

Frequently asked questions about how to volunteer safely during COVID-19

Are volunteers considered key workers?

Key worker groups:

- Health and Social Care
- Educations and Children Services
- Key Public Services
- Local and National Government
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public Safety and National Security Transport Utilities, communications and financial services

You can find more comprehensive info on [gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19)

If your volunteering role falls into any of these categories then your volunteering role is that of a volunteer key worker.

If on the other hand your role is outside these groupings you are still a valued volunteer but depending on the nature of your role you may have to pause your volunteering in order to comply with Government guidance around social distancing and lock down.

If you are volunteering through an organisation your contact person should be able to advise you further.

I am talking to someone who is lonely on the phone during COVID-19. What do I need to think about?

- For your own safety dial 141 to block your number before calling the person.
- Agree with the person you are calling parameters regarding the length and frequency of phone calls, Who calls who when etc.
- Are there things they do or don't want to talk about?
- Are there things you do and don't want to talk about?

Check in on their well being. This could include asking whether they:

- they are eating well and staying hydrated
- have enough food
- have a plan to get more delivered if necessary
- they are taking and have access to any medication which they might need

If someone is lonely, as well as talking to them you can recommend:

- that they keep in touch with people over the phone or digitally if they can
- listening to a chatty radio station
- putting up some extra pictures around of people they care about

Always follow safeguarding advice.*

I would like to volunteer in my area by telephone befriending, but there is no organisation in my area. How can I help?

We encourage people to volunteer through a recognised provider that provides training and ongoing support wherever possible. Some examples of national programmes would be:

thesilverline.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/

independentage.org/get-involved/how-can-i-volunteer/join-our-team-of-telephone-volunteers

ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services/sign-up-for-telephone-befriending/

If you want to support a vulnerable person you know personally, follow safeguarding advice.*

As a volunteer you should ensure you have adequate emotional support and an opportunity to offload with friends or family after all calls.

You need to be aware of how the befriending is affecting you, and be proactive in seeking support when you feel you need it. You should always take breaks from phone sessions if they are long or back to back> This will give you time to breath, manage any stress you might be feeling or move about physically.

Always follow confidentiality best practice and treat everything you are told during calls as confidential. Don't gossip and make sure when you debrief, you are keeping personal information confidential.

- ✓ Follow safeguarding advice at all times when you're volunteering - there more information available on the Volunteering Matters website.
- ✓ Follow government advice at all times, during COVID-19 this changes regularly so keep yourself up to date on the government website.
- ✓ Always consider and look after your own wellbeing. Volunteering should be fun and worthwhile, so be aware of how it's affecting you and take steps to keep yourself safe.

*Make sure you know how you can #VolunteerSafely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit our website for advice and resources (including risk assessments and safeguarding) to keep you and your community safe.