

Covid-19 Advice for Volunteers

We know that a huge number of people have signed up to help in their local communities through various Facebook groups. This is encouraging to see, but at this point it has created a great deal of work for a very small number of volunteers who are trying to manage the groups.

What you can do now

The simplest thing everyone can do right now is look out for their neighbours and offer help with shopping and other errands if people cannot get out of the house.

And it's not just about neighbours who are self-isolating, stretched medical staff might also appreciate an offer of help.

Remember it's a marathon not a sprint – we're not at the peak and the time we need most people will likely be in a few weeks' time. So for now best thing to do is just check in on neighbours.

Staying safe when supporting others

- Let family and friends know what you are doing
- Support family, friends and neighbours by phone or video call
- Stay at least 2 metres - about 3 steps - away from people you are helping
- Offer to run errands for people but staying outside of people's homes
- Keep washing your hands often for 20 seconds
- If you join a local group supporting others, be mindful about what data you share

Volunteer with organisations providing support:

If you want to help but are not sure how, you can get in touch with us as a local volunteer centre.

There'll be more information on the best ways to volunteer in the coming days. We are working with charities and the local authority to create ways for people to get involved.

But here are a few suggestions:

You can sign up to the British Red Cross's Community Reserve Volunteers scheme <https://reserves.redcross.org.uk/>

Your local foodbank may appreciate donations, and they may also need people to help with deliveries for those who can't leave the house.

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

<https://fareshare.org.uk/volunteer/outbreak/>

NHS Volunteering <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>



Safeguarding and DBS: FAQs

What if I have a criminal record? Will that stop me from volunteering?

If you have a criminal record you can still volunteer for most roles. If you are asked by the volunteer organiser for a DBS check for your volunteering role, you can discuss anything that is disclosed on the certificate with them.

The only people who are legally prevented from volunteering with children and vulnerable adults are those who have been barred from doing so. If you have been barred by the DBS, you will have been informed by DBS, so you will know you have been barred and from what type of work. If you have been barred by DBS from certain types of work, then you would be committing an offence by trying to do that work.

Do I need a DBS check if I'm helping with personal care, such as washing and dressing

If you are helping in this way for a friend or family member, then you don't apply for a DBS check. However, it is not expected that community volunteers will be offering personal care to strangers. These activities should be provided by professionals.

If someone requires that type of personal care and they don't have the necessary services in place, you should help them to contact the appropriate health and social care services.

My DBS check has recently expired. Do I need to apply for a new one?

As DBS checks do not have an expiry date, you should speak with the organisation that you are going to be working or volunteering for. They may choose to accept the check that you already have.

Do I need a DBS check if I'm helping with medical care?

If someone you are supporting requires medical care, and they don't have the necessary services already in place, you should help them to contact the appropriate health or social care services.

Medical care should be provided by professionals, or specialist volunteers with the appropriate skills, training and checks.

All charities will need help

Lots of volunteering now for all sorts of charities is done by people who may not be able to volunteer right now. But if older people in particular are advised to stay at home, the organisations that rely on them will be hit.

So now is actually a really good time to get in touch with local charities working on areas you care about – whether that's the environment or health or anything – and see how you can help.

Obviously charities are really stretched at the moment in the same way everyone is so you might not get a reply straight away. But get in touch and offer your details and say what you can help with.

Could people be using this as a way to abuse vulnerable or older people?

99.9% of people absolutely want to do the right thing – but the sad reality is there are always a handful of people who'll exploit any situation.

That's the reason why charities have things in place like criminal records checks and references.

We're doing what we can to support groups that are setting up to make sure they are safe and effective - but we have to be aware that some of them have limited expertise or experience or procedures in what they're doing.

Further Support Available

Our friendly staff at the County Durham Volunteering Centre will be happy to offer you practical help including:

- Arranging a confidential one to one interview with a trained volunteer adviser to find out what opportunities may be available
- Providing you with information about volunteering and current opportunities
- Helping you to fill out any paperwork that may be required

Get in touch with the County

Durham Volunteering Centre

Our staff are currently remotely working from home but we are still here to support and can be contacted by the details below.

Tel: 07960210665

Website: www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

Email: volunteering@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

