

A quick guide to run community volunteering safely for small groups

Introduction

We're passionate about volunteering and the amazing impact it has, 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 organisations or groups who want to get their people volunteering possibly for the first time or maybe doing different activities.

As of 23 March 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. You may also need to provide care to help a vulnerable person.

For these essential types of support make sure you are following the most recent government advice and NHS advice at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.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.

We have produced these guidelines to help groups to do so in as safe a way as possible. Running a risk assessment is important so that you, the people you help and your volunteers 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:

[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

[nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

[hse.gov.uk/](https://www.hse.gov.uk/)

Supporting documents:

An example Risk Assessment document for download [insert link]

A risk assessment template for download [insert link]

Staying safe when volunteering guide [insert link]

Why is considering health and safety important?

As communities come together in response to coronavirus, it's important to that everyone, including those directing 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 your volunteers can be safe.

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 or groups 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 organising the volunteering 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.

For example, takeaway delivery drivers are now ringing their recipients doorbells then stepping back 3 meters when they deliver their orders to avoid spreading or coming into contact with COVID-19.

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

Telling everyone; If you are directing others to volunteer you need to make sure that everyone involved reads and understands the Risk Assessment. Send them the controls that are relevant to them and ask them to confirm that they have read and understand it, via a written media be it, WhatsApp, email or text

An example of what a risk assessment document may look like is below, and we have templates available to download at volunteeringmatters.org.uk

What is the activity?	What are the hazards, risks and consequences?	Who's at risk	How you can reduce risk
<p>Cooking and delivering a fresh meal</p>	<p>To the volunteer – Risk of burning or scalding of hands/arms/face during food cooking, preparation, and transportation, resulting in burns and discomfort</p> <p>To the person they're helping – Risk of food poisoning or infection as a result of poor food preparation, handling or storage</p> <p>To the person they're helping – Risk of allergic reaction to food or ingredients, resulting in illness -- or death</p>	<p>Volunteers, especially those with underlying health conditions or aged 70 and over.</p> <p>People they are supporting</p>	<p>Volunteers (where possible) to be supervised by an individual with a food hygiene certificate</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure that the food prep area is clean and meets basic food hygiene standards</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure they use oven cloths or gloves when handling hot items such as pans, cooking trays and dishes etc.</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure their prep area is not crowded</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure when cooking hot food that the food is cooked for the recommended recipe time, at the recommended temperature, and reaches a hot core temperature.</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure that cooking (or reheating) times and temperatures are also adhered to in order to kill any bacteria.</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure that all prepared food is labelled with the date when it was prepared, and when it should be consumed by</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure that all prepared food is labelled with information about how it should be stored, and how it should be frozen/defrosted/cooked/reheated as appropriate</p> <p>Volunteers to ensure that food is placed in appropriate containers for transporting and reheating hot food</p> <p>Volunteers to add a label with a clear list of every ingredient and make sure this stays with the meal</p> <p>Volunteers to make sure that they follow the guidance around exposure to COVID-19 virus resulting in infection' as laid out in this document. Lots of helpful advice can be found here: https://www.food.gov.uk/food-safety</p>

We hope these simple guidelines are helpful when thinking about volunteering, or setting up a community volunteering activity in your local area. If you require more guidance or have further



questions or queries please email us at communications@volunteeringmatters.org.uk and a member of our team will be in touch.