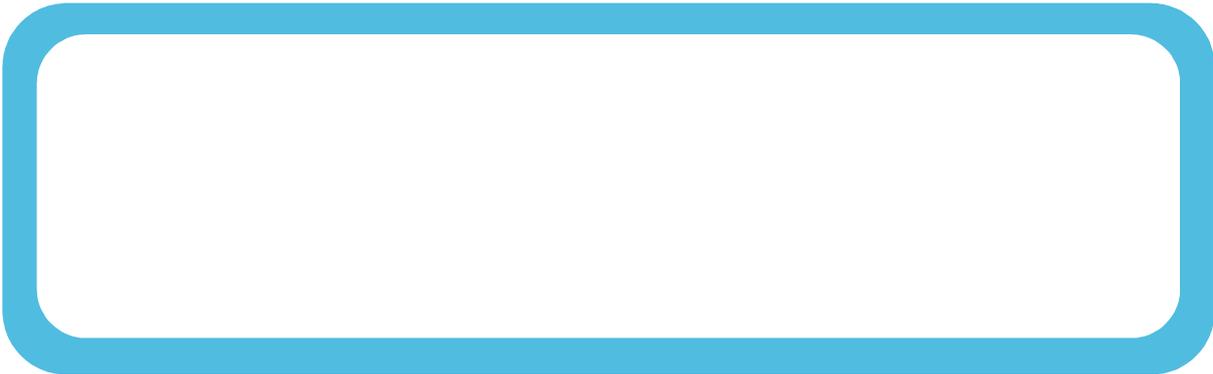
OK you have reached the end – well done, how did it go?

have you?

Aim	Yes	No	?
have defined 'risk' in general			
have considered the risks encountered by volunteers			
have identified situations in your role that may put you at risk			
have explored what the risk might be			
have thought about ways to reduce the risk			
have devised a checklist for your personal safety			
have information about the organisations' responsibility towards your personal safety			
know who, within the organisation, will deal with your personal safety concerns			

Please do get in touch with the person named below to talk through this pack and to go through any aspects that you feel need further discussion. You will meet with them once you have completed this pack to discuss your responses.

Your contact is:





notes - a space for anything at all that you want to record or comment about this pack or your safety

A large rectangular area with a blue border and rounded corners, containing horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.

**Thank you for working through this  
pack**

***Stay safe***



## appendix- feedback

We recognise that working through a self-study pack can be a lonely experience and would encourage you to buddy with a colleague to complete this pack if you find yourself struggling – ask your co-ordinator about this.

So in this appendix we have included some suggestions that may help you. You may of course have said a lot more, which is fine – no wrong or right answers here.

### some generic precautions that you may consider

These can apply to your daily life not just to your volunteer role.

- Get into the habit of doing a quick personal 'risk assessment' – be aware of your surroundings and any potential danger
- Decline lifts from strangers
- Carry a personal alarm
- Always tell someone whether family or someone in the organisation where you are going and when you expect to be back
- Make sure you know exactly where you are going and your route
- Avoid obvious risky situations – parking or walking in an unlit isolated place
- Be very careful about the personal information you give out
- Don't feel bad about refusing to do a task that you feel you cannot tackle and may do you physical damage
- Don't be prepared to work with faulty, dangerous equipment because you don't want to make a fuss
- Never give clients your home telephone number or address
- If you feel you are working in a risky situation ask for a personal alarm
- Check whether In general accepting gifts at Christmas is OK
- Be aware of surroundings and potential situations that may pose a threat to personal safety. Do your own swift risk assessment. Decide what actions you can take **now** to reduce any risk.
- Do some mental 'what if' exercises, these will help you to address any fears about safety and you will feel prepared. (What would I do if someone came into the shop and threatened me or acted aggressively?)
- If you are in a building be aware where phones, doors etc. are.
- If you are in a part of town that is isolated make sure you become familiar where the nearest place is where people will be (pub, burger bar etc.)
- Be aware of how you dress, yes dress is very personal and an expression of ourselves but it should be appropriate for the situation and the group.
- Be aware of using unlit cash points – try to always use cash points that are known to you and if possible inside
- Look confident
- Be aware of body language – don't present yourself as vulnerable
- Don't assume 'it won't happen to me', 'it's only a short journey', 'that person looks respectable'
- Take reasonable care not to expose yourself to unnecessary risk.
- If in a building always identify your 'exit' and keep the route to the exit clear.
- Don't just ignore anything that is a potential safety hazard (training wires, damaged chair etc.) thinking it is someone else's responsibility.