

Personal Safety Guidelines during Doorstep Library Visits – guide for volunteers

Volunteers must:

1. Comply with any precautionary measures including guidelines laid down, including only visiting families in pairs;
2. Report to their Team Leader any unsafe or potentially unsafe situations, and report incidents in which violence or aggression or threats using the incident reporting procedure;
3. Take reasonable care for their own safety and not expose themselves to unnecessary risk;
4. Attend any training provided.

Guidelines:

- Always visit in pairs.
- During visits volunteers must carry ID badges visibly at all times.
- Know the estate: Without being “nosy” be chatty, tell them who you are and what you are doing – be positive.
- Use different routes on the estate so you can learn the layout (important for an emergency situation or to find another volunteer who may ring for help) and become familiar to the people who live there.
- Dress casually – do not stand out - leave your personal belongings and valuables at home or at base (jewellery, handbag etc) *except* for your phone in a pocket.
- Always have a mobile phone with you and switch it on loud – it is your responsibility to ensure your battery has enough charge or you may not be able to go out visiting families.
- Ensure that the Team Leader’s mobile number and all your volunteer team’s numbers are in your mobile (Team Leaders will send you termly phone number updates).
- **Always** answer the phone from a team member or staff even if in a family’s house. Your Team Leader will do the same, therefore only ring them in an emergency and text for everything else. Do not make/answer personal calls or have your phone out at any time during or in between the visits, except in an emergency.
- During the winter take a torch (supplied at base). **Do not** use your phone as a torch as this makes you a target.
- Leave the estate at the end of the session with someone else or Team Leader
- When door knocking: **Do not** go inside a home on the first meeting. There must be a ‘paper trail’ (i.e. the address recorded on the database/visit list). You also need to find out the relationship to the children of the person opening the door. If appropriate lend a book and/or just read a story on the doorstep.
- *The adult we know is not there, another adult opens the door, can we go in?* – If the adult is **expecting you** and invites you in, do so only if you feel

comfortable. If they aren't (or you feel uncomfortable) then suggest to come back next week or leave a book and a note. Always take your pack on your visits for the emergency phone number sheet, map, and Doorstep Library leaflets to explain what we do to anyone who asks/is suspicious.

Emergency Situations

- If you have any personal safety concerns when you arrive for a Doorstep Library visit or during it, do not proceed; apologise and leave promptly. Call the Team Leader.
- If you need help, call your Team Leader or another volunteer immediately.
- If feeling in danger or in case of emergency for you, another team member or Team Leader, err on the side of caution and call 999
- Step away from a situation, do not engage or intervene. If someone else is in trouble, do not go to the scene or put yourself in danger. Ring the police/Doorstep Library staff/volunteers as appropriate.
- There is a list of Doorstep Library phone numbers on the information sheet in your pack. If your Team Leader doesn't return or needs help, ring the Project Coordinator/Programme Manager/Director/Trustee.
- At base: if you are back before team leader and alone in building, lock yourselves in. Do not let anyone else in other than the Doorstep Library team.

Volunteer safety always comes first.

During a visit

- On arrival, take a moment or two to check exit routes. Ensure your option to exit is visible and accessible at all times.
- If you are sitting in a family's home, if possible, choose the seat nearest the door so that your exit cannot be blocked.
- If during the visit you become uneasy or uncomfortable with your surroundings, perhaps due to the arrival of another person, make an excuse (such as you've just received an urgent telephone message from the office that you've only just noticed on your mobile, or you need to put more money on the parking meter), apologise and leave.
- If the parent/ carer attempts to leave you alone in the property regardless of the length of time, explain that Doorstep Library Network's policy does not allow volunteers to remain in a family home alone.
- Never enter a home if parents are not present. Always make sure parents know you are there before entering – if a child answers the door, ask them to go and get their parents or call out yourself into the home to check it is ok. Make sure you at least hear verbal consent before entering.

If you feel threatened:

Do:

- Leave promptly

Do not:

- look flustered or look frightened - Stay calm, try not to take things personally
- respond or be drawn into an argument
- turn your back
- invade the person's space by leaning towards her/him or touching her/him
- Do not antagonise people by:

- Offering something that you or Doorstep Library cannot deliver, as it may cause disappointment and anger in the future i.e. Find a math teacher, solve problems, promise an after school club. Just listen to concerns or requests.
- Use labeling language which may cause offence and jeopardize the reputation of the project: Do not refer to “Poverty” or “poor” families - “Doorstep Library supports families in the community”. (We work in disadvantaged *areas*, not with disadvantaged families – this is an important distinction.)
- Always acknowledge the arrival of a newcomer - meeting people and making them comfortable is more important than reading a story or the project itself - suggest to cut your visit short.

May I:

- Give my personal contact details: No - Give the office number
- Invite a family to my home: No
- Invite a family member to meet outside of the session: No
- Being friendly is not becoming a personal friend - you are a Doorstep Library volunteer - Do not mislead people
- Talk to people in the street: Definitely if they approach you first, but do not be nosy - make them feel that it is nice to meet them
- Accept an occasional glass of alcohol: No
- Make a cup of tea: No
- Accept tea: Yes
- Move furniture: No
- Avoid causing accidents in the home; if there has been an accident - write down what happened and ask the Team Leader for a report form for insurance purposes
- Be extremely respectful of people’s space and privacy - remember outside the front door or in the hallway is often the best place to avoid disturbing the family – always offer this.
- Take your shoes off: Always ask.
- Enter without being invited: No. Always wait to be invited, and *a*lways ask if it’s convenient for a visit this week. Do not assume, however well you know the family.

Above all:

- Trust your instincts – Be yourself
- Be very polite
- Be alert
- Your first duty is to yourself
- If in doubt in any situation, leave as promptly as possible and share your concerns with the Team Leader who will support you.

ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT PROCEDURES

Any incident or accident to employees or volunteers during working hours, or which occur outside of but are related to work, must be reported in the **Accident Book**. Accidents to any other persons while on Doorstep Library premises must also be recorded in the **Accident Book**.

This report must be completed as soon as possible (note: anyone can report an accident, not just the injured party). The incident will be investigated by the employee's/ volunteer's immediate line manager and action taken to ensure the incident does not recur. All the information required and online reporting forms are available at the Health and Safety Executive website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm>.

Persons with minor injuries (cuts, abrasions, sprains) must be referred immediately to a qualified first aider or, if appropriate, the Accident and Emergency Department of the nearest hospital.

Specified reportable injuries (RIDDOR 2013 regulation 4) include:

- a) a fracture, other than to fingers, thumbs and toes; amputation of an arm, hand, finger, thumb, leg, foot or toe;
- b) permanent loss of sight or reduction of sight;
- c) crush injuries leading to internal organ damage;
- d) serious burns (covering more than 10% of the body, or damaging the eyes,
- e) respiratory system or other vital organs);
- f) scalplings (separation of skin from the head) which require hospital treatment;
- g) unconsciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia;
- h) any other injury arising from working in an enclosed space, which leads to hypothermia, heat-induced illness or requires resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours.

The Specified Injuries above that are dealt with by the Accident and Emergency Department must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

Major accidents must be reported immediately,

- a) death, fracture of the skull, spine or pelvis;
- b) fracture of any bone in the arm or leg, other than in the wrist or hand, or ankle or foot;
- c) amputation of a hand or foot;
- d) serious eye injury (including chemical injuries);
- e) electric shock requiring medical treatment or resulting in loss of consciousness;
- f) any other injury that results in hospital admission as an in-patient for more than 24 hours other than for observation).
- g) Any other injury to a member of the public that requires hospital treatment
- h) An incident resulting in unconsciousness