



# MRS/IQCS Guidelines for Interviewer Safety

**August 2020**

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## Introduction

There is an increasing awareness in our society that we must all take positive steps to improve our safety and security, within our homes and when we are out and about. These guidelines have been prepared to help you consider your personal safety whilst interviewing and although almost all of this document is common sense, it can be helpful to be reminded of the benefit of sensible planning and precautions which can be taken to protect yourself and your belongings.

We all assume that other people will behave predictably, so when faced with an aggressive person we are often surprised and shocked because it is unexpected. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and often when somebody has been involved in a violent situation, they will say 'I should have realised', 'I felt uneasy'. Learn to listen to your instincts, trust in them and act accordingly.

In preparing this document, we have referred to guidelines published by the [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#) – a leading authority on personal safety.

## Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve, and it is essential that practitioners follow government guidance about social contact and social distancing. All of the provisions in this guidance are subject to the Her Majesty's Government (HMG) advice which is current at the time that the data collection exercise is conducted.

MRS has published a set of [a set of guidelines](#) for returning to work including for face-to-face activity. The guidelines build on the government's safe working guidance and set out the measures research practitioners will need to take in order to ensure the safety of their own staff, and those members of the public with whom face-to-face interaction is essential. MRS advice is based on our current understanding of [HMG's guidance and support on Covid-19](#) which is subject to continuous development. MRS will update and publish accordingly, but it remains the responsibility of research practitioners to keep up to date.

### Key points to consider for lone working interviewers

It is important to give special consideration to the following when interviewing alone:

- Make sure that any cash is kept out of sight.
- Consider setting up a buddy system with someone so they know your plans for the day.
- If participants must come into your home, use rooms that do not disclose personal information.
- Conduct your own risk assessment on the doorstep before you enter unknown places. If you feel at all uncomfortable or unsure, make an excuse and leave.
- Be mindful of the fact that if you are entering someone else's territory, your presence there may be unwanted and/or pose a threat.
- It is important that a tracing system is in place that enables your employer/colleagues to know where you are and who you are with at all times.
- Risk assessments should be carried out by your employer to identify any risks related to the people, environment or tasks involved in your job.
- Trust your instincts to help you decide how safe a situation is and what action you should take to avoid danger.

### **Remember PLAN**

**P**repare

**L**ook confident

**A**void risk

**N**ever assume it will not happen to you

## PLAN

Tell someone or leave a note at home as to which area you will be working in and when you expect to return home. If it is not possible to leave a message with someone at your home, please do so with your Area Manager or Area Deputy Manager and advise them the area in which you will be working and the time you expect to return home. Once home, telephone your Area Manager/Deputy to confirm that you are home safely. If your Area Manager has been unable to confirm your safety within forty-eight hours, the police will be contacted.

- Consider carrying a personal safety alarm, which can be used to shock and distract an attacker giving you vital seconds to get away.
- Have an alert system in place to covertly raise the alarm with colleagues, such as making a phone call to ask them to check the 'red file' if you need immediate assistance.
- Keep valuable items such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones out of sight.

## ACT TO AVOID RISK AND DANGER

Aggressive and violent behaviour can be caused by people feeling that there is an intrusion into their private lives. They may have had a bad day or possibly a bad experience with a previous caller. If the participant shows any sign of aggressive behaviour terminate the interview and leave.

Any incident in which you feel threatened should be reported immediately to your Area Manager. Verbal abuse or physical attack is extremely stressful and your Area Manager will be able to give you the support you need.

Remember:

- Try to use well-lit routes and consider carrying a torch.
- Avoid higher risk areas. Remain alert and avoid distractions such as your mobile phone or headphones.
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts and take action. Act confidently, cross the road, turning to see who is behind you. If you are still being followed, keep moving. Head to a busy area and if you believe you may be in danger, call the police – DIAL 999.

### NEVER ASSUME IT WON'T HAPPEN TO YOU

If someone is aggressive or confrontational do not engage; politely end the conversation and leave that address. Report this to colleagues so they avoid same situation.

Trust your instincts. Do not knock on a door or enter a garden or driveway that you feel uncomfortable about.

Always report an incident. Report any incident to your Area Manager as soon as possible.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE?

#### **Remember ReLATE**

**R**emain calm.

**L**ean the environment if you feel at risk, informing your line manager or buddy that you are changing your plan.

**A**larm: If someone will not let you leave, or is threatening aggression, set off your alarm next to their head to disorientate them, drop it to the floor and get away from the aggressor.

**T**ell someone what has happened as soon as you can.

**E**mergency: in this situation always call the police, and let someone know what's happening.

### Working In Store/Shopping Centres/Flats

If working in a block of flats, shopping centre or store, please ensure you are aware of the fire exits and regulations.

Be cautious when using a lift, if it doesn't appear to be well maintained use the stairs.

Never use a lift in a fire evacuation situation. If working at a Hall Test, your supervisor will brief you on the health and safety issues.

Be aware of litter and never touch discarded objects (hypodermic needles may be obscurely placed). You should not touch or go near any suspicious looking objects.

### Summary

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999, employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and the health and safety of those affected by the work, e.g. visitors, such as contractors and self-employed people/workers who employers may engage.

Employees, self-employed people/workers, and contractors have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

If you have any questions about these Safety Guidelines, please contact your Area Manager.

Further information on Personal Safety can be obtained from the [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)