



Well-being and Personal Safety – a Guide for Councillors

January 2024

Councillor Wellbeing

The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales states that Councils should take every opportunity to support the well-being and personal safety of councillors and their families.

Support staff

All Councillors have access to the Health and Wellbeing Officer, based in the People and Organisation Service. Councillors can contact the Health and Wellbeing Officer directly for advice and support, however where adaptations are required, the Councillor must notify the Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services in order that an assessment can be conducted, and appropriate arrangements are put in place.

Councillors are also able to access the Employee Assistance Package (counselling). Details for accessing the Employee Assistance Package is available on Cerinet.

Training

Ceredigion County Council provides training to all Councillors on 'Welfare' and 'Health and Safety and Lone Working for Elected Members'. In addition there are e-learning courses available on a whole host of subjects including 'Display Screen Equipment' and 'Health and Safety'. Councillors are encouraged to complete all training provided as it may highlight issues where we can support you.

Financial Support

Where Councillors have chronic health conditions and/or are disabled, and where circumstances make councillors less able to engage with their roles and duties (for example due to caring responsibilities), Councillors should consider the support that is available to them.

Councillors are entitled to claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance, for activities that the individual council has designated official business or an approved duty which might include appropriate and reasonable preparation and travelling time. Such contributions must be linked to official business or approved duty and be for additional costs incurred to enable them to carry out those approved duties. Claims can be made in respect of a dependant under 16 years of age, or a minor or adult who normally lives with the Member as part of their family and who cannot be left unsupervised.¹

Further information

If you require further information, or would like to discuss your personal circumstances, please contact the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services or the Corporate Manager: Democratic Services.

¹ For more information, refer to the Members' Schedule of Remuneration.

Personal Safety

Contact Addresses and Sensitive information

Provision of electronic and postal addresses

Section 43 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires councils to provide electronic and postal addresses to ensure members' privacy and that of their families is preserved and protected.

Ceredigion County Council provides an electronic e-mail address to all Councillors. The Canolfan Rheidol address is published for each Councillor on the Council's website, and all mail is forwarded to Councillors electronically. Where mail has been marked as 'PRIVATE', it will be placed unopened in an allocated mail-box for individual Councillors at Penmorfa.

Removal of the members' addresses from the register of members' addresses available for public inspection

The Local Authorities (Amendments Relating to Publication of Information) (Wales) Regulations 2022 amend sections 100G (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Regulation 12 (1) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2001 to remove the requirement to make the register of members addresses and the register of members of the executive addresses available for public inspection.

Councillor addresses is not available for public inspection.

Register of personal interest and addresses

Part 4, paragraph 15 of the Model Code of Conduct requires members to register personal interests in the authority's register of members interests falling within a category mentioned in paragraph 10(2)(a), by providing written notification to the members' authority's monitoring officer. This includes any land and property in the authority's area in which members have a beneficial interest (or a licence to occupy for more than 28 days). However, it is sufficient for members to state that they own a property in the authority's area (for example identifying the road or ward) in order to discharge their duties under paragraph 15 of the Code.

The Ceredigion County Council Register of Interest form states that '*the full primary address is not required – identifying the road will suffice*'

Register of personal interest and sensitive information

Under paragraph 16 of the Model Code, members with their agreement, need not include information relating to any of the members' personal interests that is deemed sensitive information. In the code, "sensitive information" means the availability of the information for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that the member or a person who lives with the member may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

Lone Working

Lone workers are people who work alone for some or all of the time without direct or close supervision or support. This applies to Councillors when conducting surgeries, meeting residents or when they are out and about in their communities.

Working in isolated/rural areas

Mobile phones may not work in some areas. Before you start your journey, you should always consider how you could contact others if a problem arises, or if your car breaks down on a rural road. Always make sure that someone knows where you are going, and what time you are expected to return. Walk away from situations you consider threatening.

Ward Surgeries

Try not to hold surgeries alone in an otherwise empty building. If you are currently doing surgeries alone, discuss how this can be changed with fellow Councillors. Multi-Member Ward representatives may wish to arrange surgeries at the same time at the same location. Alternatively, you could book a room at one of the Council Offices, or community centre. If you are a member of a political party or group, they may have office facilities that you can use where other staff will be present in the building at that time, or if you are a Member of the Town or Community Council, you may wish to arrange to meet a member of the public immediately prior to the Town or Community Meeting, when you know that others are present in the vicinity.

Assessing Risk

The Suzy Lamplugh Organisations provides an useful tool for employees for assessing potential risk when working alone, which can be just as relevant to Councillors:

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=046a0410-030a-4b90-89bb-a48bed7b07d7>

It suggests the following questions for your checklist:

- Do I really need to make this visit/meeting and do I have to make it alone?
Could I ask the client to come to the office/centre?*
- Have I left all the relevant information on the white-board, in my diary and with a buddy? (If using a buddy).*
- Have I done my personal safety checks? (Considered the risks and thought through the 'what ifs').*
- Do I have a mobile phone that I can take, with emergency numbers programmed in? Is it charged and topped up?*
- Do I feel confident to go?*

It recommends that unless you can answer **YES** to all of the above questions or you are happy that you have put in other measures to keep yourself safe, then you should not go.

Please see the Personal Safety Checklist in Appendix A.

Social Media and Online Abuse

Training is provided to Members on Communication and Social Media. Members are advised to keep their personal social media and Councillor pages separate and to use a statement outlining the 'rules of engagement' for social media. Members are welcome to replicate Ceredigion County Council's statement:

"We ask that contributors respect fellow resident, businesses and our staff by following our community contributors guidelines.

We welcome comments and information that is relevant to the post topic.

Comments including those that insult or attack a person or organisation, those unrelated to the post, bad language or posts that are deemed offensive or extreme will be deleted with immediate effect.

Libellous or slanderous comments will be deleted with immediate effect.

Ceredigion County Council has a right to block a person or page and/or report to Facebook. Action to block a person or page and/or report to Facebook will be considered following a breach of these Community Guidelines or due to that person following or liking purely to promote a product or service, or merited spam."

The WLGA has also produced a document which provides guidance on social media, as well as useful tips on how to deal with online abuse, and it is recommended that all Councillors read and familiarise themselves with this document if they are using social media: [Microsoft Word - 130805 WLGA social Media Guidance for Councillors.doc](#)

If a Councillor has any concerns regarding online abuse, they should notify the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services immediately.

Risk of Serious Harm

Ceredigion County Council has a role in supporting the presence of an open, accountable and respectful political culture in local areas, however there is a need to be aware of the risks that come with high profile public service. Councillors may at times be at physical risk of harm – particularly where they are associated with unpopular or controversial decisions or issues.

Ceredigion County Council pro-actively seeks to understand where such risks emerge, such as controversial reports to be considered during meetings, and work closely with local police and other community safety partners to – where necessary – put in place protective arrangements for councillors.

There may be times when a member is in need of targeted, unplanned support for example, where councillors are the subject of attacks on social media which go beyond acceptable political discourse.

Ceredigion County Council provides training to Councillors on the safe use of social media, and further advice and guidance is available on the WLGA website, and an in-house e-learning module on 'Social Media Awareness'.

Where a Councillor believes that they are at risk of serious harm, they must notify the police immediately, and inform the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services to highlight their concerns in order that the Council can support police action where appropriate. Political parties may also provide advice to councillors on these subjects.

Incident reporting

All incidents reported to the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services will be recorded on the Council's Incident Management system. It is important that you share this information, in order that an appropriate assessment may be carried out, and to ensure that there is a record of any potential threats, should further issues arise.

Emergency Contact Details

Upon election, Members provided their contact details via the Ceri System. You need to ensure that these details are accurate, in order that we can contact your family / next of kin in the event of an emergency, should it be necessary. Please check the Ceri Self-Service pages to ensure that the information is up to date.

Useful CCC Contact Details

The main enquiry lines are:

CLIC (General Enquiries): 01545 570881

Council Tax / Housing Benefit Enquiries: 01970 633253

Social Housing / Homelessness: 01545 574123

Opening hours for the Contact Centre:

Monday to Thursday: 08:45 – 17:00

Friday: 08:45 – 16:30

Emergency numbers for out of hours:

Highways and Environmental Services emergencies:

North Ceredigion: 01970 625277

South Ceredigion: 01239 851604

Social Services emergencies: 030 456554

Other useful information:

WLGA

- [Personal Safety for Members](#)
- [Social Media: a guide for councillors](#)
- [Councillors guide to handling online abuse](#)

Local Government Association:

- [Personal Safety Guidance for Councillors \(LGiU\)](#)
- [Basics on communicating with residents, colleagues and officers](#)
- [Councillors' guide to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation](#)
- [Practical advice for handling online abuse](#)
- [Practical advice for handling physical abuse and personal security](#)
- [Practical advice for handling psychological abuse and impact on wellbeing](#)

Other Resources

- [The Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)
- [Get Safe Online](#)
- [Recognising the terrorist threat guidance](#)

Personal Safety Checklist

Running a Safe Surgery – Risk Assessment

Members hold surgeries and meetings with constituents in a wide range of locations and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to security. Nevertheless, there are some practical points to consider, many of which are likely to be relevant – and remember REVIEW each surgery after it has finished – do you need to change anything?

Think about the following	Tick
Liaise with and get to know local neighbourhood police and, if applicable, any on-site security staff; ensure that these contacts know the dates and times of surgeries.	
Ensure that a partner/colleague/friend is aware of the location of proposed meetings and the expected time of return; have a prearranged system of what to do if that time has passed; carry a mobile phone/phone card and ensure that someone is notified if there is a change of plan, you are delayed, or that you have returned safely.	
Wherever possible have someone else present during meetings so that they can assist or call for help if necessary.	
Check the mobile phone signal in the room and other parts of the building which you will use	
When choosing a venue also identify a safe area with an escape route which can be used in an emergency	
Ensure that the table or desk to be used is positioned between you and your constituent and that your chair is nearest the door/exit and ensure that your pathway is not blocked, for example by furniture, if you need to leave in an emergency.	
Remove any articles that could be used to cause harm e.g. water glasses and jug; or sharp objects.	
Have a plan for what you and your colleagues would do in an emergency and review it with them regularly	
If appropriate leave the door ajar; or use a room with a door with a view panel; never lock yourself into a room with a stranger	
Agree a key phrase to alert staff in the event of an emergency.	
Have a mobile phone at hand with a pre-dialled number for use to call for assistance	
If using a regular venue, consider installing a panic button, preferably attached to a monitored alarm system.	
If you are arranging to meet a constituent you have concerns about, consider the option of arranging the meeting in a Council managed location such as Council Offices, Libraries or Wellness Centres where there are arrangements in place for visitors and an individual can be screened on arrival.	

Consider the risks of advertising your whereabouts in advance on social media (e.g. Twitter) where your intended movements can be monitored anonymously by fixated individuals.	
Ensure your GPS is disabled on social media apps such as Facebook that have public access that enable your movements to be tracked.	
Make sure you alert the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services if you start to receive threatening or malicious communications from individuals or groups as this merits further investigation. You can ask the Corporate Lead Officer if you have any concerns about a person; or raise concerns that can be investigated about a person who has been threatening and violent to you	
Where a constituent requests a meeting concerning a grievance against the Council, it is suggested that the Service Area be contacted prior to any meeting to confirm factual information. If there has been threatened or actual violence to Council staff, Councillors will be informed and appropriate steps taken e.g. only meet in Council premises, have two persons present.	
Do not carry cash or valuables and do not openly display 'desirable' objects such as mobile phones, laptops etc. If challenged, comply with any demand to hand over valuables	
If there is a confrontation and members of the public are abusive or violent, contact the Police where appropriate, but ensure that an Incident Report is completed. It is foreseeable that staff will also be required to deal with this person following your meeting and they may need to be informed that there is a grievance and potential for abuse/violence.	

Your safety Out & About – Risk Assessment

Think about the following	Tick
As a recognisable figure, you may be stopped by constituents or others in the street and other public places. In such circumstances it is important to adopt a pragmatic approach to your personal safety and where applicable, that of your family and your staff.	
Be conscious of people's body language and behaviour, trust your instincts and remove yourself from the situation if something does not feel right.	
Do not isolate yourself.	
Do not arrange to meet an unknown constituent without staff/colleague/partner or friend knowing where you are, how long you expect to be and how to contact you.	
Check the mobile phone signal	
Report suspicious behaviour, concerns or threats to the Police.	

Security at Home – Risk Assessment

It is important to be aware of your surroundings at home and at your office and to encourage your family and staff to do the same so that unusual or suspicious behaviour may be easier to spot. You may also wish to consider the following:

Think about the following	Tick
Check security and robustness of external doors and consider fitting lever mortice deadlocks to external doors if replacing; ensure windows are fitted with a good lock appropriate for the window type.	
Check for signs of a break in before entering and call the police if you think someone might have broken in or if you notice anything unusual such as an open door or window.	
Ensure you have adequate lighting around the perimeter of your home at night and consider using an automatic device or leaving some lights on if it will be dark when you get home.	
If you use a car, be alert to any visual changes to your vehicle.	
If you notice anything suspicious, contact the police and do not enter the vehicle.	