

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR MEDIATORS

Personal safety focuses on avoiding, reducing or managing violent or aggressive behaviour. We all have the right to live and work in safety and those rights are protected in law.

Service providers and individual mediators are responsible for risk assessment and personal safety in the work place and on home visits so mediators should be familiar with their service's Health and Safety policy and practices and Personal Safety guidelines.

Things to consider when you are planning a home visit:

- > Time and location i.e. where and when to meet a co-mediator (if you work in pairs) how to recognise them if you haven't met before and what to do if they are not there at the agreed time.
- > Travel arrangements.
- > Communication - how to contact your co-mediator, client or staff and/or someone at home, if there is a problem or change of plan.
- > If there is any indication of possible problems it is a good idea to have a contingency plan e.g. you can arrange for someone to call you, a code word or phrase to indicate what is happening and an agreed action plan.

Things to check before a visit:

- > client details
- > location of visit
- > access to the premises
- > pets e.g. dogs/cats if they are cause for concern

Things to take with you:

- > client details
- > map of area
- > torch
- > up to date contact list of co-mediators
- > mobile phone (if you have one) fully charged and switched on, a charge card or change for the phone
- > bus fare

Getting to/ from the visit:

- > Allow plenty of time so that you are not rushing.
- > Let someone know what time you are expected to finish the meeting and who to contact if you are late.
- > If you are driving, park your car in a well lit space and don't leave valuables where they can be seen.
- > If you work with a co-mediator, arrange to meet in a public place.

At the visit:

- > Assess the situation. Use your judgement. If your intuition tells you there is something wrong do not ignore it. You can always make your excuses and leave.
- > Maintain eye contact with your co-mediator (if working in pairs) so that you can signal your unease and enlist their support.
- > Stay calm, speak clearly and slowly. If you feel at risk leave as soon as possible.

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After the visit:

- > Talk through any concerns with your co-mediator on the way home.
- > Contact your supervisor for advice, help and support if it is required. Verbal abuse or physical attack (although rare) and intimidation can have long term, psychological effects. Even if the situation was handled calmly at the time some people experience a range of disturbing feelings afterwards including guilt, fear and anger so emotional support after an incident is essential.
- > All personal safety incidents must be reported to a named person in your organisation so make sure you know the appropriate procedure.

Legislation

You should check with your employer what health and safety legislation they consider relevant and get from them a copy of their health and safety procedures. You should also ask about your employer's risk assessment procedures, if there is available training and how you, as a mediator, would report any incident or concern.

Further Reading

A good source for relevant material about working safely in other people's homes, personal safety and reducing the risk of violence or aggression is the *Susie Lamplugh Trust* who have a website at www.suzylamplugh.org

Relevant Organisations to Contact

Victim Support Scotland - 15-23 Hardwell Close, Edinburgh. Tel 0131 668 4486

Bullying at Work - The Andrea Adams Trust. tel. 01273 417850



Scottish
Community
Mediation
Centre