

A quick guide on how to run community volunteering safely for small 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 organisations who want to get their people volunteering maybe 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.

<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 to 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://gov.wales/coronavirus>

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

Supporting documents can be found on our website

[An example Risk Assessment document for download](#)

[A risk assessment template for download](#)

[Staying safe when volunteering guide](#)

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 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.

Insurance

If you are thinking about directing volunteers you should hold Public Liability Insurance. If you do not I would approach an insurance company and arrange this before directing people to volunteer

If you already hold Public Liability Insurance then you should contact your insurance broker or your insurance company account manager. You need to inform them of what you are planning before you do it. If you do not and make a claim (this could be as simple as a volunteer having a bump in your mini bus. You may well not be covered

Personal Data?

As a pre-existing organisations you already have obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulations and The Data Protection Act 2018. You should have data protection policies and procedures in place to ensure that you carry out all of your legal responsibilities. Treat the data coming in from the new volunteering work in the same way you have been and you should be OK. If you are a data controller concerned that your normal standards might slip during the

Coronavirus please follow his (reassuring) link for the Information Commissioner's Office
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-coronavirus/>

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.

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 much 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 [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

What is the activity?	What are the hazards, risks and consequences?	Who's at risk	How can you reduce risk
<p>Cooking and delivering a fresh meal</p>	<p>To volunteer – Risk of Burning or scolding of hands/arms/face during food cooking, preparation, and transportation, resulting in burns and discomfort</p> <p>To beneficiary – Risk of food poisoning or infection as a result of poor food preparation, handling or storage</p> <p>To beneficiary – Risk of Allergic reaction to food or ingredients. Resulting in illness to or death</p>	<p>Volunteers, especially those with underlying health conditions or aged 70 and over.</p> <p>People they are supporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers (where possible) to be supervised by an individual with a food hygiene certificate • Volunteers to make sure that the food prep area is clean and meets basic food hygiene standards • Volunteers to make sure they use over cloths or gloves when handling hot items such as pans, cooking trays and dishes etc. • Volunteers to make sure there prep area is not crowded • Volunteers to make sure that when cooking hot food that the food is cooked for the recommended recipe time, at the recommended temperature, and reaches a hot core temperature. This can be checked by inserting a metal fork or knife (or food thermometer) into the middle of the food, then leaving in place for a couple of seconds, and then removing. The metal should be very hot to the touch • Volunteers to make sure that the following cooking (or reheating) times and temperatures are also adhered to in order to kill any bacteria: Cook food until it has reached 70°C and stayed at that temperature for 2 minutes. The other time and temperature combinations are: 60°C for 45 minutes / 65°C for 10 minutes / 70°C for 2 minutes / 75°C for 30 seconds / 80°C for 6 seconds • Volunteers to make sure that all prepared food is labelled with the date when it was prepared, and when it should be consumed by • Volunteers to make sure that all prepared food is labelled with information about

			<p>how it should be stored, and how it should be frozen/defrosted/cooked/reheated as appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteers to ensure that food is placed in appropriate containers for transporting and reheating hot food• Volunteers to add a label with a clear list of every ingredient and make sure this stays with the meal• 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
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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.