Further Support Available

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

- Advice and support to set up a volunteer programme

- Help with recruiting and supporting your volunteers

- Lots of experience of working with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

- Simple and straightforward registration process

Get in touch with the County Durham Volunteering Centre

We are open between 9am - 5pm

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

www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

volunteering@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

The County Durham Volunteering Centre is managed by Durham Community Action

SIGN ~UP~ HERE

DURHAM COMMUNITY ACTION

Good Practice Guide

Covid-19 Guide for Volunteer involving Groups

County Durham **Volunteering**

Key Points

It has been heartening to see an explosion of people wanting to help. Even in the most testing of circumstances, it's good to see people coming forward to help others. Coordination and planning are vital – support must be directed to those most in need at the point at which they need it.

In this guide we will look at how organisations or informal groups can respond to the increase in spontaneous volunteers whilst maintaining good practice standards.

Getting Started

When spontaneous volunteers enquire it is recommended that they should be registered and undertake a basic assessment. The assessment should be done in a proportionate and timely way before spontaneous volunteers are tasked. Volunteers will want to get involved in the response to help communities as quickly as possible, but the safety of volunteers, communities and responders should be paramount.

The assessment of selecting prospective volunteers is a crucial role. Whilst it will be important to make this seem a simple process, the person carrying out the assessment role should have skills in determining the suitability of a volunteer quickly and with the confidence to identify those who are not suitable.

Another role to consider is how to provide supervision to those volunteering. One option is a Task Supervisor. They should have health and safety awareness and experience of managing volunteers appropriately thereby promoting their care and safety throughout. They should have sound awareness of what is required.

Application/registration

The process for registering spontaneous volunteers should be flexible and be capable of being scaled up or down depending on the requirements of the emergency, the types of tasks that spontaneous volunteers are being asked to undertake, and the number of spontaneous volunteers presenting.

It is important to manage the expectations of volunteers. They may arrive in response to specific requests, but evidence suggests that most will arrive simply to get involved. Spontaneous volunteers may not agree with any process put in place to provide safe practices, and will likely expect to provide immediate practical assistance.

Any unnecessary bureaucracy or delays should be avoided as this will likely be picked up on and possibly communicated via social media detracting from the benefits of such arrangements. It is therefore important for the Volunteer Coordinator and other members of the team to be clear about the purpose and reasons why processes are put in place e.g. health and safety.

Covid-19 Information and useful links for Voluntary organisations

Durham Community Action:

https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/

Durham County Council:

http://www.durham.gov.uk/

County Durham Safeguarding Adults Inter Agency Partnership

http://www.safeguardingdurhamadults.info/

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

http://www.durham-scp.org.uk/

Disclosure and Barring Service

https://www.dbs.services/

Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE)

https://www.vonne.org.uk/

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

https://www.ncvo.org.uk/

Debriefing and longer-term recovery

An essential part of the process is to debrief spontaneous volunteers who play a role during the response.

In extreme circumstances some individuals may need signposting to support services as some might have unknowingly been exposed to stressful or upsetting events.

All volunteers should be thanked for giving-up their time to assist and letters of thanks might be considered appropriate in some circumstances.

The organisation should consider the longer-term roles that volunteers can do.

Organisation should communicate:

a. The resources that will remain after the official response phase has ended and any continuing roles available to volunteers;

b. The role of the community in its own long-term recovery and how volunteers may further support this; and

c. The opportunities available to join a voluntary organisation aligned to the tasks they have been delivering as a volunteer, such as the organised voluntary sector or groups already established by public sector services.

Selection

Some volunteers might have to be informed that they are not suitable for the required tasks. This might be due to factors such as a declared medical condition.

A volunteer may declare a medical condition, disability or other factor affecting their ability to carry out certain tasks required. It will be important to explore all possible opportunities for involvement, but if difficulties persist, the Volunteer Coordinator should be consulted and a decision made regarding their participation. This could be to thank the volunteer, but to explain that they are not required on this occasion. This may require particularly sensitive handling.

Having a criminal conviction would not, in most cases, exclude someone from volunteering, but it might define the work they are tasked and the supervision required.

An audit trail of why a decision has been made not to accept a spontaneous volunteer should be recorded and retained.

Insurance

Whether an organisation is legally liable for the acts of a volunteer will depend on whether the organisation is deemed to be acting in the capacity of a temporary employer or has otherwise assumed liability for their actions. This will depend on the relationship between the organisation and the individual, including the level of control the organisation has over the spontaneous volunteer's work and behaviour.

Ultimately, it would be for the courts to decide whether the organisation is liable for the acts of its volunteers, but if the organisation (or any other body or government agency) accepts the offer of help from a spontaneous volunteer and provides guidance to the volunteer on what to do, it is possible that the organisation will be deemed to be acting in the capacity as a temporary employer and could be held liable.

Once the question of liability has been answered, a separate question is whether the employer's insurance will cover the costs. Whether the insurance of the organisation would cover claims made against the organisation for any injury or damage the volunteer has caused (Public Liability insurance) or for injury to the volunteer themselves (Employers' Liability insurance) will depend on the terms of the insurance policy

Safeguarding / Disclosure and Barring Service checks

The organisation should be clear that its approach to volunteers is compliant with safeguarding principles. The organisation should review relevant safeguarding policies and procedures to make certain that safeguarding best practice is adhered.

Volunteers should never be deployed into a situation where they would have unsupervised contact with any child or vulnerable adult and should never be placed in a one-to-one situation with a vulnerable person (all children are vulnerable persons due to their age) as part of their normal duties. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks would only be required if volunteers were put into regular, unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups.

A vulnerable person can be defined as someone known to the agencies as vulnerable or made vulnerable as a result of the incident.

The DBS checking procedure takes time and may not appropriate during an emergency.

Spontaneous volunteers should be made aware of safeguarding issues before deployment and how they should report any issues they may encounter.

Risk assessments

Underpinning volunteer tasks will be the completion of task risk assessments. Generic risk assessments and if necessary a dynamic risk assessment should be completed by the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator or Task Supervisor at the start.

Some volunteers may require additional briefing needs should they be deployed to a more involved or complex task. If appropriate, the organisation might consider providing briefing on:

a. Frequently encountered hazards

b. How to complete simple tasks such as:

i. Safe handling procedures; and

ii. Properly using any equipment provided by the organisation.

c. Specific and specialist roles that might be tasked.

Behaviour

The organisation should consider the potential reputational damage posed by the involvement of spontaneous volunteers for example but not limited to:

a. Breaches in confidentiality;

b. Misrepresentation of the organisation to the public/media;

c. Misconduct by volunteers;

d. Harm to volunteers or those they help;

e. Lack of cultural sensitivity and/or the use of abusive or discriminatory language

f. Provision of misinformation.

If a volunteer is reported to have breached any of the above, or behaved in the opinion of the Task Supervisor in an inappropriate manner, the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should have the authority to tell the volunteer that their assistance will not be further required and the offer of help terminated and recorded.

Communication

Effective communication will be crucial to assist in the coordination of spontaneous volunteers. Any messaging that encourages volunteers should contain sufficient information to guide them on how to get involved and might include;

a. Where and when volunteers can offer their help;

b. The types of tasks for which help is needed;

c. The resources that they might bring and what is not required;

d. The support that will be provided;

e. Where they can get more information;

f. Issues regarding insurance and liability; and

g. The benefits of working with the existing organisations, such as reducing the duplication of effort.