

Lone Working Guidance Note for HBOS Artists and Makers

Hebden Bridge Open Studios, being an organisation of artists opening their own studios and home studios, without the benefit of non-artist support staff for during the event, cannot guarantee the safety and wellbeing of artists opening their own homes and studios during HBOS events. Open Studios necessarily involves artists having an open door policy to strangers during the event opening times.

The HBOS committee wishes to support lone working artists and makers during our events, and has produced this guidance note of suggestions for actions and behaviours that each lone working artist should consider to enhance their individual safety during the event.

Please rest assured, threatening visitors are the exception and not the rule, and there will be a host of lovely, interested and supportive people visiting your home or studio, but being prepared reduces any potential for discomfort or worry.

This is a non-prescriptive list of suggestions that may or may not be right for you.

1. **Be prepared – read this note and have a think** about what you need to do (and buy), if anything, before the HBOS event, and also what you would do if you had issues during the event.
2. **Consider if the best option for you is to have someone with you.** Maybe a friend can spend the day with you during the HBOS event, or you can plan to do a studio share for the next HBOS event with you and another HBOS artist sharing one person's studio space, so you're not alone. We appreciate this won't be possible for everyone.
3. **Buy a personal attack alarm** and have it on you during the event, e.g. in a pocket. Buy one with a high dB rating. It is possible to buy USB rechargeable alarms. Alternatively, you may have a house alarm which you can trigger remotely, e.g. via a phone app – if you have, make sure the app is updated and open on your phone to make it quick to use.
4. **Consider putting up signage by the door which states you use CCTV** on the premises. You buy signs cheaply online. You may even want to install a dummy (or working) CCTV camera, or maybe your smart doorbell is already recording everyone coming on to the premises.
5. **Change the layout of your studio space** so you cannot become physically trapped by a visitor – have a desk that you can access from more than one angle, so you aren't physically unable to move away from someone invading your personal space or being threatening. Do you have a second exit you could use in an emergency such as a back door or fire exit?
6. **Consider joining together with other lone working artists nearby to make your own small network.** You could each use a laptop to have a WhatsApp video call running all day, with everyone on mute, so you can all see each other's spaces. If an issue arises you can

unmute your connection letting all of the others know you're not comfortable with a visitor / don't feel safe.

7. **Consider asking a studio group nearby, if there is one, if you can join their WhatsApp group** for a few days so you can message or call the group if there is an issue during the event. If you sent a message one person from the shared venue group can pop to your location to check on you, whilst others in the shared space mind their studio. Perhaps those in a shared setting can take it in turns to periodically check in on lone working artists nearby as a way of stretching their legs.
8. **Can you let a neighbour who will be at home over the course of the event know you will be alone**, and ask them to have their notifications and ringer on their phone in case you need support from them?
9. **Consider what you will say if you do feel threatened and need to act immediately.**

Maybe say "I'm having to close now for a short while, please can you leave." Don't feel you need to give a reason, though you can always prepare an excuse in advance.

If that first statement doesn't get the person out of your space, next you might say "You need to leave now, or I will call the police."
10. **Can you do anything to your mobile phone settings in advance to allow you to make discretely calling the police easier**, as you might be in a situation where doing so overtly would not be easy or possible? On iPhones you can turn on 'Emergency SOS' settings, within 'Settings', which include toggling on options such as calling 999 with 5 side button presses, or calling 999 by pressing and holding the side button at the same time as a volume button. Android phones may have equivalent safety settings you can turn on.
11. **Have your mobile phone ringer turned on during the event**, so if people are checking in with you they can get through. Ask those in supporting groups such as local studio groups, to make sure they do the same, so any calls for help will get through. Consider turning on text and WhatsApp notifications (beeping noises) so you are fully connected during the event.

This note is intended to support lone working artists and makers to make the choices that are best for them, and support each HBOS members in preparing their event risk assessment for their studio / home with consideration of all potential risks.

Difficult or threatening visitors are very rare, but thinking about how you would respond and putting a system in place in advance is advisable.

HBOS Committee, May 2025

