Community response to Covid-19 - enabling safe and effective practice

This guidance has been written to help support and guide the incredible community response to supporting others that has been generated by the onset of Covid-19.

It is intended for people wishing to volunteer, current volunteers and volunteer coordinators who are responding to community need during the coronavirus crisis.

It consists of:

- Introduction - what to think about and where to find support

- Volunteering - could I? should I? and how?

- Volunteering options - sources of information and opportunities

- Starting new community action - guidance and top ten tips

- Dos and don'ts - to coordinate well and safely

- Safeguarding guidance - to help keep everyone safe

- Guidance for the beneficiaries - to keep themselves safe

- Managing volunteers and their conduct - to 'manage' remotely

- Re-deploying the volunteer workforce - 'reshaping' what we do and how

- Financial transactions - preventing abuse, fraud and theft

- Suggested volunteer roles - with helpful detail

- DBS checks reminder - what has and hasn't changed

- Other useful resources - a selection of useful links

We hope you will find it useful. We will update it as necessary as things change, and in response to your needs. Do let us know how we can help you: safeguarding@wcva.cymru.

INTRODUCTION

We all want to capitalise on the goodwill and resourcefulness of communities and community action in caring for those who are most vulnerable under the shadow of coronavirus.

But we need to take the time to create safe methods and systems that protect everyone: those at risk from Covid-19 and those who deliver the services (visit [Looking out for each other Wales](#)). We need also to be mindful of conventional safeguarding threats and the opportunities presented by the current crisis for financial (scams, fraud, theft), emotional harm, neglect, poor care practice, domestic abuse and all other forms of abuse.

In all circumstances, the emphasis and aim should be for minimum contact between those most at risk of becoming seriously ill and anyone who could possibly carry the virus to them. Utilising our growing use of technology for communication, co-ordination and co-operation by remote means is vital for beneficiaries, volunteers and the organisations.

Social media is a powerful tool for motivating volunteer action, but could lead to well-meaning but ineffectual, if not dangerous, activity, if this takes place without appropriate structure. Part of our effort should be to guide individuals to use the many established means of co-ordinating and supporting volunteer action that we already have in place.

These include:
- the network of County Voluntary Councils which make up [Third Sector Support Wales](#)
- and Volunteering Wales' [database of volunteering opportunities](#)

VOLUNTEERING – COULD I? SHOULD I? AND HOW?

Health first

Anyone can volunteer but under the current guidance for responding to the coronavirus, people who are most at risk (those who are pregnant, over 70 and who have underlying health conditions) should **not** take on volunteering roles that could raise their risk of infection, or of passing it onto others who

might be at risk. If anyone under the age of 18 years wishes to volunteer, please contact your local CVC for further guidance.

Think about non-contact roles which can be performed through remote access using phones, emails, *facetime* etc. These roles are just as important as many others to prevent loneliness and disconnection.

People who should be in self-isolation with possible infection or at risk of infection, can also undertake these distance roles, as long as they are well enough, but must **not** break their isolation to volunteer otherwise.

VOLUNTEERING OPTIONS

Mutual aid/community circles

Many neighbours have already undertaken to assist and support one another in a very small locality. In most cases, this means that the people involved already know each other, to some extent. No-one should be placed under pressure to participate (and should be encouraged to call their CVC or the Police if they feel in any way uncomfortable or threatened).

Postcards or leaflets though letterboxes can re-introduce neighbours and suggest how they might help and support one another: from simply keeping in contact through phone calls, to dropping off shopping on the doorstep, etc. whilst maintaining social distance: [PHW Wales coronavirus/covid-19 self isolation advice](#).

Ideally, there should be at least 2 metres between people and the visitor should wear a facemask or scarf over their nose and mouth, and wear gloves if handling items to be left with the neighbour. Cards or leaflets should not be stockpiled and should be stored in plastic sealed bags.

Check your social media such as **WhatsApp**, **Nextdoor** and **Facebook** for local groups etc. and for more information.

Joining an existing volunteer organisation

Through your local [county voluntary council (CVC)](#) or [Volunteering Wales search opportunities](#) you can sign up to undertake a specific volunteering role with a local organisation.

Volunteers should expect there to be some kind of application process and may be asked to sign up to a code of conduct by the organisation.

Some volunteer roles may require a police check. All volunteers **could** be asked about their unspent convictions (those for which the rehabilitation period has not yet ended (see [Unlock](#)) This is the same as a DBS basic check and involves filling in and signing a simple form.

Other roles may require enhanced [DBS checks.](#)

This is less likely in the current context, since these checks are for roles with contact with the people who are most at risk of conventional safeguarding issues. Roles requiring enhanced DBS checks should be clearly stated on the opportunity description.

Starting up new community action

Community responses to Covid-19 are happening swiftly in very many ways. We welcome and applaud our communities for their generosity and willingness to assist others. We also urge them to put systems and processes in place to safeguard beneficiaries and volunteers from abuse and harm.

The following guidance is for organisers of new groups that are in the process of getting set up to deliver local services with volunteers, and for existing groups that now wish to expand their volunteering activity in response to the coronavirus.

In all circumstances, the emphasis and aim should be for minimum contact between those most at risk of becoming seriously ill and anyone who could possibly carry the virus to them.

TOP TEN TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED.

Please see our guidance on the [Third Sector Support Wales](#) website for more detail on all these points:

1. Group leaders should provide their contact details to the beneficiaries (the people you will be helping) and a description of the services they are planning to offer

2. Group leaders should create role descriptions for volunteers which identify whether there is a need for DBS checks (Check our website or email safeguarding@wcva.cymru for advice)

3. The service should create a clear system for beneficiaries to alert volunteers to their need for help: volunteers should be informed what to do next – usually call the emergency services: Do NOT Enter premises

4. Group leaders should ensure that volunteers have access to a named co-ordinator who is easily contactable

5. Volunteers must know that they should contact the Co-ordinator if they have any concerns and the Co-ordinator should have a list of contacts to make referrals, e.g. police and social services

6. Volunteers should follow all Public Health Wales guidance about COVID-19 and security measures should also be observed

7. Financial transactions must be carefully managed and cash exchange avoided at all costs (explore online methods e.g. bank transfers, PayPal). Methods other than cash exchange are easier to trace and less vulnerable to abuse.

8. Beneficiaries should only sign up willingly to make any payments. They should be encouraged to call their CVC (see below) or the Police if they feel in any way uncomfortable or threatened

9. Volunteers should use a clear form of identification when communicating with beneficiaries

10. Where possible, make use of the existing volunteer workforce, e.g. community drivers and befrienders, or employees of public services who want to volunteer. They may already have relevant training and experience in safe working practices and hold a current DBS certificate.

SUPPORT

Contact your local [county voluntary council (CVC)](#) for support and guidance with organising volunteer activities.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS

Preparation

Where possible:

DO

- Know who you will be working with (the beneficiaries)
- Ensure that they know who you (the group) are
- Provide a 'service guide' to what you will do and how you will do it
- Provide the contact details of a named contact (co-ordinator) (mobile number and email)
- Make use of your website or Facebook page, etc.

Communication

DO

- Tell all of your beneficiaries to be security conscious above and beyond their usual safeguards
- Provide your volunteers with ID, ideally with a photograph, and in large format
- Ensure they know to use it at each visit and on every occasion
- Tell volunteers only what they need to know to carry out their tasks
- Ask each volunteer to sign up to a code of conduct and to comply with it at all times
- Pass on any information indicating a risk to beneficiaries to the authorities
- Ensure volunteers know they **MUST NOT VOLUNTEER** if they feel ill

DON'T

- Involve a volunteer if you have concerns or hear complaints about their conduct. Ask them to desist and return/destroy their ID

- Ask for cash transactions if there is any way to avoid this
- Allow/expect anyone to work who may have coronavirus symptoms
- Ignore an unresponsive household
- Ask for DBS checks for roles where this is ineligible (not legal)

SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE

Alerting the need for help

The Police would want to remind everyone that it is unwise for someone to flag up to the public that they are at risk, but in the present situation there may need to be an easy way for a householder to indicate 'I am seriously ill or I am not coping'. It would always be preferable to send this message to a single recipient, such as a (blank) text message to the co-ordinator or a family member, but this may not always be possible.

Any signal that is going to be used for requesting help should be agreed only between the householder and the service. When volunteers notice the signal, they should alert their co-ordinator. Do NOT enter the premises.

The co-ordinator should call the household directly or the nominated individual and arrange for the volunteer to call if this is required. In the event of no answer/reassurance, call the emergency services.

Guidance for beneficiaries

Remind your beneficiaries that they should not be expected to open their doors to anyone unless there is a good reason for doing so, and even then, only when the person is stood at a certain distance away as recommended by [PHW Wales covid-19 social distancing](#).

Any use of a 'Help Wanted' postcard (e.g. [Safe help)](#) should be with caution: display it only in daylight and remove it once help has been arranged. If anyone is concerned about someone at or near their home that they don't know or recognise, or who does not show them clear identification, they should contact the co-ordinator or the Police.

Any items delivered to the door should be handled with care. Dispose of the outer wrapping and wash hands thoroughly after handling the goods.

Managing volunteers and their conduct

Provide all of your volunteers with some form of identification, ideally with their photograph, and in a large and clear format, so that they can hold it up to a window and show the householder that they are part of your group. Include the co-ordinator's mobile number in large print.

Tell your volunteers only what they need to know about the beneficiary to undertake their role. This may be no more than their address and a phone number, (but it is still information that could be misused). Ensure that all volunteers, those well-known and especially those who are new to your group, know exactly what you expect of them: the tasks, their conduct, their respect for the information that is shared with them or becomes known.

You may find you will gather more information about your beneficiaries as time goes on. Encourage your volunteers to share factual information and any concerns they have about the beneficiaries with the co-ordinator, who can log it, and report it onwards. This may help you to respond appropriately in an emergency.

If you have concerns about the way any volunteer is undertaking their tasks, you have every right to ask them to desist entirely, to switch tasks, or to report them to the police if they may be committing an offence/crime, or to social services if they pose a safeguarding risk or the possibility of abuse. Ask them to return their ID in the post or destroy it. Log the concerns and all your actions in response.

> **Deliver a very clear message: If a volunteer begins to feel ill (fever, cough etc.) before or during their duties, they should immediately alert their co-ordinator, and remove themselves from duty.**

Re-deploying the volunteer workforce

Wherever possible, aim to re-deploy the known volunteer workforce into activity demanded by the current situation. Community drivers may have fewer health appointments to take people to attend but could drive them home from hospital. Befrienders may not be able to meet in cafés for a cup of tea but could provide a neighbourhood checking service (by phone or

knocking at doors) and also make regular phone or video calls to ensure that no-one is being neglected or feels forgotten and overlooked.

This would mean that their current DBS checks, where they are in place, should be applicable for the new role the volunteer may undertake. There is guidance for the existing social care workforce from Social Care Wales. Coronavirus, our work, what you need to know.

Some suggested volunteer roles are outlined below.

Financial transactions

One of the big concerns will centre around getting supplies to households which are in isolation. These will have to be paid for and may mean that some organisations will pay up front and ask for reimbursement from the individual, or, will request some payment up front from the individual to cover the likely cost.

To avoid possible opportunities for financial abuse, theft etc. these should be through electronic exchange systems, bank transfers, card payments made over the phone etc. wherever possible, so that they are traceable and separate from the act of delivery. Cash exchange should be avoided at all costs (both to reduce opportunity for theft and infection).

To create evidence of the purchases, costs and delivery, photographs taken on mobile phones by the volunteer can be shared with the household and the organisation. If the householder suffers from confusion or issues with phones, a nominated family member could receive texts with photos attached.

SUGGESTED VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteer shopper

- Washes hands/uses sanitiser before and after every set of shopping
- Works to a set list of items (pre-printed with essentials to tick, or

NO contact with person at risk

Eligible: basic DBS check

(unspent convictions only)

This is not a mandatory requirement

an open list, in priority order,
with appropriate alternatives or none, with a set upper cost limit)
- Photographs the receipt and places the original with the items
- Ensures swift delivery of items

Delivery volunteer

- Washes hands/uses sanitiser frequently/wears gloves
- Places items in pre-arranged place at address (a porch would be ideal)
- Photographs items in place
- Alerts household to delivery
- Retreats to reasonable distance (minimum 2 metres) to ensure there is a response to their alert
- If no response, call the co-ordinator

NO contact with person at risk

Eligible: basic DBS check

(unspent convictions only)

This is not a mandatory requirement

Motoring checks, licence, MOT, etc.)

If items must be carried into the premises for the individual, this should be pre-arranged.

- Householder to open door nearest to e.g. kitchen, and retreat.
- Volunteer puts on face mask/scarf and uses hand sanitiser or wears gloves before entering premises. Maintain social distance.
- Places items in the kitchen without touching anything else
- Alerts householder that they are leaving and leaves
- Use hand sanitiser again and before next visit

Task oriented roles requiring access to premises but not for care purposes

eg to mend a leak, walk the dog

Social distance in relation to person at risk
Eligible: basic DBS check
(unspent convictions only)
This is not a mandatory requirement
Competency/relevant experience for tasks

- Alert householder to arrival, use hand sanitiser and put on face mask/scarf (gloves, overalls etc. if applicable)
- Access the premises using the shortest distance from necessary equipment
- Maintain social distance from all residents
- Householder to remove themselves to another room
- Communicate with householder using phone, let them know when you are leaving
- Use hand sanitiser again and before next call

Care roles

eg washing, dressing, bathing, assistance/prompting to eat, all forms of healthcare

Almost always will require an enhanced DBS check with barring list check (adult/child/both workforce(s) as appropriate) by law
(unless performed by family member/friend as informal carer)
Close contact
Core competency skills for care or medically qualified

- Use hand sanitiser and don personal protection equipment (face mask, apron, gloves, etc)
- Carry out required care with due care and attention
- Maintain social distance from everyone other than the intended service user
- On departure, remove and dispose of personal protection equipment, use hand sanitiser again and before next call

DBS CHECKS – REMINDERS

- Will be easier and swifter where the applicant has a current driving licence and passport and the process uses an online portal (from the provider)
- Use video conferencing to see the ID documents with the applicant
- Promote use of the DBS Update Service for anyone getting a new check (free for volunteers, £13 for salaried staff as a personal subscription) and make use of it for a free status check if a volunteer is already signed up
- **Always** ask to see the check certificate, check for content on the rear. Use video conference facilities to see the applicant, their passport and their DBS certificate, all sections

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Wales Safeguarding Procedures (Download the app from Google Play and Apple stores)
- Charity Commission - Safeguarding and Protecting People
- Disclosure & Barring service leaflets
- Volunteering Wales
- WCVA volunteering pages
- Find your local county voluntary council - Third Sector Support Wales

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