



A quick guide on how to run community volunteering safely, for individuals and informal groups

Introduction

We're passionate about volunteering and the amazing impact it has, and no more so than in the current climate when so many people realise their potential to help each other. We want to offer advice to everyone who wants to volunteer or setup a community volunteering activity.

As of the 1st of April 2020, volunteering should only be done to provide essential services such as providing shopping (as infrequently as possible) for someone unable to access food and medicine. For these essential types of support make sure you are following the most recent government advice and NHS advice at gov.uk/coronavirus and nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

If you have to do volunteering face to face with someone use social distancing measures and please avoid travel as much as possible to prevent COVID-19 from spreading or infecting others.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

So we've produced these guidelines to help groups or individuals who want to volunteer do so in as safe a way as possible. Running a risk assessment is important so that you, and the people you help will be significantly safer in your volunteering.

By reading this guidance you should know/be able to do the following

- Understand why you should carry out risk management and produce a risk assessment
- The difference between a hazard and a risk
- Be able to identify common hazards involved in helping others/volunteering
- Have some idea of how to control hazards
- Be able to fill out a risk assessment
- Understand where you can get help and support

We also recommend making sure you are up to date with the latest guidelines and advice from the government and NHS:

<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>



<https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

Personal information or Data?

Any organisation (and that would include new organisations of people coming together to help) that uses or handles information about living individuals has obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. However, as this blog from the regulator shows, the obligations do not have to be onerous and should not put you off:

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/03/community-groups-and-covid-19/>.

As a volunteer or group of volunteers coming together informally, the data protection legislation should not stand in your way provided you let people know what information you propose to hold on them and what you will do with it, take care of information about other people, keep a record of what you do with it and don't do anything with it that you have not said you will be doing.

- *Only collect and store information that you actually need to carry out the support you have offered. Don't ask for or keep any information "just in case" and avoid holding confidential or more sensitive information such as detail of health issues, birth dates, financial information etc.*
- *Don't share what you have with anyone who does not need to see it. This includes chatting about the information.*
- *Don't leave the information on bits of paper or any device that others can see. Lock it away or put a password on*
- *Don't store any information for longer than you need. If someone leaves your group, delete their details*
- *Once the crisis is over and you don't need the information delete all of it (it was given to you for a reason and once that reason is gone so has the permission to store or use it)*

Here is a [link](#) to an example of a Privacy Notice produced by the Information Commissioner's Office

Why is considering health and safety important?

As communities come together in response to coronavirus, it's important to that everyone, including volunteers and the people they're looking to support, remain safe. By thinking about health and safety, a risk assessment can create a simple to-do-list so people can be safe.

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It's also important as every adult in the UK has a responsibility to consider the 'duty of care' that they have to each other. Duty of care is a common law duty which applies to all individuals and organisations.

Under this law, voluntary organisations and individual volunteers have a duty of care to each other and others who may be affected by their activities. This is why taking reasonable measures such as a risk assessment can help identify potential issues before they occur, and make sure you or your volunteers can help everyone stay safe.

Thinking about safety

When thinking about safety, it's important to understand the difference between a hazard and a risk to make sure we know we are safe. Plus it's how Health and Safety people talk about these things, so if you need to communicate to others, you will be talking the same language.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define hazard and risk as follows:

- A hazard is anything that may cause harm. Examples include:
 - Water on a staircase is a hazard, because you could slip on it, fall and hurt yourself.
 - Loud noise is a hazard because it can cause hearing loss.
 - Asbestos dust is a hazard because it has harmful effects if inhaled
- Risk is the chance, high or low, of somebody being harmed by the hazard, and how serious the harm could be.

How to identify hazards and risks

A good starting point is to get some key people of those involved together in the volunteering you will be doing to think through the potential hazards (things that may cause harm). Then think about the risk - high or low - of somebody being harmed by a hazard, and how serious the harm could be.

Think about how accidents could happen and who might be harmed. Ask yourselves what you think the hazards are. Concentrate on the real risks – those that are most likely to cause harm. Consider the measures you are planning to control the risks and ask if you have covered all you need to do.

Then record these on a document. Risks should be reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking control measures, don't just write something down because it looks good and then not do it because it's impractical. To help, we've included a lot of helping/volunteering activities in as separate downloadable links. But remember if we have not covered your activity you can ask us for guidance

We want to help people volunteer, and come together to help others in their community in the national response to coronavirus. And we want to make sure volunteers and the people they are

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working with are safe. So if, after looking at the activity and planning the controls, you feel the risk is still too much then don't do the activity.

An example of what a risk assessment document may look like is below, and there are templates available to download on our website.

What is the activity?	What are the hazards, risks and consequences?	Who's at risk	How can you reduce risk
<p>Working with unfamiliar dogs/dog walking</p>	<p>Risk of attacks or bites resulting in broken skin, upset, infections</p>	<p>Volunteers and public</p>	<p>Controls or actions you are going to take</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers should only volunteer to walk others dogs when the movement restriction allows https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus • Volunteers must not enter the home of the isolated person and should maintain social distancing guidelines as laid out by the government at https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus • Volunteers to make sure that they have sufficient experience with dogs and dog walking. That they are confident with dogs • Volunteers to make sure that they receive specific instructions from the owner in regard to the habits and temperament of the dog(s) being walked. With particular instructions around the dogs reaction to; Other dogs, Children, Wildlife/cattle, Cyclists and traffic • Volunteers to make sure that they only walk the number of dogs they feel confident to • Volunteers to make sure that they talk with the owner on the planned route • Volunteers to make sure that a someone who cares knows where they are when they are due back • Volunteers to make sure that they are contactable whilst volunteering via a mobile phone • Volunteers to make sure that they follow the guidance around 'exposure to COVID 19 virus resulting in infection' as laid out in the relevant Volunteering Matters risk assessment (found on the website) .



We hope these simple guidelines are helpful when thinking about volunteering, or setting up a community volunteering activity in your local area.

Other supporting documents and information on volunteering can be found on our webpage [here](#)

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(Adapted from volunteering matters)

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