



## **Lone Working**

## **Compliance Code**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Lone working is defined as a person working without close or direct supervision and without contact from others. It can take place both out of hours and during the normal working day.

Lone working activities are a normal part of some roles within West Norfolk Academies Trust (WNAT) and include:

Working in premises where:

- only one person works.
- people work separately in isolated areas of a site, e.g., Cleaning Staff
- people work outside normal hours, e.g., Caretaking Staff or Teaching Staff working late.

They can also include:

Mobile or peripatetic workers operating away from their main location:

- in unfamiliar sites
- when conducting home visits
- when driving between West Norfolk Academies Trust (WNAT) sites

It is necessary therefore to ensure that safe working practices are in place to ensure lone workers are not at greater risk than other employees. The requirement will be determined by undertaking a work activity assessment and identifying if lone working is conducted at the site.

If identified, Lone working must be included in the site General Risk Assessment and this compliance code must be followed to identify suitable control measures.

Where the risk of lone working cannot be reduced to a reasonable level, alternative arrangements must be put in place. For example, if a home visit is deemed to expose staff to undue risk, then a two-person visits or the use of online meetings must be considered.

## 2.0 Carrying out a lone working risk assessment

This section provides further information to assist with assessing lone working risk where required. The risk assessment must consider the specific factors and the hazards involved.

Lone worker risks fall into three categories:

- **People** risk
- **Environment** risk
- **Task** based risk.

This system is often referred to by the acronym PET and is a useful tool when identifying risk and control measures required. For example:

**People** - Do the people the lone worker meets increase the risk, do they have a history of aggression or violence? Is the lone worker at greater risk because they are inexperienced? Is the individual's health a factor? Do they have a disability?

**Environment** - Does the environment the lone worker is exposed to increase the risk? Is there a phone signal in the area? Are they working in dangerous areas such as boiler rooms or swimming pools?

**Task** - Does the task increase the risk, is the lone worker communicating unwelcome news which can prompt a negative response? Does the task require the use of ladders or working at height?

The PET system will assist line managers when carrying out a lone working risk assessment and the lone worker themselves when they carry out a dynamic risk assessment.

## 3. Identify the hazard.

Activities need to be reviewed and assessed to determine the level of risk they present. To do this effectively consideration must be given to all roles within the school. For example.

- Teaching and teaching support staff – Do they work late? Do they conduct home visits? Do they work in high-risk areas (such as technology workshops or science labs)?
- Admin staff - Do they work alone in an office away from others?
- Site teams – Do they work out of hours? Are they often the only person on site? Do they need to use work equipment?
- Cleaning teams – Do they work individually? Are they close to others?

Once a hazard has been identified the risk must be calculated as per normal risk assessing. What is the likelihood that an event could occur and what is the consequence of the event?

Once a risk factor is determined it is important that suitable control measures are identified and shared with staff to ensure they are aware. The template attached to this Compliance Code should be used to record control measures and should be made readily available to all staff when complete.

### 3.1. Potential for violence and aggression

Some roles can expose staff to an increased potential of violence or aggression. Therefore, if this is the case, the hazards presented can vary in level of risk. The following table identifies key areas for consideration and should be used as a starting point:

PET	Hazard	Issues to be considered
<b>People</b>	The client	Previous history or dealings where violence or aggression has been a factor. Note - Where there is no history of violence this is not an indicator that there is no potential.
	Other people	Consider other people who may not be directly involved in the requirement but who could become involved if a situation is not controlled.
<b>People</b>	Staff	Factors which may increase or decrease the chances of violence and aggression occurring. This can include. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their competence (level of training, experience, cultural awareness etc.),</li> <li>• their role (e.g., representing authority)</li> <li>• their time management (e.g., arriving late for a home visit, etc.)</li> <li>• their personal mood and body language.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	The work environment	<u>Away from West Norfolk Academies Trust (WNAT) Sites</u> For example, a home visit to another person's property, visiting rural areas without lighting, court visits, hospital visits, driving etc.  <u>On WNAT Sites</u> Staff need to be able to raise the alarm in the event of an intruder on site.  Where there is the potential for violence and aggression involving a client, both staff and visitors need to be able to move to a place of safety if a difficult situation arises,  For example,  Safely exit the meeting room that they are working in by ensuring they are positioned to maintain a clear and quick exit route.
<b>Task</b>	Interaction	The interaction which takes place between the client and staff member,  For example, enforcing rules, carrying out inspections, asking questions about family backgrounds, carrying valuable items etc.

### 3.2. Physical hazards

For some roles the working environment and activities may present hazards and should be considered as part of the lone working risk assessment, for example:

PET	Hazard	Issues to be considered
<b>Environment</b>	Work environment.	<p>The level of risk varies from one working environment to another. Higher risk environments can include plant/ boiler rooms, Technology workshops or Science labs etc.</p> <p>Lower risk lone working environments can include working in offices or areas of the site whilst others are present but not within the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>There should be a safe means of arriving and leaving the workplace - this must be considered in the assessment. It can be difficult to achieve when working at premises which are not known or not under the control of WNAT, such as a home visit.</p> <p>Also consider use of third party owned equipment (e.g., during home visits) and poor lighting.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	Communication	<p>The use of land lines is becoming less likely and as such may not be available and dependence on mobile phones is standard.</p> <p>Phone signal, charge etc need to be considered.</p>
<b>Task</b>	Activity being undertaken.	<p>The level of risk varies by activity.</p> <p>For examples</p> <p>higher risk activities include working at height, working with clients who have complex needs, using potentially hazardous machinery.</p> <p>Lower risk lone working activities include attending meetings at another school belonging to WNAT and home working.</p>
<b>Task</b>	Plant, equipment, substances	<p>Consider the equipment used to carry out the work activity. Some equipment may not be easily and safely handled by one person, e.g., temporary access equipment such as ladders or trestles. Manual handling activities may also not be suitable for one person.</p> <p>Establish whether equipment can be used and controlled safely by a lone worker, for example, lifting hoists, handling aids, machinery etc. Consider what would happen in an emergency.</p> <p>Specific warnings may be provided by the manufacturer, or identified through the way in which the work is being done, that indicate a need to avoid lone working, for example, when using certain chemicals or hazardous substances and plant/equipment that may require two-person control or usage.</p>

### 3.3. Who is at risk (and when)

Consider who might be harmed due to the work activities, for example, employees, visitors and/or contractors. The following table provides details of some specific aspects for consideration when assessing the suitability of lone working:

Hazard (People)	Issues to be considered
New and expectant mothers	The ability to carry out physically strenuous work. Increased risk of falls due to changes in mobility. Risk of early labour or miscarriage through physical assault.
Young people	Lack of experience, understanding, risk perception and level of maturity.
Disability / Health / Age	Impact on ability to make unassisted evacuation. Response to situations and the effect on the individual. Ability to identify that evacuation is required. Increased likelihood of sudden illness or health issues.
New employees, trainees, including inexperienced volunteers	Lack of work experience and/or increased training needs. Lack of life skills and dealing with others. Less likely to be risk averse due to poor awareness.
Specific medical conditions	Some individuals may have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. These may include conditions such as uncontrolled epilepsy or diabetes. The consideration of medical conditions should include routine activities and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional demands on the individual.
Contractors	Unfamiliarity with site layout, emergency procedures and site hazards.

## 4. Controlling the risk

Control measures should not be overly restrictive as the process of risk assessing is to ensure that hazards are managed whilst allowing the task to continue. They should not be overly risk averse.

Whilst an assessment of roles and activities will assist in identifying foreseeable hazards there will be times where individuals may find themselves needing to adapt to an unforeseeable situation. In this type of situation there would be a requirement to conduct a dynamic risk assessment.

A dynamic risk assessment is:

“The continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing, in the rapidly changing circumstances of an operational incident.” It is conducted at the time using the available information and is not recorded. For example, People conduct a dynamic risk assessment subconsciously when crossing a road.

Once the unforeseeable risk has been addressed it is worth highlighting the situation and ensuring the control measures utilised are included within the lone working assessment so that other staff benefit from the information.

## 4.1 Unsafe lone working

In circumstances with all control measures in place, if the assessment identifies that it isn't possible for the task to be carried out safely, then lone working must not proceed. For example. Working at height using ladders is deemed to hold an unsuitable level of risk and is therefore not permitted during periods of lone working.

## 4.2 Withdrawing from lone working activity.

Staff conducting lone working should be made aware of the foreseeable control measures identified. However, they should also be encouraged to act decisively to ensure they are not exposed to undue risk irrespective of the stated control measures.

Managers must ensure that the lone worker is supported if they decide that they need to terminate the work they are carrying out to protect their own safety or that of others. For example, when visiting or interacting with a person who becomes verbally aggressive and threatening. This should also lead to a review of the risk assessment and arrangements for similar future work.

## 5. Review of Control measures

Line managers must ensure that control measures are regularly reviewed, and that feedback or information is obtained from those involved. This ensures that control measures remain suitable and effective.

Managers are also responsible for ensuring that the control measures are actively implemented by staff. This can be conducted by monitoring, discussion or conducting site visits but must be proportionate to the level of risk.

## 6. Mandatory control measures

Where there is foreseeable potential for violence and aggression, the following three risk categories and mandatory control measures apply. Some employees may fall into more than one category of lone working. Therefore, all control measures against each individual category shall apply in relation to the specific activity.

### 6.1 Risk category 1 (Low Risk)

Risk Category	Control Measures
<p><b>Category 1</b></p> <p>Staff working in offices or other secure locations (including those at other WNAT sites) <b>outside of normal working hours</b>.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teachers or Office base staff working after hours in their normal work location.</li><li>2. Teaching staff attending sports fixtures.</li><li>3. Caretaking staff carrying their normal role.</li></ol>	<p><b>Mandatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff must understand the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency such as fire alarm activation.</li><li>• Staff must understand the procedures for dealing with intruders.</li><li>• Staff must inform others of their location and intended departure time from site.</li></ul> <p><b>Security information</b></p> <p>How do they leave the site to ensure it is secured and who is responsible for site security such as locking up and setting alarms. Where have they parked and is the area well lit to ensure safety.</p> <p><b>Emergency information</b></p> <p>What to do, Who to call.</p>

## 6.2 Risk category 2 (Medium Risk)

Risk Category	Control Measures
<p><b>Category 2</b></p> <p>Staff travelling to and working in locations where security is minimal such as home visits.</p> <p>Staff travelling to other sites as part of their normal role.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An assessment of risk has been conducted considering any previous known issues including acts of violence or aggression.</li><li>• The location of the visit has been shared with managers and an expected time of arrival and return has been noted.</li><li>• Communication during the visit has been discussed and agreed upon. Considering mobile phone signal strength.</li><li>• A method of raising the alarm has been agreed upon and reactive measures discussed.</li><li>• Staff to ensure they park in a suitable location to ensure their safety and egress from the location if required.</li><li>• Staff aware of the need to ensure their vehicle is suitable and in good condition to minimise potential breakdowns.</li></ul>

## 6.3 Risk Category 3 (High Risk)

Risk Category	Control Measures
<p><b>Category 3</b></p> <p>Staff who conduct home visits or deal with individuals where a high level of risk from aggression or violence is known or expected.</p>	<p><b>Mandatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• staff dealing with clients known to be aggressive must receive training on dealing with confrontational situations.</li><li>• information given must include when to withdraw or stop work, communication arrangements and emergency procedures.</li><li>• a form of staff tracking system must be introduced and its use enforced. It is recommended that you use an automated system such as an SOS fob and/or lone worker phone application, that allows staff to raise alerts and request emergency assistance, if required. Alternatively, an effectively implemented buddy system can be used.</li><li>• staff must be briefed on the procedures for lone working before they start such work for the first time and at least six-monthly thereafter. Records of these briefings should be maintained.</li><li>• where a client presents a known risk of violence, the visit should be arranged at a venue where appropriate levels of security or assistance are available. If there are reasons for the visit to take place at the client's home then at least two people should attend, ensuring that means of escape/alarm raising are maintained.</li><li>• Staff should ensure they park in manner that allows them to leave unrestricted if required.</li></ul>

## **7. Personal safety - guidance on general lone working control measures**

### **7.1 Employee Health - Is the employee medically fit to work alone?**

If not, this must be discussed with the manager and adjustments made to work activities where it is needed. Are there any other health considerations? Does the employee have a health condition that would place them at a higher risk of serious illness if they were in contact with an infectious disease?

### **7.2 Is the employee pregnant?**

Review the suitability of a pregnant worker for lone working where there is a risk of violence/client/equipment handling. Ensure that lone working is included in the individuals' expectant mothers Risk Assessment.

### **7.3 Training and experience of employee**

Is the lone worker new, and/or inexperienced in this type of work? Has adequate information, instruction and training been provided (risk assessments) to carry out work activities safely? Is job shadowing or doubling up needed at this point?

Has the employee received appropriate training and are they competent in the ongoing assessment process, including factors such as maintaining a reaction gap, positioning within a home, awareness of potential weapons, understanding changes in behaviour and defusing difficult situations?

Arrangements must be in place for supervising lone workers, for example, periodically accompanying lone workers, buddy systems.

### **7.4 Security arrangements**

Are suitable arrangements in place and known, and visit planned/assessed in accordance with any local procedures? Does the individual understand the need to ensure the site is secure when leaving and who is responsible for this?

## **8. Personal safety – Guidance on lone working control measures for home visits.**

### **8.1 Advance Assessment Information - before you leave the office.**

#### **Telephone assessment.**

A telephone call before making a visit in person may assist in some circumstances to:

- Establish who will be present.
- Confirm the meeting time and duration.
- Establish what expectations the client has from the visit.
- Clarify issues which will not be able to be dealt with in advance.
- Eliminate the need to make a personal visit where appropriate.

#### **Plan the visit.**

Confirm directions prior to attending as due to the rural nature of the county Sat Nav is often unreliable. Consider using apps such as What3Words to pin point the exact location.

#### **Pre-Site visit**

Consider a site/area visit a day or so before the meeting to have a look at the general layout of an area. This doesn't mean that the employee needs to make themselves too conspicuous and they do not have to get out of the car.

#### **Inform others.**

It is important to inform others about the visit to ensure that people have an awareness to monitor person safety. Consider agreeing suitable 'call in' times if required or the use of coded messages to seek assistance without raising the alarm.

For example,

If called and asked for information in the blue folder the individual would know that assistance is required and that police services can be requested ahead of a situation escalating.

Are there arrangements in place to raise the alarm when needed?

Are there arrangements in place to ensure employee safety can be monitored based on the risk, for example, in-house buddy system and/or lone working device?

Would panic alarms be useful?

What panic alarm systems are already in place?

The following information must be accessible to anyone who would act as a responder in an emergency to these workers:

- Name, address and telephone contact of where you will be going.
- Time of the appointment, when it is expected the visit will be completed and the time the lone worker will contact their nominated colleague to let them know that the visit has been safely completed.
- The make, model, colour and registration of the car employee will be driving and the intended route to be taken or what transport will be used.
- Additional information such as What3Words to pin point the exact location.
- Any particular risk factors identified and the purpose of the appointment.

## **8.2 Client information**

Is there access to information about the client?

Where violence and aggression is known the information must be used to develop/inform the risk assessment.

## **8.3 During Visit - Dynamic Risk Assessment**

See Annex A to this compliance code for additional considerations

Maintain levels of awareness whilst lone working, the situation can change rapidly, and action may need to be taken if it does. A dynamic risk assessment is an active observation, assessment, and analysis of an active work environment, while work is ongoing, to identify and manage risk.

Do not enter a situation if it feels uneasy or that something is possibly wrong.

Is the lone worker confident that they have all relevant information and knowledge to continue to assess the risk and respond to a changing and challenging situation?

If there are factors which make it unsuitable to work alone, is it suitable to double up or to use an alternative venue that is safer such as a meeting room /other premises.

Consider police and/or another agency support if necessary.

If the planned visits change, then consider the outcomes of this prior to going ahead and ensure that the buddy, if used, knows that the lone worker's itinerary has changed and confirm a change in work itinerary with manager/buddy/recording system.

## 8.4 Additional Personal safety considerations

**Name Badges** – The risk assessment may identify that “no surname” or “no name” ID Badge is safest.

**Equipment** – Ensure mobile phones are suitably charged. Carry an in-car charger.

**Breakdown services** – Consider what to do should a vehicle breakdown occur.

**General** - Carry the minimum number of personal belongings (and valuables) and if at risk, consider that you may need to leave belongings behind.

If any employee feels uneasy about conducting a lone working visit, the matter should be discussed with line manager to establish if additional control measures are needed.

Do not enter someone’s home if you don’t feel comfortable or safe.

Do not enter a house if the client is not there.

Be aware of, and maintain, personal safety always during visits.

If running late or appointment needs to be cancelled, inform client.

## 9. Mobile Telephone considerations

Mobile phones are the main source of communication, and it is likely that all individuals have access to one. However, there are aspects to consider when relying on mobile phones in any situation. Such as,

- Is there a suitable signal available? If not, how can the individual raise the alarm if needed?
- Lone workers should ensure that their mobile phone is charged.
- Most mobile telephones can be used to make a 999 call when the phone is locked or where there is no signal. It is important that the employee checks this with their phone provider.
- Pre-programme the one touch dial function with the numbers most likely to be needed to use in an emergency and keep mobile phone in a pocket or an easily accessible place when lone working.
- Leave mobile phone switched on during meetings (put it onto silent or vibrate).

As stated, some areas do not have a good mobile signal and this must be considered as part of the risk assessment, for example, where appropriate the lone worker can extend the “call-in” time to include the travel they need to get back to a signal area. It is important that all factors are considered when deciding how to deal with the lack of signal.

### In Case of Emergency (ICE)

Emergency services will look for your ICE contact details on your mobile phone. Whilst this doesn’t prevent an incident, it does mean that you have made some provision for contact to be made in an emergency, if it were needed, for example, road traffic accident.

Some devices allow access to ICE numbers that bypasses the phone’s security to ensure emergency services can gain information. Where able this provision should be set up.

If there is no ICE function use your mobile phone contacts to store the name and number of someone who should be contacted if you have an emergency – but add the letters ICE in front of their name. Make sure you choose a number that is easy to get in touch with – a home number could be useless in an emergency if the person works full time. You can recommend day and evening numbers and call them ICE1, ICE2 etc.

Make sure that the person whose name and number is listed has agreed to be your ICE contact. The ICE contact should have a list of other people to contact on behalf of the employee in case of emergency. In addition, the ICE contact will benefit from knowing about any relevant medical conditions that could affect emergency treatment, including allergies or medication.

## 10. Using own car/vehicle

For most journeys the following would not be required however, it is good practice to plan for eventualities that may occur.

Is the route planned? Consider checking google maps or Waht3words to check the surroundings, plan where to park – don't park on a drive where there is a potential to getting blocked in, reverse into a space so driving away is straightforward and quick.

Is the car in good repair?

Is there a motor vehicle emergency kit in the car (that includes a torch, a reflective triangle and a high visibility vest)?

Keep a water/drink in your car. Keep a warm coat in the car.

Is the car/driver a member of a national breakdown service?

Travel with doors locked, particularly in urban areas. If windows are open, handbags and valuables should be kept out of sight.

At night, the car should be parked in a well-lit and busy place. Car parks where the car and the user will not be easily visible should be avoided.

Avoid leaving any personal information loose in your car, for example, personal post or insurance documents. It is recommended that such items are locked away or keep them in the boot.

## **11. Reporting incidents**

Violence at Work is defined as “assault, threat or abusive behaviour during the course of work duties”.

In situations of violence at work the primary action must be to get to a place of safety. After the incident, the manager should be informed of the incident and an incident report should be submitted on the WNAT incident reporting system.

As per the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) These incidents must be reported to the HSE and an investigation into the incident and ensure that, where possible, action is taken to prevent recurrence.

Debriefing may need to be arranged to allow the lone worker to talk through the experience as soon as possible after the event.

Please report all incidents, even if those considered to be minor or part of someone else's behaviour, it may still be an act of or perceived violence, even if involuntary, that needs to be flagged up to protect other people and other departments. This is to ensure that on subsequent interactions other staff members can be aware that behaviour may escalate, which may not have been anticipated by the employee. It is important that there is information available so that an informed assessment of the risks can be made.

## **12. Emergency arrangements**

Lone workers should be capable of responding to foreseeable emergencies through the development of planned arrangements and training, for example, fire, potentially violent situations and first aid needs.

Staff should be suitably competent via training and experience to manage potentially dynamic environments by using the PET acronym system approach to carry out dynamic risk assessments.

Wherever possible, a lone worker should withdraw from circumstances of escalating violence and aggression.

Where a lone worker monitoring system is used it must include a safe means to raise the alarm in the event of (a) failure to contact a lone worker and (b) an emergency request for assistance.

## **13. Risk assessment recording**

Lone working risks should be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. This should be determined when undertaking a work activity risk assessment. Where there are additional risks due to lone working the work activity should identify lone working as a hazard and a separate lone working risk assessment should be completed and referenced in the control section.

The WNAT General Risk Assessment Form available in the WNAT Risk Assessing Compliance code should be used.

## **14. Risk assessment review**

Lone working risk assessments must be regularly reviewed with employees. All incidents and/or previously unforeseeable risks must be reported by the lone worker as soon as possible, reviewed by the manager, and flagged on any systems which will warn other relevant employees of the risk. If no changes have occurred within a twelve-month period, lone working risk assessments should be reviewed at that point.

Managers must ensure that there are adequate reporting and feedback mechanisms in place which allow for new information to be gathered about any changes that impact on the risk assessment. Changes to working practice must be accessible and communicated to all relevant staff.

## Annex A to WNAT Lone working Compliance Code

### Home visit checklist

Door-Step – Quick Assessment for Home Visits	Working in other people's homes – Quick info (pre-meeting checks)
<p>Give yourself 10 seconds to assess your situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remember the route you have taken – steps, gates, paths, and lighting.</li> <li>– Look for signs that there may be animals on the premises.</li> <li>– Ensure your location is known to others and where required, lone worker tracking is operated.</li> <li>– Check whether you have a mobile phone signal and keep the phone in a place where you can use it quickly.</li> <li>– Keep your car keys in your pocket.</li> <li>– Keep your personal belongings to a minimum.</li> <li>– Listen for signs of arguments or groups of people inside.</li> <li>– Look at the type of lock on the door and remember how the door is opened.</li> <li>– Remember where you parked your car.</li> <li>– When the door is opened, introduce yourself and ask the person for their name (check that you are at the right place with the right person)</li> <li>– Assess what you see, hear, behaviour, inside lighting, smells.</li> <li>– Always check that the occupier wants you to enter before you do.</li> <li>– Only enter the premises alone if you feel comfortable to do so.</li> </ul>	<p>Remember the following points for home visits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Keep aware of your surroundings, situation, and changes.</li> <li>– Look at the physical layout of the room you are in and remember how to leave the premises if you need to.</li> <li>– Try and avoid sitting in a low comfortable chair that is difficult to get out of. Opt for sitting near to the door if possible.</li> <li>– Be prepared to politely refuse accepting a drink or food where appropriate.</li> <li>– Explain the purpose of your visit, the expected outcome, how long you expect to be and whether you need to take written notes.</li> <li>– If you are unable to answer any questions on the spot be prepared to give a time limit on getting back with an answer.</li> <li>– Consider how you would respond to a potentially violent situation, for example, reading body language, active listening skills, checking that communication is still effective and looking for signs of escalation in violent behaviour.</li> <li>– Know your own reaction to stressful situations so that you can take control of your response – your body language, speed, and tone of speech. Deep breathing to release tension will help you to maintain control.</li> <li>– Have planned responses for difficult situations – end the meeting if you need to.</li> </ul>

<p><b>If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, leave the premises immediately.</b></p> <p><b>From a place of safety, call your buddy/manager or call 999 if required.</b></p> <p><b>Report any incidents.</b></p>	<p><b>From a place of safety, call your buddy/manager and use an agreed code word or phrase. or call 999 immediately if necessary.</b></p> <p><b>Report any incidents.</b></p>
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