

Keeping Yourself Safe Whilst Volunteering

General Safety Tips

Every volunteering opportunity is different. However there are some general things you should keep in mind:

- Try to assess the overall risks you might encounter on your project, and plan how you can reduce or avoid these.
- If you are conducting a street survey or similar work off the University campus, ensure you work in pairs and are in a busy, public, well lit area.
- When in public places, take care of any valuable items, such as laptops. Make sure they are security marked and do not display them openly or leave them unattended.
- When going to meetings, focus groups or interviews connected with your volunteering make sure you don't go alone if at all possible, and make sure that someone you trust knows where you are and when you will be back. Make sure that they know what to do and who to contact if you do not get back at the agreed time. Neutral, public meeting places may be safest unless you need to visit a specific place, e.g. the host organisation's premises.
- Your volunteering activity will, as a rule, not require you to visit people in their homes. Any exceptions to this are where we have previous agreement from the host organisation and a member of its staff should accompany you on the first visit. If you are asked to do this without being accompanied, you must notify the Volunteering and Community Engagement Team before doing so (contact details below).
- When travelling to unfamiliar places in connection with your volunteering, ensure you plan your route in advance, have the bus times and print off maps if required. If you are still unsure, don't be afraid to ask directions from your volunteer host or venue that you are going to.
- Avoid confrontational situations - it is better to focus on your safety if you are being provoked or hassled. Move to a public area, and if necessary ask for help.
- When visiting or volunteering from an organisation's premises, you must follow any safety instructions you are given by them.
- If volunteering from the organisation's premises, it should provide you with a health & safety induction when you first start. If this is not done get in touch with the Volunteering and Community Engagement Team (contact details below). The health & safety induction should cover:
 - The organisation's general safety policy and procedures
 - Procedures to be adopted in the event of a emergency
 - Emergency evacuation, location of fire exits
 - Procedures for accidents/first aid
 - General security at the premises.

- Don't be afraid to ask questions if the induction does not clearly explain all these areas.
- If any of your volunteer activities involve working with machinery, hazardous substances or similar, this must have been part of the original volunteer opportunity description, and the organisation must provide training. You must not undertake this activity unless the organisation has provided this and you feel safe and competent to do this work.
- Always think about what you are doing and how safe it is. Make sure you consider the safety of others as well as yourself so that you don't endanger the people you volunteer with, whether staff of the organisation, the public or other volunteers.
- If you have concerns about your safety stop doing the activity. You must notify a member of the Volunteering and Community Engagement Team as soon as possible to discuss the concerns, so that appropriate action may be taken.

Contact the Volunteering and Community Engagement Team

We are based within the Student Development & Community Engagement Division at the University. This is located in Room 3.206/3.207 in University Place on Oxford Road.

You can contact us via:

Tel: 0161 275 2851

Email: volunteers@manchester.ac.uk