



## INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS

This page is free to all

Advice on involving and managing volunteers during the coronavirus outbreak.

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### How volunteers can make a difference

There are lots of ways volunteers can support people who need help. Some of the ways volunteers are helping out include:

- helping with shopping and running errands for those who are self-isolating
- driving people to/from health appointments or other essential appointments
- helping to organise food deliveries from food banks and/or supermarkets
- helping to spread awareness about coronavirus scams
- running online wellbeing classes for people
- running online activities for children who are staying home
- online or telephone befriending to those who need to stay indoors.

### Redirecting volunteers if you cannot take on any more

- If you cannot take on any more volunteers, tell volunteers about other groups who may need their help.

- You can also share your volunteers with another organisation if that enables your group and theirs to better coordinate activities. Check in with your volunteers often, to make sure they are not taking on too much.
- [Find your local Volunteer Centre](#). They will be able to tell you which other organisations or community groups are operating in your area.
- Many areas have a community-run website where volunteers can post offers of help. Here is an example of a [list on the London SE1 community site](#).
- Join a [covid mutual aid group](#). There are hundreds of local self-organising Facebook and Whatsapp groups all over the UK. These have safeguarding and accountability guidelines that every volunteer/group member must follow.

## How volunteers are affected by the lockdown

- [Government guidance](#) is that people may leave their home for two specific reasons.
  - If they are helping vulnerable people
  - If their volunteering cannot be done from home, whether related to the coronavirus response or not
- If people are volunteering from home, they can carry on as normal.
- Leaving home to help a vulnerable person can be done through an organisation, or as an individual.
- If volunteers must leave the house, they should spend as little time away from home as possible and follow [government advice on social distancing](#).
- Any volunteer may be stopped by the police and will be expected to explain why they are not at home. Send your volunteer a text or email listing their activities/tasks with your name and contact number, so they can show them. Be available on the phone in case the police call you to verify any details.
- Gatherings of more than two people in public are currently banned, so make sure that volunteers understand this before they leave home.
- Read our blog post for more [information on volunteering during the lockdown](#).

## Volunteers in key worker roles

- People in [key worker roles](#) are allowed to send their children to school while the schools remain shut to others.
- Some sections of the [key worker guidance](#) are about volunteers specifically, including health and social care volunteers.
- However, the key worker definition applies to people in all the roles listed, whether they are paid and unpaid roles.
- [Key worker guidance](#) is different to the guidance asking people to stay at home. If you're not volunteering in a key worker role, you can't send your children to school, but you may still be allowed to leave the house to volunteer.

## Volunteer expenses

Volunteer expenses are expenses incurred as a result of a person volunteering.

- Not everyone can cover their own expenses when they volunteer. Paying expenses means volunteering is open to more people, including those from disadvantaged communities.
- Remember to pay volunteers for any expenses they may incur. This could include:
  - fuel or mileage costs
  - food and drink taken while volunteering
  - hygiene items, such as disinfectant, plastic gloves or hand sanitiser.
- Having an expenses policy will help you be consistent over what is and is not an expense. NCVO's [guidance on writing an expense policy](#) can help with this. If you are setting up a community group, you should still develop an expenses policy.
- To pay volunteers you can:
  - ask them to spend the money, keep receipts and return them so you can pay them back based on actual expenditure
  - give them money upfront, tell them to get a receipt and return any change.
- Make sure you keep a record of amounts paid, to whom and when. If volunteers are unable to confirm that they have received money, take screenshots or photos of conversations with them where they confirm they have received reimbursement.
- For more information read our [volunteer expenses guidance](#).

## Paying for goods or services

If someone is self-isolating, volunteers may pay for the food, other household shopping, medicines (prescription or otherwise) or other services. This is different to volunteer expenses.

- It is up to the volunteer if they wish to give their bank account details to the person they are helping, so that person can repay them by bank transfer.
- Volunteers can give receipts of any purchases made to the person who is self-isolating
- If you are worried about handling money from those who are self-isolating, consider contactless payment methods such as cheque or online payment (eg using Paypal).
- If you are handling cash, wear gloves and/or make sure you wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds after to reduce the likelihood of virus transmission. Alternatively, use anti-bacterial gel and always keep your hands away from your face.

## Data protection

If your organisation already involves volunteers, review your data protection policy to consider any new activity, such as the impact of working from home and the security of personal data.

- Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual. All organisations or groups handling personal data need a data protection policy. [Read our data protection guidance](#).

- Whether you are a small community group or an established charity, you need to know who is acting in your organisation's name. Organisations can ask volunteers for personal data so they can carry out their role.
- Decide what type of personal data will help you identify volunteers. You could ask for a utility bill with their name on it. If you are engaging a driver, ask to see their driving license.
- Store personal data securely. Try to use password-protected documents/hardware. If using paper, lock it away. We have guidance about [how to store personal data](#) which applies to volunteers as well as paid employees.
- Health data is classed as sensitive personal data. Make sure your volunteers are handling personal data responsibly and that no one's health status is used against them.
- Explain that volunteers are not to ask for or share anyone's personal data or health data, unless there is a specific reason why this data needs to be collected.
- It is ok to ask volunteers if they have experienced any coronavirus symptoms, so you can advise them if they need to self-isolate. If they're well enough, they may be able to volunteer from home.
- The [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO) recognises that organisations may struggle to maintain data protection standards at this time. They have said they will not penalise organisations where they have had to divert efforts away from activities such as responding to subject access requests.

## Recognising and reporting scams

- Coronavirus has led to an increase in scams and false offers of help. Common scams include:
  - cold calling homes and offering to help those self-isolating with shopping
  - fundraising, door to door or online, for donations to develop a covid-19 vaccine
  - scam emails offering fake products such as anti-bacterial gels or a cure for coronavirus.
- Make all your volunteers aware of current scams.
- Tell volunteers to remind those they are helping not to give out credit or debit card details, personal identification numbers or passwords.
- Help your volunteer show who they are by providing them with an email or text message with your group or organisation's details, and a contact telephone number.
- Tell your volunteers to report anything suspicious regarding fraudulent activity to your organisation or the person leading volunteers.
- You or your volunteers should report any concerns to Action Fraud [0300 123 2040](#).
- For more information to safeguard against scams, [visit the National Trading Standards website](#). Their campaign Friends Against Scams will help your volunteers to recognise scams and help those they are helping to be aware of them. They also offer a free [elearning course](#).

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