



ROYAL COLLEGE  
*of* PODIATRY

## **Lone Working: Keep Yourself Safe!**

**Katie Harwood  
Professional Support Officer, RCPod**

**Wendy May  
Advanced Specialist Podiatrist  
South Warwickshire UFT**

**Emma Noe  
Head of Podiatry  
Harrogate and District NHS Trust**



# Lone Worker Guidelines

- The Royal College has produced guidelines to help ensure members keep themselves and their employees safe at work: <https://membersarea.rcpod.org.uk/podiatric-practice/health-safety-and-wellbeing-resources-area/professional-practice>
- We also work with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/>

Lone workers – working in isolation without direct or indirect supervision

- Working alone in a clinic
- Working alone on home visit
- A receptionist manning the phones in a clinic on their own over lunch
- Driving on your own on home visits
- A cleaner locking up after they have finished cleaning
- Walking to your car with their visiting bag

Healthcare workers are 4 times more likely to experience workplace violence

Healthcare workers working in people's homes are 11 times more likely to receive verbal abuse.

Risk management process -There should be a clearly documented risk assessment process in place in relation to lone workers within the healthcare or community setting:

- to **identify** risks in relation to lone working
- to **assess** the risks to lone workers
- to implement measures to **reduce** the risks to lone workers, including appropriate training to minimise these risks
- to **evaluate** the control measures and ensure that risks to lone workers are appropriately managed

## Risk Assessment Template

<https://membersarea.rcpod.org.uk/podiatric-practice/health-safety-and-wellbeing-resources-area/general-resources>

# Essential Points for Risk Assessment

- Stay alert to warning signs, like an agitated family member.
- Execute a quick '10-second risk check'; if harm is suspected, exit swiftly.
- Know all entry and exit points, including fire escape routes.
- Implement effective security measures (e.g., use panic buttons to alert nearby personnel, security, law enforcement, or utilize a lone worker device or mobile phone for emergencies).
- Position yourself strategically for a safe escape, ensuring you're near an exit. steer clear of corners or areas that could block your escape.. ensure you can operate the door lock for a quick emergency exit.
- Be aware of object placement, especially items that could turn into potential weapons (scissors, scalpels, etc.).
- Assess the best action to take – decide whether to continue working or retreat.

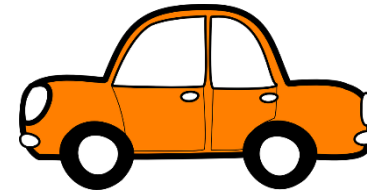
Does someone know where you are?

- Keep a list of patients, their addresses and the order you are visiting somewhere safe.
- Ensure family members or a trusted friend know your expected return time and who to contact if concerned and where the above list is.
- Leave your vehicle details or mode of transport with your “safe person”
- It is better to be overly cautious than under.
- Our *Buddy System* is fully explained in the guidelines

# Some measure to reduce your risks

- Make sure your mobile phone is charged.
- If travelling by foot arrange calls in daylight (If nighttime then well-lit streets), plan route before setting out.
- Walk in the middle of pavement, facing oncoming traffic.
- Share location via phone.
- Consider doubling up with another professional if you feel unsafe.
- Be cautious in areas with poor mobile reception.

# Car Safety



- Join a recovery service e.g. RAC, AA
- If lost - Seek directions from well-lit areas like petrol stations.
- Keep valuables out of sight and avoid using 'Podiatrist on Call' signs.
- Be mindful of parking:
  - reverse into spaces and avoid patient driveways.
  - Park close to location visiting in a well lit,
  - Avoid parking on patient driveways.
- Check fuel levels
- Hold vehicle keys in hand when leaving premises
- Look around car, once inside car lock doors

# Emergency Procedures

- Always sign in and out of the building if required.
- Know the full address and postcode of where you are attending in case you need emergency services.
- Keep your keys and phone in your pocket for easy access.
- If someone tries to steal your bag or equipment prioritise your safety and let them.

# Sharing your location

WhatsApp – you can share your GPS live location for up to 8 hours

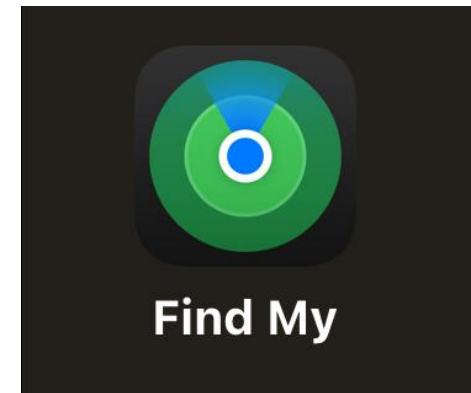
- Open chat with person you wish to share location
- Click the + sign (bottom left)
- Choose location
- Then share live location
- Ensure WhatsApp location permissions are set to always



# iPhone

Find my iphone (should be on phone already)

- Choice of sharing for 1 hour, all day or indefinitely
- Open App
- Click on people
- Press on Start Sharing location
- Choose who you want to share location with
- Press send



- Open a text message from person you wish to share
- Tap on Name,
- Tap on info
- Tap on Share my location
- Select share till end of day

- Check your phones settings
- You should be able to set an emergency contact
  1. Select the “Groups” tab.
  2. Select “ICE – Emergency Contacts”.
  3. Use the icon to the right of “Find contacts” (a plus sign) to add an emergency contact.
  4. Select or add a new contact to the group.
  5. All contacts in this group will be available from the lock screen, so you can call them without unlocking your phone
- You should have a safety alert setting which you can turn on
- Enter your medical info into the emergency contact section

**Hollie Guard App** (set up after the murder of hairdresser Hollie Gazzard) download – free but can pay to upgrade



- Set up emergency contact
- Test it as may need to adjust sensitivity
- Shaking phone will send message to emergency contact giving last known GPS

# Alert Apps



## Parachute

- Simultaneously calls, texts and emails your emergency contact/s and send live video, audio and location from the scene.
- Takes one touch or activate through Siri
- It records discreetly (saving everything to you phone) from front and back cameras simultaneously

# What do I do if I have a concern?

- Report what has happened to the patients GP or Safeguarding Team
- If you have been harmed report to the Police
- Document what has happened in the notes
- Take pictures
- Contact the College for advice
- If you are scared or feel in immediate danger 999

# Mental Health and Lone Working

Lone working poses unique mental health challenges:

- Increased Stress: Managing all tasks alone can be overwhelming.
- Anxiety: Safety and performance concerns may rise.
- Burnout: Limited social interaction leads to emotional fatigue.

Strategies to Safeguard Mental Health:

- Recognise Stress: Look out for signs like fatigue, irritability and poor concentration.
- Seek Support: Reach out for help; conversations can bolster emotional health.
- 24/7 Confidential Helpline: The Royal College provides support for podiatrists on 0800 389 0287.
- Maintain Balance: Set clear boundaries between work and personal life. Ensure time for relaxation and self-care.

# Loneliness and Isolation when Lone Working

## Impact of Isolation:

- Loneliness: Working alone can lead to feelings of isolation, which may affect both your mental health and work satisfaction.
- Disconnection: Lack of regular interaction with peers can make it harder to feel connected and supported.

## Strategies to Combat Loneliness:

- Regular Peer Check-ins: Schedule video or phone calls with colleagues to stay connected, share experiences, and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Utilise Support Networks: Join professional forums or social media groups for podiatrists to engage in conversations, share advice, and foster a sense of community.
- Implement a Buddy System: Pair up with another professional who works alone to regularly check in on each other's wellbeing.



Everyday life + work + home = PRESSURE

**Health Assured** - confidential counselling helpline,

Free, 24/7, 365 days a year, putting you in touch  
with qualified counsellors and advisors.

Providing you with counselling / bereavement support.

0800 389 0287 (quote HA148581 when calling)

<https://membersarea.rcpod.org.uk/membership/membership-benefits/wellbeing-support-service>

# Resources

E-integrity <https://membersarea.rcpod.org.uk/cpd2/eintegrity> - conflict resolution training

Lone Worker Devices and Apps <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/lone-worker-devices>

Speak to Health and Safety Reps – become a Health and Safety Rep!  
[employmentsupport@rcpod.org.uk](mailto:employmentsupport@rcpod.org.uk)

HSE: Managing the risks to lone workers  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm>

Any Questions?

[professionalsupport@rcpod.org.uk](mailto:professionalsupport@rcpod.org.uk)

02072348652