

Vogal Training Safeguarding Newsletter

This week we have seen the terrible news story of Sarah Everard who was kidnapped and murdered in South London.

Whilst this is an extremely rare occurrence, we thought this may be a good opportunity to revisit the topic of staying safe when walking home alone.

There are very simple steps we can all take to keep ourselves safe.

Always Have Your Phone With You

Always check before you start to walk home alone that you have your phone and that it has enough charge on it. This could prove to be invaluable in summoning help should an issue arise on your way home. It is also worth remembering that most mobile phones work as torches, which may be helpful if you walk home is at night.

Always, Always, Tell Someone Where You Are

Whether it is a text to a colleague, friend, family member or partner or a phone call to Mum/Dad, always let someone know where you are going and what time you think you will get there.

If you are making a longer than usual journey, it is a good idea to text at the start and end of the journey as well as at key points, e.g. when you have taken a bus/train/taxi, when you have exited from a bus/train/taxi. This provides a solid picture of where you are and when – key locations & key times.

It may seem over the top at first thought, but you must think of what would happen in a worst-case scenario where you were unable to contact anybody.

If something happens to you and you don't arrive home or at your location when you expect to, people can start looking for you as soon as possible. And they will know where to start looking.

There are also some handy apps available for android or iPhone that let you share your location with friends, family or co-workers (some phones have them pre-loaded so have a look as you may already have one that you can use).

Plan your route

Planning the direction in advance will allow you to project confidence as you walk and lessen the chance of finding yourself in a position where you are unsure of your surroundings. If for any reason you do get lost, do not wander aimlessly. Find the nearest shop, petrol station or restaurant to ask for directions.

Stick to well-lit, busy routes

Always stick to routes that are busy and well lit and try to stay in areas densely populated with houses. The shortcut across fields, through parks or down dark alleys may knock minutes off your journey, but it is not worth the risk.

Phone a friend (But don't text)

Call a friend or relative to chat whilst you're on your journey to let them know where you are. A chat can also calm you down if you're feeling nervous at all.

Stay on the line chatting until you reach your destination, whilst keeping focused on the direction you are taking. Although a chat can provide a welcome comfort for a walk alone, refrain from texting or playing games on your phone that will require you to look down and distract you from your surroundings.

Always Have A Method Of Payment With You

If you have to cut short your walk home for any reason, for example, if you feel uncomfortable or scared, if the weather has deteriorated or if you took a short cut and got lost, you will be able to pay for a bus/train/taxi and make you much safer when walking home alone.

If you take a taxi, always photograph the license plate and business license before you get in. Text this information to a friend, family member, partner or colleague so they have this information too.

Try to use a taxi company you are familiar with and have used before/regularly. There are some taxi companies with female drivers or female only taxi companies for ladies travelling alone who would prefer this type of service.

Look Confident

When you are walking home alone try to make sure that you look confident and self-assured, keep your head up and walk at a steady speed. Try to avoid doing anything that would make you look nervous or intimidated. Studies show that people who look confident give potential attackers the impression that they would put up a fight.

Trust Your Instinct

Always trust your gut instinct. If you start to feel uncomfortable for any reason phone a friend or colleague. Is there an alternative route you could take? Could you head somewhere more public?

Do you have a feeling that someone may be following you? Turn around to check. Don't approach someone who is following you, but sometimes just by simply making them aware you have noticed could make them go away.

The bottom line here is that if your walk home alone puts you into a situation or environment where you feel unsafe or scared it is essential you remove yourself from the situation and, if you need it, find help.

Carry a panic alarm/whistle

If you think there's a chance you could find yourself walking a route alone, at any time of day, carry a panic alarm or whistle in your pocket. Make sure it's always within easy reach to allow you to attract attention easily in the case of an injury or to act as a deterrent if you feel threatened in any way.

Use your phone as a flashlight

If the daylight fades on your walk home, make use of your phone's in-built flashlight to help guide you on the way.

Avoid Wearing Headphones

Avoid wearing headphones if you are walking home alone. It is great that we can listen to music, a book or podcast while we are out and about, but on a walk home alone, especially at night, you always need to be aware and alert.

It is so easy to get distracted and for a moment forget exactly where you are, which could be dangerous should you find yourself in a tricky situation.

Wear Suitable Clothing

This may seem like common sense, but can all be caught out by the rain or a thunderstorm. Check the weather forecast before you set off walking home alone. If it looks like the weather will be adverse, whilst it might not seem like a safety issue if you are cut off or trapped somewhere due to adverse weather, you will be more comfortable if you have appropriate clothing.

Do you have comfy shoes? If you need to make a quick exit is your footwear suitable for running?

How Much Are You Carrying?

Try not to struggle from the office to the car or home carrying a weeks' worth of shopping in multiple bags and a laptop. You should always try to avoid this if you can, especially if you have to walk home alone.

Carrying too much could mean you may be more vulnerable, as it stops you from being able to quickly use your hands or arms. It will also slow you down should you have to make an urgent escape.

Keep Your Keys Close

Always keep your keys close at hand when you are walking home alone. Many crimes are opportunistic and the sight of someone struggling to find something in their bag or coat is an ideal target for a criminal.

We want to make sure everyone stays safe so these tips are valuable and relevant to EVERYONE.

If you can, always avoid walking home alone especially at night, at times when there are very few people about and in areas which are remote, unfamiliar or poorly lit.

Make prior arrangements to share a journey with at least one other person or agree a designated driver in your social group who can drive everyone to their safe location.

Please feel free to share this information with colleagues, family and friends and make sure everyone is aware of the steps we can all take to stay safe if you have to walk anywhere alone either at night or during the day.

Phone Apps which you can download to help you stay safe by keep those that matter to you updated on your location include...

[Glympse](#)

[Zecure](#)

[Family Locator](#)

[One Scream](#)

[Red Panic Button](#)

[Hollie Guard](#)

[Life 360](#)

[Watch Over Me](#)

These Apps offer a range of service options, some of which are free and others for which they may charge a fee, so please review and find one which is best for you, most importantly **STAY SAFE**.