

Personal Safety for Councillors

Miranda Smythe
The Baikie-Wood Consultancy Ltd



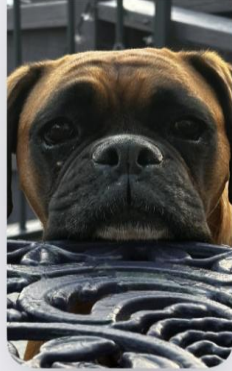
#DebateNotHate

Programme overview

1. Principles of personal safety
2. Use of mobiles and technology
3. Personal safety tips:
 - Being safe out and about
 - Unsolicited visitors to your home
 - Safe surgeries
 - Visiting residents in their own home
 - Canvassing.

In Case of Emergency (ICE)

[Cancel](#) New Contact [Done](#)



[Edit](#)

ICE 1

Sami Urman

Partner

- mobile >	07971 234567
- home >	01234 567890

Useful telephone numbers

101 Non-emergency police

999 Police, fire, ambulance, coastguard

112 Police, fire, ambulance, coastguard

Silent solution or silent plea:

999 or 112

When answered, press 55 on telephone keypad.

Texting 999 or 112



Emergency satellite calls and texts

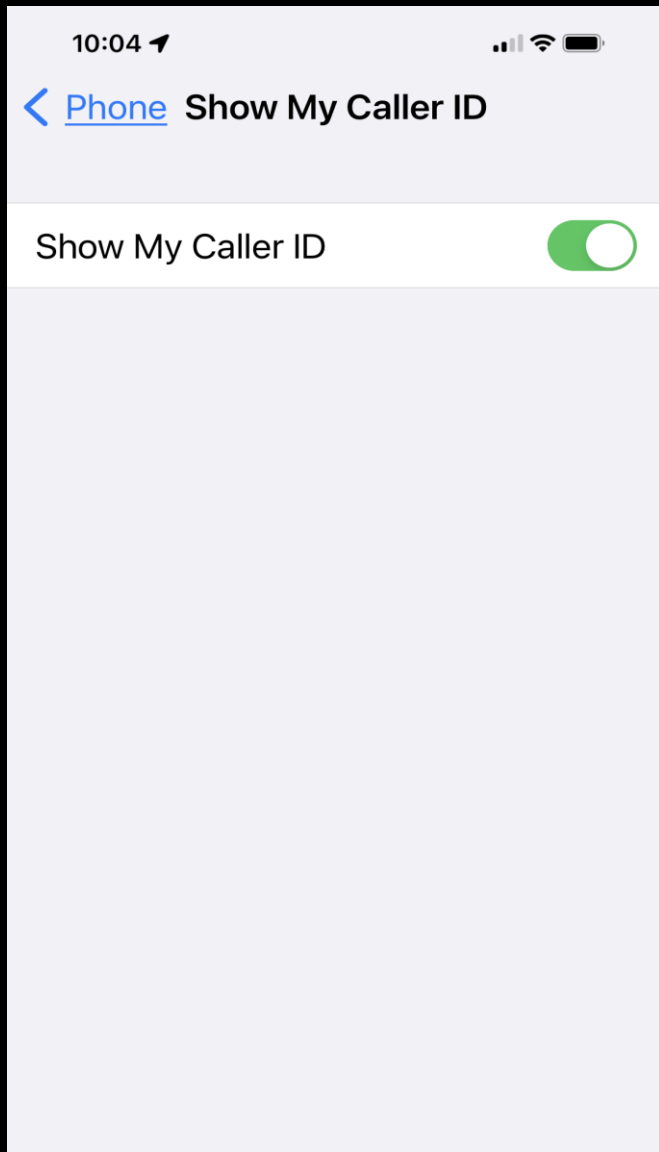


Apple iPhone 14 or above
Google Pixel 9 series
Samsung Galaxy S25 series
Motorola Razr

To withhold a number from landline OR mobile, dial...

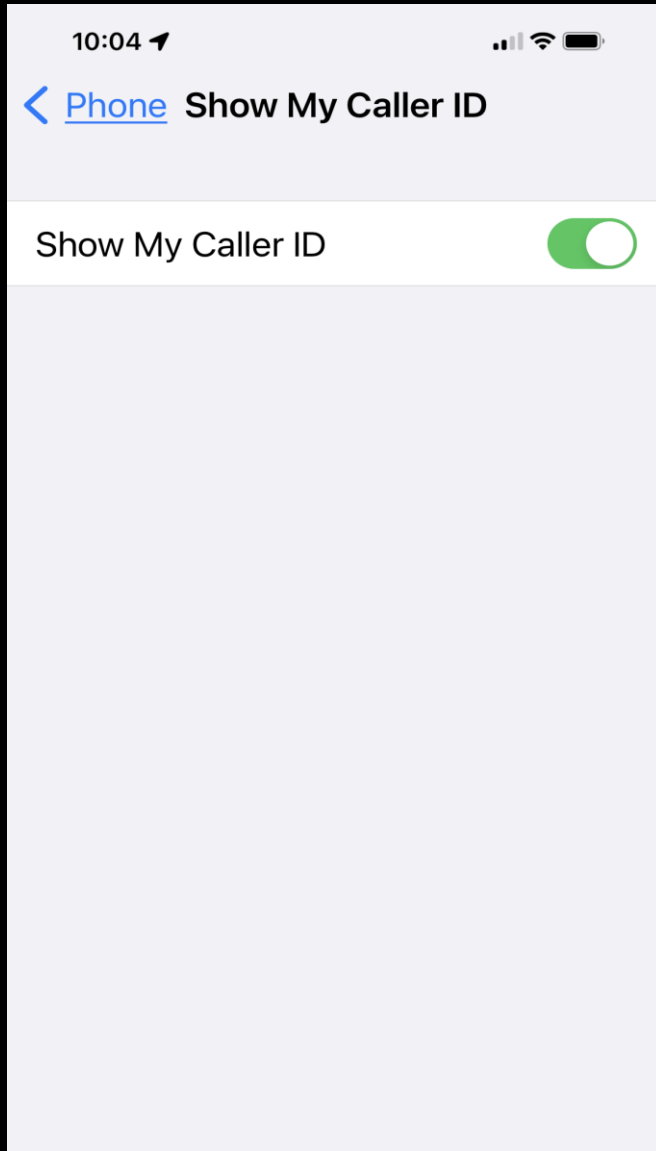


Then dial the full telephone number you want to call



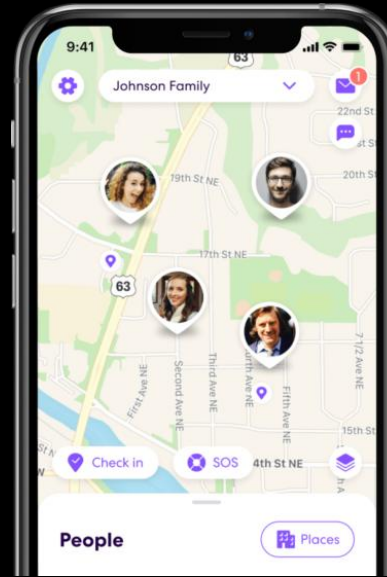
Turning user ID
off on your
telephone

Turning user ID off on your telephone





Hollie Guard



Life 360

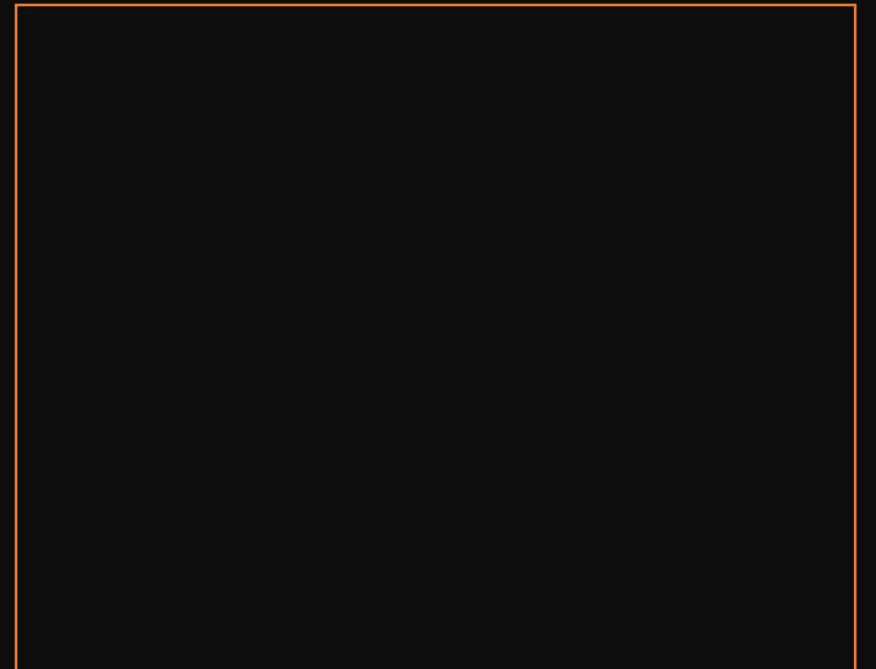
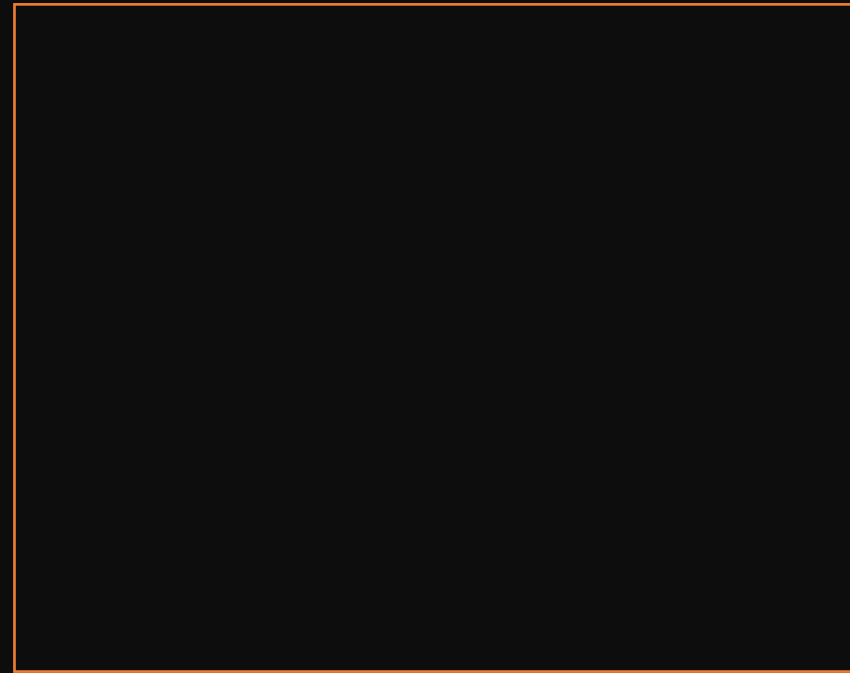


Bsafe

Safety Apps

Pedestrianship

- Route
- Clothing
- Name badge
- Bags and valuable items
- Use of telephone/earphones
- Confidence
- “Please may I speak to Angela?”
- Personal alarm.





0333 335 0026

Fridays & Saturdays: 19:00 - 03:00
Sundays: 19:00 - 01:00



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Strut Safe is a UK-wide phone line. If you're walking alone, our volunteers will be a friendly voice to keep you company and help you feel safe until you are through the door.

Strut Safe is proud to be the winner of the 2023 Young Scot Community Award.



**Unsolicited visitors to
your home**

Personal information - council

- Choose to use a qualifying address on your ballot paper
- Use your council's address as your contact address on their website
- Talk to the Council's Monitoring Officer - Register of Members' Interests.

Personal information – public domain

- Using “incognito” mode, carry out a vanity search
- Submit a Google Remove request:
<https://support.google.com/websearch/troubleshooter/3111061?hl=en>
- Set up a Google notification which alerts you when information about you is published online: <https://www.google.ca/alerts>
- Make a request to blur your home on Google Street View:
<https://support.google.com/maps/answer/15439776?hl=en-GB>
- To find out who owns a website: <https://lookup.icann.org/en/lookup>
- Remember to check Companies House – Directorships and Trusteeships.

Unsolicited visitors

- Could try a deterrent notice: “no uninvited visitors”

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- Could try a deterrent notice: “no uninvited visitors”
- Install a digital doorbell
- Fit a simple chain
- If you choose to answer the door, take your 'phone with you
- Talk on the doorstep
- Signpost the caller to your next surgery or arrange a telephone call
- If it's an adrenalised group, secure your door and contact the police
- Never invite someone you don't know - or trust - into your home
- For persistent offenders, seek advice from the Council or your Operation Ford named Officer.

Harassment and stalking

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Harassment

- Sending abusive text messages or images
- Posting abusive messages on social media
- Neighbour disputes that involve abusive behaviour or damage to property
- Repeated antisocial behaviour
- Making unwanted or offensive phone calls

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Stalking

- Following someone
- Going uninvited to their home
- Hanging around somewhere they know the person often visits
- Watching or spying on someone
- Identity theft
- Fixated, obsessive, unwanted or repeated behaviour

If you have any concerns...

- View the video on the National Stalking Helpline:
<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/am-i-being-stalked-tool>
 - Collect evidence without making yourself vulnerable
 - Identify witnesses
 - Let other people know that you have an issue
 - Doing nothing is not an option
 - Seek advice – Operation Ford contact, Monitoring Officer and external agencies
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-

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Threats and intimidation

- Immediate threats that compromise your safety: police on 999 or 112
- To report a non-immediate incident dial 101 or speak to your Operation Ford officer
- You can report incidents online: [Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](https://www.police.uk)
- Cyber threats can be logged online: [The Cyber Helpline - Victim Advice Line](#)
- Remember to report the incident internally and to your political group.

Case study

You hold your monthly surgery in a community centre and are usually allocated a room directly off the main hall. It's a good environment, with clear exits and a busy footfall around it.

When you arrive, you are told that this room has been allocated to another meeting. All the other rooms are already occupied.

You are shown down to the lower level of the building, to an isolated room at the end of a long corridor, which has zero mobile signal.

It's going to be a busy surgery... what would you do?

Choosing your surgery venue

- Busy footfall
- Decent-sized room
- Good exits
- A vision panel in the door or a window
- Without an internal door lock
- Strong mobile signal, wi-fi or a landline
- Monitored CCTV/alarm
- Councillors who have a disability may need to consider additional environmental needs
- Risk assess your environment:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

Safe surgeries

- Work in pairs or teams
- Use a table to create space
- Sit opposite
- Nearest the exit
- Choose a chair with arms for you and without for your visitors!
- Keep the table clear, and your hot drink on the floor by your chair
- Ask your companion to wait until your last meeting has finished
- Manage conversations sensitively.

Planning a home visit

- Consult with the relevant council team
- Ask internally – Unacceptable Behaviour register
- Check the resident's name against the Electoral Register
- Ask the resident who else will be in the property – people and dogs
- Organise a companion to go with you – mixed pairs can work well
- Agree code words so that you can communicate discreetly
- Travel light.

Case study

You have agreed to visit an elderly resident to discuss a housing issue.

When you set up the meeting, you asked if anyone else would be there, and the resident said they would be on their own.

When you arrive, the door is opened by a younger person. You hear other voices in the background plus several dogs barking inside the house.

What would you do?

When you arrive....

- Knock at the door, then step back to create space
- Tilt your body sideways
- If you can, talk on the doorstep
- If you intend to go in, carry out a doorstep assessment
- Use your senses: vision, hearing, smell, gut feel...
- If you are uncomfortable going in, make an excuse and leave
- Take care with loose dogs.

Canvassing

1. Form pairs or teams
2. Plan the areas you intend canvassing
3. Agree whether you will include no cold calling zones
4. Establish your ground rules
5. Exchange numbers/create a WhatsApp group
6. Discuss prior knowledge of properties to avoid (party list)
7. Agree coded signals
8. Start together: finish together.

Other canvassing tips

- Canvas during daylight hours
- Check for signage before you knock
- Judge whether to have a conversation
- Do not enter a property
- Notice where your colleagues are
- Use a spatula to post leaflets
- Report any aggression/threats to your Monitoring Officer
- Follow advice given in the LGA's:

[Seven principles for safer canvassing: A guide for councillors and candidates | Local Government Association](#)

Incident reporting

- Language
- Threats – to you or to others
- Stalking or harassment
- Hate crimes
- Damage to property
- Theft or attempted theft
- Physical violence.

Programme review

- Principles of personal safety
- Use of mobiles and technology
- Personal safety tips.

Useful Resources

LGA Guide to handling online abuse:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/practical-advice-handling-online-abuse>

To make a complaint to Ofcom under the Online Safety Act:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/complaints/online-services-sites-apps>

Government guide for politicians using Twitter:

<https://www.parliament.uk/contentassets/358409c9ef7d47f89412becd40f7d8e2/digi096cipr.pdf>

The Cyber Helpline (Stalking)

<https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/guides/cyber-stalking>

Police online incident report form:

<https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/guides/cyber-stalking>

To report hate crime:

<https://www.police.uk/ro/report/hate-crime/hc-av1/report-hate-crime/>

To check who hosts a website:

<https://lookup.icann.org/en/lookup>

Meta - Facebook/Instagram/WhatsApp/Threads

Meta safety centre

<https://about.meta.com/actions/safety>

Crisis support resources (you need to select UK in drop-down menu)

<https://about.meta.com/actions/safety/crisis-support-resources>

Online safety for women in government

<https://www.facebook.com/government-nonprofits/blog/online-safety-for-women-in-government>

Tips to protect your Facebook and Instagram accounts

<https://www.facebook.com/government-nonprofits/blog/tips-to-protect-your-facebook-account>

TikTok

<https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/safety-privacy-controls/>

<https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines/en/>

WhatsApp: Staying safe on WhatsApp

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/1313491802751163>

X (formerly Twitter)

<https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security>

YouTube

https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803240?hl=en&ref_topic=6151248

Keeping your family safe:

<https://peoplesafe.co.uk/blogs/safeguarding-democracy-addressing-personal-safety-fears-during-election-time/>