

Example Volunteer Handbook for Covid-19 Neighbourhood Volunteer Initiatives



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This document will be updated regularly, please check the [Volunteering Barnet Resource Bank](#) for the most up to date version. Last updated on 01/04/2020.

Group Contact Details

Volunteers are an essential part of the (group name), thank you for volunteering to support to help people in the community affected by COVID-19 (coronavirus).

(Group name)

(Group details and what you do)

Team leader name:

Telephone:

Email:

(LOGO)

COVID-19 - Volunteer Task Description

There are a number of volunteer tasks that people can get involved in, here are some examples of the things we may ask for support with:

- shopping
- gardening
- posting mail
- taking bins out or recycling
- dog walking

Depending on what volunteer tasks you are doing a Disclosing and Barring Service Check (DBS – this used to be called a CRB check) or background checks may be necessary.

Many of the roles that volunteers will carry out in their local communities do not raise safeguarding issues and do not need a DBS check. You can have a look at the [DBS eligibility guidance](#) to confirm whether the activities you propose to do are captured.

Regardless of whether you have a DBS check, you should ensure your group follows simple, practical precautions such as keeping records of money spent and providing shopping receipts to safeguard all involved.

Please make sure you are physically well and able to carry out these volunteer tasks, this is to minimise any risk of spreading infection.

You may be volunteering to support extremely vulnerable people. Please read carefully the government advice on shielding and [protecting extremely vulnerable persons from covid-19](#) before considering volunteering.

Staying Safe While Volunteering

Please remember the following safety advice:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds. Do this after you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, after you eat or handle food and before and after every drop-off using hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available.
2. Let family and friends know what you are doing, check in with them once you are home
3. Stay at least 2 metres – about 3 steps – away from the people you are helping and never go inside their homes. Take a look at the BBC's advice on [what 2 metres looks like](#)
4. If you are dropping off items for someone, place the items to be delivered on the doorstep before ringing the bell or knocking on the door and take at least 3 steps back
5. Try to volunteer during daylight hours
6. Listen to social distancing guidelines and don't volunteer in groups, if you not from the same household, volunteers must stay 2 metres apart at all times
7. If you're are volunteering in an area you don't know well, make sure you tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to be home
8. Support friends and family by phone or video call
9. Take hand sanitiser gel with you and use a face mask or gloves (if available) as and when appropriate, if possible disinfect any objects or surfaces you have touched
10. Be careful about what personal data you share

Other precautions you should be taking to prevent the spread of Covid-19 when volunteering are:

- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in a bin straight away
- avoid close contact with other people
- avoiding public transport where possible
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- if dog-walking remember to wash your hands before and after handling the dog and to always keep 2 metres away from other people and animals, including when handing over the dog to the owner
- when you have finished volunteering, and before eating and drinking, thoroughly wash your hands with hot water and soap for 20 seconds and safely dispose of any gloves

Important things to consider

The most important thing to consider before volunteering is to make sure you are healthy enough to volunteer. You don't want to risk making someone else unwell. Please follow [NHS advice](#) and stay home if you have either:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

You should:

- **keep checking the NSH website as they are regularly updating their advice on the above points.** We recommend looking at the latest guidance when making decisions on volunteering
- **only offer to help with tasks you feel comfortable doing and are able to do.** If you become unwell please do not volunteer.
- follow these guidelines from the government regarding [social distancing](#).

Induction of Volunteers

All new volunteers should be supported by the people in charge of the group and should fully understand their volunteer role and the boundaries that need to be put in place due to COVID-19. Volunteers should know how and when to report any issues or concerns.

Sickness reporting

Volunteers should notify their team leader or another members of their group as soon as possible if they are ill in general or have symptoms of COVID-19. **It is helpful to let others know when you think you will be better – please do not return to volunteering until you are completely well and it is safe to do so.**

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should stay at home for at least 7 days. If you live with other people, they should stay at home for at least 14 days, to avoid spreading the infection outside the home. After 14 days, anyone you live with who does not have symptoms can return to their normal routine. Be sure to follow [NHS advice](#). Please keep checking the latest NSH advice it is updated regularly.

Insurance

Organisations should have public liability insurance which covers their volunteers (or insert who your insurance is covered by). Volunteer drivers must inform their insurance company in writing if they will be driving in a voluntary capacity. Volunteers are only covered for tasks that they are authorised to do.

Travel expenses

It is good practice to reimburse travel expenses for volunteers. While the government are advising members of the public to only make essential travel using public transport, groups should do their best to allow volunteers to carry out their tasks in local areas by foot.

Emergency and First Aid

All accidents should be reported and recorded promptly to the team leader.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is designed to help make sure organisations and groups have considered all the aspects of a risky situation. It helps you decide what actions you should take, with appropriate precautions, and which you should avoid altogether. Please read Volunteering Barnet's [guide to creating a risk assessment](#).

Volunteers' personal safety

Volunteers should:

- follow the social distancing procedures
- avoid any direct face to face social contact with the people you are supporting
- discuss with the person you are supporting the best way to exchange money and shopping lists to avoid physical contact
- ensure before and after your volunteering to wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser
- always park your vehicle in a safe place and keep locked at all times
- wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- wear seat belts at all times if driving
- ensure your mobile phone is charged, and has credit, in case of an emergency

You have the responsibility to ensure that you follow procedures and that you do not knowingly put yourself at risk of harm in the course of your duties.

If you have any concerns about your own safety please contact your team leader.

Individuals' personal safety

You should all necessary steps to minimise any social interaction with the person you are supporting this is in line with the [government guidelines on social distancing](#) and stay at least 2 meters away at all times.

If you have any concerns about an individual contact the local child or adult safeguarding department.

If you are concerned about an adult who may be at risk of abuse, harm or neglect you can make a [referral](#) or contact Social Care Direct on 020 8359 5000 (Monday to Friday, 9 am - 5 pm) or 020 8359 2000 (out of hours).

If you feel you have urgent welfare concerns about children or young people that require an immediate response, phone the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 020 8359 4066. The MASH team are available Monday to Thursday 9 am to 5.15 pm and Friday 9 am to 5 pm.

Outside of these hours, you should report any concerns that need an immediate response to our emergency duty team on 020 8359 2000.

In an emergency call 999.

Gifts or payments for service

Volunteering is an unpaid activity and to help people in need, other than money that has been agreed in advance to pay for shopping, volunteers should not accept money from the people they are helping. If you are offered gifts or money from the people you are helping you must explain that it's your role to help people, which you are happy to do and therefore it is not appropriate to accept money or gifts for services provided, though the gesture is appreciated.

Health and Safety

It is important to provide a safe and healthy volunteer environment for all. So far as is reasonably practicable (group) will:

- provide safe and healthy volunteering conditions
- ensure all volunteers are competent to undertake their tasks and to give them adequate training and advice;
- provide information, instruction, training and support in safety matters

Duty of volunteers

There is also a duty of all individuals operating within the group. In particular to:

- volunteer safely, efficiently and without endangering the health and safety of themselves or the people they are helping
- adhere to the safety procedures laid down by (group)
- report all accidents, near-miss occurrences and hazardous situations to the appropriate person(s)

Safety advice for shopping

- we recommend that you take digital payments rather than cash to avoid physical contact
- ask for payment upon delivering the items with a valid receipt
- only buy and take payment for the requested items. It is advisable to take a list and record allowed substitutes
- do not enter their home to put the shopping away, leave the shopping at the door at least 2 meters away

Lone Working

(Group) takes seriously its responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all volunteers who carry out their volunteer activity alone without direct support or supervision. E.g. collecting and dropping off shopping for someone who is self-isolating.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to:

- think about where you will be going and what you will be doing; consider whether there are particular risks relating to that location or activity (e.g. an unusually isolated location, adverse weather conditions for driving). If there are, discuss them with your team leader before setting off
- comply with any personal safety procedures detailed by (group)
- raise any concerns with their team leader immediately
- report any accidents, incidents, injuries or 'near misses'
- report any safety practices that need to be improved or risks not otherwise identified

Volunteers should take the following precautions when volunteering:

- ensure someone knows where they are going and when they are expected home including details of any activities you have arranged and the name of the person you are helping
- volunteer during daylight hours as much as possible and as much as possible avoid poorly lit or deserted areas
- carry a mobile phone, check it is fully charged and has sufficient credit; leave it switched on and do not use it whilst driving
- carry a personal alarm, if you have one
- arrange to check in with a named contact when you have safely returned home
- take and use any other personal protective equipment provided e.g. face mask, hand sanitizer
- inform your team leader of any incidents which arose during volunteering

Procedure for checking in and out and alerting to personal danger

We recommend all volunteers should have a buddy to check-in and out of their volunteer shift with. It is the responsibility of the volunteers to exchange emergency contact details in case a volunteer fails to check out after their shift and is not contactable.

It is sensible to establish a "trigger phrase" for use for extreme situations. This would alert a team member without alarming the antagonist.

It is essential that all volunteers are aware of this phrase. In the event of the trigger phrase being used, or a "home safe" call not being made when expected, checks should be made to establish the well-being of the volunteer.

If a volunteer finds themselves in danger and unable to speak freely, they should stress to the antagonist that they are expected to call into the office or a central point at a pre-determined time and that if they don't, the alarm will be raised.

On telephoning, they should say "Hello, this is, may I speak to xxxxx?" And then pass on an innocuous message or use the trigger phrase.

This is the signal that all is not well. You should immediately call the police and direct them to where the individual has indicated in their schedule they have gone.

Safeguarding

Please read [Volunteering Barnet's safeguarding guidelines](#).

What does safeguarding adults mean?

Safeguarding means protecting the health, wellbeing and human rights of adults at risk, enabling them to live safely, free from abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

It is about people and groups working together to prevent and reduce both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect. It also means making sure that the adult's wellbeing is supported and their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs are respected when agreeing on any action.

Who is an 'adult at risk'?

An 'adult at risk' is someone who may require help because they have care and support needs. They may be unable to stop someone else from harming or exploiting them.

Abuse happens when someone hurts you or treats you badly. It can be accidental or deliberate. Abuse can take many forms. There doesn't need to be an injury for abuse to have taken place. Neglect is when someone who is meant to look after you does not look after you properly.

What do we mean by abuse?

Abuse is described as a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

What forms do abuse and neglect take?

Physical abuse including hitting, slapping, pushing, unnecessary restraint or misusing medications.

Domestic violence including all types of abuse between family members or partners; so-called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse including inappropriate touching, indecent exposure, rape, harassment or any sexual acts the adult has not consented to.

Psychological abuse including emotional abuse, threats of harm, attempts to control, coercion, verbal abuse and bullying.

Cuckooing is a term used where criminals exploit vulnerable people by taking over their homes to deal drugs and commit other crimes.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, coercion with regard to financial affairs.

Modern slavery including forced labour and human trafficking.

Modern Slavery is a serious and brutal crime in which people are treated as commodities and exploited for criminal gain. The true extent of modern slavery in the UK, and indeed globally, is unknown - Home Office

Discriminatory abuse harassment or slurs due to someone's race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or gender identity.

Organisational abuse including neglect and poor care practice within a care setting or in relation to care provided in one's own home.

Neglect and acts of omission failure to act or ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs.

Self-neglect neglecting to care for your own health, hygiene or surroundings. This can include hoarding.

Reporting Potential Abuse

Adults

If you are concerned about an adult who may be at risk of abuse, harm or neglect you can make a [referral](#) or contact Social Care Direct on 020 8359 5000 (Monday to Friday, 9 am - 5 pm) or 020 8359 2000 (out of hours).

Children and Young People

If you feel you have urgent welfare concerns about children or young people that require an immediate response, phone the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 020 8359 4066. The MASH team are available Monday to Thursday 9 am to 5.15 pm and Friday 9 am to 5 pm.

Outside of these hours, you should report any concerns that need an immediate response to our emergency duty team on 020 8359 2000.

If you believe a child is at risk of immediate harm please call the Police on 999

It is important that any concerns regarding potential or actual abuse, or a lack of care of vulnerable adults from other carers, family members, neighbours, etc., is reported immediately to the local authority safeguarding team. We appreciate as there will be minimal face to face contact with older people and vulnerable people this may be difficult to highlight but sometimes during telephone

conversations when you may get to know individuals you are supporting more this may become more evident.

Remember:

- If a crime has been committed contact 101
- If it is an emergency call 999

If individuals are not in immediate danger but you need to report any issues or concerns in confidence without fear of retribution for situations such as suspicion of fraud, abuse or inappropriate behaviour then it must be reported to your team leader or designated safeguarding lead.

Requesting non-medical support for others during Covid -19 crisis

If a family friend or relative who is need of urgent non-medical support the council has set up the COVID-19 Community Help Hub should people have queries or needs that can't be supported themselves or via their social networks and other community resources – full details of the phone line and online registration form are [here](#).

Equal Opportunities

(Group name) wants everyone who needs help or wants to help to be able to get involved. Please treat your fellow volunteers, and people you support equally and with respect. (Group name) is committed to supporting everyone, regardless of their gender, race, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, physical appearance, body size, or religion.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

We need to be careful not to unnecessarily share people's personal information. Only share personal information (e.g. name, age, address, and personal contact details and circumstances) when necessary. Don't share it with people who don't need the information. It might be that with some information seems harmless to share but it is better to be safe than sorry.

We want to make sure that no one feels afraid of accepting help. Therefore, do not share of immigration status information with enforcement agencies (e.g. Met Police, Border Force/Home Office, and Neighbourhood Watch).

Privacy Policy

For the purposes of General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the data controller in respect of your personal data is (group name). (Group name) hold personal data about all our volunteers. Your data will be used to administer your volunteering and will not be shared with any third party without your prior permission. Your data may be used for statistical purposes. The extent of the personal data will vary but may include contact details, DBS checks, medical information, etc. Our commitment is to respecting volunteers' rights in data protection law.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

(Group name) is based on building trust and solidarity among community members. All volunteers should adhere the following Code of Conduct, and behave in a reasonable manner at all times.

- be polite and kind to others
- behave professionally. Any form of harassment or discrimination is forbidden. This includes sexual attention or innuendo, deliberate intimidation, and stalking. It also includes oppressive comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, immigration status, or religion
- do not share any immigration status information with enforcement agencies. This is to protect the lives and dignity of individual volunteers or recipients of support
- do not gossip or share people's personal information unnecessarily
- always be transparent, accountable and responsible in their interactions with one another
- if you set up a WhatsApp group, or other social media platform, do not share any graphic material or discuss Covid-19 news as this could contribute to existing anxiety and stress
- all communication must be appropriate for all audiences, including people from different backgrounds

Volunteers are asked to inform the local organiser in advance if they will be unable to commit to their designated time/day to volunteer. This enables another volunteer to cover the tasks.

Volunteers asked to stop any inappropriate behaviour are expected to comply immediately.

Volunteers violating these rules may be removed from the group at the sole discretion of the group admins.

Any volunteer who wishes to report a violation of this policy can speak, in confidence, to any of the group admins.

Complaints

(Group name) was set up to provide help and support for all members of the community. If we fail to do this, we want to know about it. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem but also to avoid it happening again.

Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- dissatisfaction with our service, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a service to someone in need etc.
- discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of the volunteers
- dishonesty of volunteers

Fraud/Theft

There have been valid concerns raised around fraud or vulnerable people being taken advantage of and some incidents of such crimes have already been recorded. These are extreme and very rare cases. To minimise risk, DBS checks may be carried out on volunteers.

Individuals receiving support may be asked to cross-reference shopping with receipts and change of money to ensure goods have been received appropriately. If there are any concerns the team leader will discuss any problems or issues with volunteers. Volunteers can be asked to leave or if necessary reported to the police. **Please read our advice on handling money safely.**

Feedback

Any feedback received from individuals should be shared with the group. Positive feedback can be used to highlight the positive impact volunteers are having as well encouraging others.

Exit Procedures for Volunteers

We understand that at some point a volunteer's role will come to an end. When you decide that you wish to stop then this should be discussed with your team leader, in case there are any steps we can take that will enable you to continue.

Volunteer Agreement

To ensure your volunteering is a rewarding experience and of mutual benefit to both parties, this volunteer agreement outlines our expectations of you as a volunteer and what you can expect from us.

As a Volunteer you can expect:

- a supportive and positive environment that ensures you enjoy your volunteering experience
- to be treated with respect and courtesy
- to be treated fairly regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, parental or marital status, disability, religion, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, or socio/economic background
- a named contact for support
- relevant and up to date information and advice
- recognition and thanks
- adequate public liability insurance
- respect to your right to privacy and that of your contacts

In return, we ask that you:

- support our aims and objectives
- remember that you are a representative of (group name)
- be clear about the time and commitment you can give
- meet time and duty commitments, except in exceptional circumstances, or to provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be made
- be open and honest in your communications with us
- treat other volunteers and team leaders with courtesy and respect
- let us know if you wish to change the nature of your contribution
- let us know if we can improve the service and support that you receive

This agreement is based on trust, it is not intended to be legally binding and is in no way an employment contract. This may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.