

Guidance for volunteers: Protecting yourself and preventing the spread of Covid-19.

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Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for volunteers to ensure they are not putting themselves or others at risk from Covid-19 through **face-to-face** volunteering.

It is based on national guidance from Public Health England, NHS England and the National Council for Voluntary Organisation's (NCVO). It also draws upon other guides published across the country. Please remember that choosing to volunteer is **a choice, freely made**.

The guidance is in two parts:

1. **Checklist before you volunteer today.** This checklist is to ensure that volunteers displaying symptoms or who are classified as vulnerable are not undertaking face-to-face volunteering.
2. **Guidance to protect you and prevent the spread of Covid-19 to others when volunteering including:**
 - i. Hand-washing and respiratory hygiene
 - ii. Keeping at a safe distance
 - iii. Handling packages and surfaces
 - iv. What to do if volunteering involves close contact
 - v. What to do if the volunteer becomes unwell
 - vi. Taking care of yourself



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.

Thank you for offering to volunteer but please remember that **choosing to volunteer is a choice, freely made**. If you decide not to volunteer for any reason your organisation will support your decision, including and up to a decision to temporarily suspend your own volunteering during this uncertain time. Please take all necessary precautions if you are immunocompromised or live with/care for someone who is immunocompromised.

If you are displaying any of the symptoms below please cease all face-to-face volunteering, go home (minimising all contact) and follow the guidance as set out by the NHS. You can find the latest advice on the NHS website [here](#).

Checklist: do any of the following apply to you?

1. **I have a high temperature or a new continuous cough. This means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)- If YES,** please do not volunteer for face-to-face roles and stay at home for 7 days.
2. **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). This includes if someone in your household has a high temperature or a new continuous cough – If YES,** please do not volunteer for face-to-face roles and stay at home with all your household members for 14 days from the day that the first person got symptoms.
3. **A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal. If YES,** please stay at home and do not volunteer face-to-face. Call 111 if you cannot get help online.
4. **I am aged over 70 – If YES,** please do not volunteer for face-to-face roles. Only those that can be done at home.
5. **I am pregnant – If YES,** please do not volunteer for face-to-face roles. Only those that can be done at home.

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

Please only volunteer for roles that can be done at home.

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

Please only volunteer for roles that can be done at home. 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' in section 2.

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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.** Following this you should 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 in line with manufacturer's instructions.

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

1. 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.
2. Avoid going into someone's home unless it is necessary for the help you are giving.
3. Avoid physical contact with people and keep more than 2 metres distance apart.
4. 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.**
5. Ask the person you are helping to wash their hands too (particularly after they have received a home delivery).
6. Avoid car journeys with people from outside your household where possible

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

- The government does not encourage the use of PPE outside of clinical settings except for a small handful of roles such as first responders.
- But if the risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then your organisation must provide this PPE free of charge to staff and volunteers who need it. **Any PPE provided must fit properly.**
- A face covering can be very simple and may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible. It needs to cover your mouth and nose. The government has developed guidance on [how to make face coverings at home and use them safely](#).
- Wearing a face covering is optional and employers should not rely on face coverings as part of their risk management strategy, as the benefits are thought to be small. If you do use one, make sure you wash your hands before and after touching it, and wash or replace it regularly. See the [guidance on face coverings](#) for more detail.

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If your volunteering duties might involve close contact with a vulnerable person or extremely vulnerable person you should:

- Check with the volunteering organisation before you start your volunteering work whether your duties will bring you and the vulnerable/extremely vulnerable person into contact of less than 2 metres.
- Government guidance for volunteering with a vulnerable person is currently under revision but 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:

If you develop any of the COVID-19 symptoms, please inform your volunteer manager or another manager immediately and go home to self-isolate or if you are seriously unwell, call NHS 111 or dial 999. Please:

- Keep at least 2 meters away from others
- Avoid touching anything
- Advise your volunteer manager (or other manager) of any areas you've been to or surfaces you may have touched in the office
- Advise of anyone you've been in close contact with since feeling unwell
- If you are able to drive home, you should do so. If you have arrived by public transport or car share, you should arrange a taxi or a driver to take you home.
- If you are seriously unwell and require medical attention, we advise you isolated while you wait for advice or an ambulance

Your organisation should arrange for an office deep clean after any affected volunteer has left the building. Please see [here](#) to follow the Self Isolation guidelines for people who are unwell with coronavirus (COVID-19).

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 including the following:

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- **Connect with people.** You can either connect digitally and make plans to video chat with people you would normally see in person or connect with others in similar situations as you may find it helpful to talk about these worries with someone you trust, especially if they are in a similar situation.
- **Decide on your routine.** Plan on how you will spend your time, it may help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall. If you are not happy with your usual routine, this might be a chance to do things differently.
- **Try to keep active.** Build physical activity into your daily routine such as dancing to music, cleaning your home and following online exercise workouts
- **Get as much sunlight, fresh air and nature as you can.** Brining nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. It can improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, and make you feel more relaxed.
- **Take care with news and information.** 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
- **Find ways to relax and be creative at home.** There are lots of different ways that you can relax, take notice of the present moment and use your creative side including DIY, colouring and mindfulness.

You can also visit

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

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