

Scottish Working People's History Trust (SWPHT)

Guidance for volunteers carrying out interviews

The vast majority of people who you interview will be absolutely genuine and pose no risks at all. However, as interviewing sometimes involves visiting people in their own homes with limited prior contact, it is important to consider possible hazards and how to minimise or avoid them.

Assess the possible hazards

- Are there any particular risks presented by the location of the building or area that you will be visiting? For example, is it isolated from other buildings or inaccessible by public transport?
- Will you be alone with an individual not known to you, in their own home or at a location away from other people?

Take steps to minimise risk

- Plan your travel to and from the interview location, think about the times you will be travelling (outward and return journeys), and if you are using public transport check timetables.
- If you have any doubts at all about visiting people in their own homes, arrange for someone to accompany you (with the prior agreement of the person you are visiting) or meet them at a suitable location where there are other people on hand.
- If you have not met your interviewee before, make the effort to check that they are who they say they are. Ring them back at a later stage, for instance.
- If you are visiting an individual or a group at a community centre or similar building, ask the organiser for clear directions, and check that the building will be open at the time you expect to arrive.
- Make sure that someone knows where you are going, and what time to expect you back. Agree with them what to do if you don't return when expected and haven't contacted them.
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason when visiting someone in their own home, trust your instincts. Make an excuse and leave.

Care for safety of people you are interviewing

- You may be interviewing older people who are living alone. Encourage them to think about their own safety as well, by providing them with proof of your identity and encouraging them to look at it carefully. You could also provide a telephone number for them to verify your identity before you arrive at their home.
- The SWPHT will provide you with a letter confirming that you are authorised to carry out oral history interviews on behalf of the Trust.

Adapted from East Midlands Oral History Archive Guidance for Interviewer.

Approved by the SWPHT, 10th January 2023