

Language Assistants Programme 2024-25

Staying safe in person and online in the UK

The UK is generally a safe place to live and work with low crime rates and trusted police and security forces. The vast majority of Language Assistants spend their time in the UK without incident. However, crimes do still occur, and it's always best to be cautious and keep the following guidance in mind.

Key guidance on staying safe

- Fraud is a common crime in the UK and some criminals will deliberately target younger people and newly arrived workers. If you are asked for money or information, over the phone, online, or in-person, always stop and challenge the request. Read more advice on staying safe from fraud, scams, and phishing in the relevant sections below.
- Be aware of pickpockets, especially in larger cities, and keep your valuable hidden to deter thieves.
- Do not leave your belongings unattended in bars, restaurants, or libraries.
- When travelling by tube, tram, or train services at night, choose a carriage with other people.
- When walking at night, plan your route and where possible stick to well-lit, busy streets. Many town centres can be busy and noisy on Friday and Saturday nights when pubs and clubs are closing.
- Never take an illegal taxi and be suspicious of any strangers who approach you offering a lift. Always book in advance through reputable taxi companies and check that the booking details match those of the car and driver before entering the vehicle.

- Be careful to protect your PIN at ATMs and try to avoid carrying around large amounts of cash.
- It is a sensible idea to make copies of your personal documents such as your passport and where applicable, Biometric Residence Permit, and to keep these in a separate, safe place.

Personal safety

During your time in the UK, you will have lots of opportunities to get to know and explore the UK. When travelling somewhere new, it's worth remembering the following:

- Make sure you know where you are going and how you are going to get there.
- Tell a friend you trust and/or family where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Make sure your phone is charged.
- Always trust your instincts; if you feel uncomfortable then don't be afraid to leave.
- Plan and research the areas and places you will visit in advance, ensuring you avoid any areas which are not considered safe.

You can read further guidance about keeping safe on the [Suzy Lamplugh website](#).

Fraud, cyber scams, and phishing

There are many criminals who may target you with scams and fraudulent schemes, so it is important to be vigilant.

A phishing attack occurs when someone impersonates another person to steal your password or personal information. This often happens through fake emails or messages that look legitimate, leading you to a fake login page where they can capture your details. Hackers may also try to trick you over the phone by posing as your bank, the Home Office, UKVI, HMRC or a similar organisation and pressurising you into immediate payments.

To protect yourself, follow the advice from the [Take Five](#) stop fraud campaign:

1. Stop. Take a moment to stop and think before sharing your money or information with anyone.
2. Challenge. Ask yourself, could it be fake? It is okay to reject, refuse, or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
3. Protect. Contact your bank immediately if you think you've been scammed and report it to Action Fraud at actionfraud.police.uk or on 0330 123 2040.

Other tips to protect yourself:

- Never click on links from emails or messages asking for login details.
- Instead of clicking links, visit the app or website directly.
- If you receive a call from your bank, hang up and call back using the number from your bank statement or card.

- Be cautious of calls asking for money or personal information. Verify with your bank or relevant authorities before sharing any details.

You can read more about scams and what to do on the [UKCISA website](#) and on the [Action Fraud](#) website.

The police in the UK

To contact the police in the UK, **call 999** from any UK phone in an emergency where immediate assistance is required for example a dangerous incident, serious accident, or to notify the police of a crime in progress.

You can **call 101** to report a non-emergency incident (such as suspicious behaviour or a minor crime that has already occurred).

If something is stolen from you, or you are the victim of a verbal or physical assault, you should always report the incident to the police. Part of the role of the police is to offer support to victims of crime and to provide helpful advice on staying safe. You can ask your host institution for support when reporting an incident.

If you are the victim of a theft, the police will give you a crime reference number which you will need for any insurance claim you make. We recommend that you take out insurance which covers your possessions in the UK.

Money laundering

Please be very cautious about letting anyone you don't know deposit money into your bank account. Fraudsters may ask you to receive money into your bank account and transfer it into another account, keeping some of the cash for yourself. If you let this happen, you're a money mule. You're involved in money laundering which is a crime. You can read more on the [Don't Be Fooled website](#).

UK law

The [laws in the UK](#) may be different from your home country. You must not carry or use illegal drugs, and the penalties for drug possession can be severe. It is also illegal to carry any kind of weapon, including knives and mace. There are laws that prohibit buying alcohol or cigarettes for anyone under the age of 18 and you should be careful not to buy stolen goods.

If you are arrested by the police on suspicion of having committed an offence, you are entitled to free legal advice from a solicitor in England and Wales. This differs slightly with [Scottish legal advice](#) and [Northern Ireland legal advice](#). You can also contact your home country's embassy or high commission in the UK who should be able to provide you with consular support.

Your home country embassy

You can use the following website to find contact details for your home country's embassy in the UK: [Foreign embassies in the UK](#). We strongly advise that you research your own home country's embassy in the UK in advance and know how to contact your embassy in the case of an emergency. It is important to note that embassies are not able to assist in all situations and you should take time to read what they can support you with as soon as possible rather than when you find yourself in an emergency.

Driving in the UK

You must have a valid driving licence to drive in the UK: it is a criminal offence to drive using a licence that is not valid in the UK. An international driving licence is not valid proof of driving entitlement. If you have a driving licence issued in your home country, there are certain conditions that affect how long you can drive, and what you can drive in the UK. You can read more about driving in the UK on the [UKCISA website](#).

For rules and regulations about driving in the UK, you should refer to the [Highway Code](#).

We would like to acknowledge the following website produced by Chevening in the preparation of this guidance: [UK law and staying safe in person and online | Chevening](#).