

Guidance for volunteers

Protecting yourself, and preventing the spread of COVID-19

Published 1st April 2020.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for volunteers to ensure that they are not putting themselves, or others, at risk from COVID through volunteering.

This easy to read guide can also be given out by organisations when selecting and deploying volunteers so that volunteers are informed and reassured about how they can safely go about volunteering.

It is based on national guidance from Public Health England and NHS England, and draws on work from other areas including Scotland and London.

It is in two parts:

1. Before you volunteer today – checklist

This is a check list to ensure people with symptoms of COVID-19 or who are part of the vulnerable groups are not undertaking face-to-face volunteering.

2. When you are volunteering – guidance to protect you and prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others

This covers

- a. Hand-washing and respiratory hygiene
- b. Keeping at a safe distance
- c. Handling packages and surfaces
- d. What to do if volunteering involves close contact
- e. What to do if the volunteer becomes unwell
- f. Taking care of yourself



CORONAVIRUS

**PROTECT
YOURSELF
OTHERS &
THE NHS**

For latest advice on coronavirus see <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

For further information for volunteers <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/voluntary-community-and-faith-sector/be-a-volunteer/volunteer-centres>

Volunteer agencies will carry out identity checks before you can start volunteering

BEFORE YOU VOLUNTEER TODAY: PROTECTING YOU AND OTHERS CHECK LIST

Firstly, thank you for offering to volunteer during COVID-19.

Do any of the following apply to you?

I have a high temperature or a new continuous cough – If YES.

- please stay at home for 7 days and if you are recovered and well after 7 days you can return to volunteering.

Someone in my household has a high temperature or a new continuous cough – If YES.

- please stay at home with all your household members for 14 days from the day that the first person got symptoms. If after 14 days you remain well, then you can return to volunteering. I
- If you develop symptoms within the 14 days you will need to stay at home for a further 7 days from when your symptoms started. In some cases you may be able to volunteer from home while you are household isolating.

I am aged over 70 – If YES.

- you are strongly advised to be staying at home as part of the government's measures to protect vulnerable people. Please only volunteer for roles that can be done at home and avoid face-to-face contact with other people.

I am pregnant – If YES.

- you are strongly advised to be staying at home as part of the government's measures to protect vulnerable people. Please only volunteer for roles that can be done at home and avoid face-to-face contact with other people.

Do you have any of the following underlying health conditions?

- Long term respiratory diseases – such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Long term heart disease - such as heart failure
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease - such as hepatitis
- Neurological conditions - such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, a learning disability, or cerebral palsy
- Diabetes
- Problems with your spleen such as sickle cell disease, or spleen has been removed
- Weakened immune system – resulting from conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- Seriously overweight (with a body mass index of 40+)
- Clinical conditions that put you at higher risk of severe illness

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If you answered YES to any of these underlying health conditions...

- you are strongly advised to be staying at home, as part of the government's measures to protect vulnerable people. Please only volunteer for roles that can be done at home and avoid face-to-face contact with other people.

I have received a letter from the NHS to say that I am in the extremely vulnerable category

- You should follow the guidance and advice set out in that letter. Volunteering that involves leaving your home, or any direct contact with other people, is not recommended.

If you replied NO to all the above, please follow the guidance on 'When you are volunteering'

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WHEN YOU ARE VOLUNTEERING: GUIDANCE TO PROTECT YOU AND PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Always follow good hand washing and respiratory hygiene rules. You should:

- 1. Wash your hands more often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If it is not possible to wash your hands with soap and water, then use a hand sanitiser.**
 - Wash your hands when you leave the house, arrive at work, or go into and leave someone's home.
 - Wash your hands after blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing.
 - Wash your hands before and after eating and handling food.
- 2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- 3. Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue**, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow.
- 4. Clean and disinfect** frequently touched objects and surfaces in your home. Wipe clean your mobile phone regularly (follow manufacturers instructions).

Try to keep your distance during your volunteering duties. You should:

- Leave items on the doorstep, rather than enter the house, when delivering them to someone. Knock on the door, step back 2 metres, wait for the door to open. Ask the person to take their items, leave any money as payment on the doorstep, and close the door.
- Avoid going in to someone's home unless it is necessary for the help you are giving.
- Avoid physical contact with people – keep more than 2 metres (about 3 steps) distance apart.
- If you are indoors, limit conversations to less than 15 minutes with vulnerable people
- If appropriate and possible, open a window if you are volunteering in a room for a long time.
- Wash your hands before and after each interaction with someone, for example when you enter and leave their home. Use a hand sanitiser if washing with soap and water is not possible.
- Ask the person you are helping to wash their hands too (particularly after they have received a home delivery).
- Avoid car journeys with people from outside your household where possible

Do I need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

Please note that if volunteering duties involve visiting well people (no COVID-19 symptoms) or even where people have symptoms but where you are not providing close personal care, you do **not** need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves and face masks. Please do not use PPE inappropriately so we can help to ensure the supplies of PPE go to those that need to use it.

Volunteering to support “extremely vulnerable” people

People who have been identified by the NHS as ‘extremely vulnerable’ due to a medical condition are at very high risk of severe illness if they develop COVID-19. Volunteers should not enter houses

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of people who are identified as 'extremely vulnerable'. If you do enter the household of someone who is 'extremely vulnerable' then you should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Always check with your voluntary organisation for further guidance on this.

If your volunteering duties might involve close contact with a “vulnerable person” you should:

- Check with the volunteering organisation before you start your volunteering work whether your duties will bring you and the vulnerable person into contact of less than 2 metres.
- If you are helping someone to wash, dress or with other care that involves close personal contact, you will usually be working with a registered home care organisation and should follow more detailed guidance set out in <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>. Your home care organisation will guide you about whether you need any personal protective equipment (known as PPE, such as disposable gloves and face masks) or other special equipment to do your volunteering. Please follow their instructions and only use PPE where appropriate so we can help to ensure supplies of PPE go to the people who need it most.

Handling post, packages, money and food

While food, packaging, letters and money are not thought to be the main cause of passing on the coronavirus infection, efforts should be made to ensure you wash your hands before and after handling these items.

Surfaces

Clean all surfaces before and after activities including high touch areas such as door handles, telephones, desks, computer keyboards, car door handles and steering wheels. It is good practice to wipe down your desk and other equipment you are using.

If you become unwell with a new continuous cough or high temperature while you are volunteering you should:

- Stop volunteering immediately.
- Return home if you can travel safely.
- If you are unable to get yourself home, remove yourself as far away from any vulnerable people, and call one of your household members or another person to help you to return home.
- If you feel very unwell, call 111 (or 999 in an emergency).
- Inform your Volunteering Manager (or other manager) as soon as possible, telling them that you are unwell, and give information about where you were volunteering when you became unwell.

Follow the Self Isolation guidelines for people who are unwell with coronavirus (COVID-19)
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

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Take care of yourself

This is a unique time and it is natural that in the weeks and months ahead we may feel concerned and anxious at times.

The charity [Mind](#) has suggested a number of different ways to take care of your mental health and wellbeing:

- Connect with people digitally, make plans to video chat with people you would normally see in person
- Build physical activity into your daily routine such as dancing to music, cleaning your home and following online exercise workouts
- If news stories make you feel anxious, think about switching off or limiting what you look at. Use accurate and fact-based sources of information such as the BBC or Public Health England coronavirus webpages
- Plan a daily routine
- Find ways to relax and be creative at home

You can also

- Visit [Every Mind Matters](#)
- Visit the [Healthy Surrey](#) webpages which include information on local wellbeing services

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