

A few things to consider when setting up or running

INFORMAL COMMUNITY GROUPS RESPONDING TO COVID-19 (CORONA VIRUS)

This guide is meant as a starting point to help volunteers, leaders and those we are helping stay safe and to help you avoid unintended negative consequences while you do your best to help those in need. Each group will need to create their own ways of working to suit their area and their community.

Misunderstandings and raised tempers can be common in stressful situations. Although everyone's motives within your group are genuine, it is important that you take steps to protect the vulnerable and volunteers from the virus and also from malicious/false allegations, stress, overload and abuse.

Who else

- Before doing anything, check if anyone else has already set something up in your area.

Your objectives

- Be clear about what you want to achieve. It might be to help housebound people with shopping, to set up a system to identify and reach out to those in need, and/or to support people facing financial hardship due to loss of income. Your objectives may change over time. Communicate well so activities are coordinated and expectations are managed.

Risks

- Complete a risk assessment – looking at the risk to people being helped, volunteers, organisers.
- Draw up some simple advice to volunteers and those they are helping to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. For instance, not entering a home; keeping a safe distance, washing hands before handling shopping.
- What methods you will have in place for a volunteer to report someone potentially having the virus?
- What procedures will you follow to reduce the risk from scammers and false accusations? For instance, volunteers never taking a bank card; certain named volunteers dealing with cash; limiting the cost of any shopping; volunteers not entering people's homes; buddying volunteers.
- If the situation continues for an extended period, you may also wish to consider having different volunteers help the same person (this reduces the possibility of inappropriate relationships forming).

Wellness

- Ways to mitigate volunteers receiving calls at inappropriate times of the day and night?
- Ways to reduce the stress and demands on volunteers.
- How will you cover volunteers coming down with the virus? How will you support the volunteer?
- Do not volunteer outside the home if government guidelines say you should be self-isolating.

Expectations

In moments like this everyone wants to help, which means people may put themselves in uncomfortable situations. Make sure all your volunteers are aware of expectations, and that they are not required to do anything beyond the agreed task.

- Will volunteers shop for alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical drugs? If you have a policy of not buying alcohol you may wish to consider uncomfortable aspects such as that alcohol withdrawal can be life threatening for someone who is alcohol dependent.
- How will you deal with complaints if a volunteer has to substitute products or if items are missing?

Data

With so much going on, it might be easy to forget that if you hold someone's data (phone number, address, etc) you have a duty to keep this safe.

- Have a privacy statement that you can give to people saying what you will use their information for and how long you will keep it.
- Collect only the minimum data required to do the job and dispose of it safely/delete it when no longer needed.
- Store the data safely, in a locked cabinet or password protected document, and have one person in the group who is responsible for the data, with a deputy.
- Only share what is necessary for volunteers to carry out a task, not all the individual's information.
- Don't give the data to other groups or organisations.
- Ask people not to share personal details of people needing support on social media

Safeguarding

- Who can volunteer and how? There are ways to still help, even if self-isolating. Do you have a minimum age?
- Will a member of your group act as safeguarding lead? How will people report concerns? Will you provide your volunteers with information and telephone numbers to report safeguarding concerns?
- What advice will you give volunteers if they are concerned that someone needs medical treatment?

To report a Safeguarding concern for children or adults call Derbyshire County Council on 01629 533190.

Call the police on 999 in an emergency.

If you are not a professional involved with the child or family, you do not have to give your name and your conversation will be treated confidentially.

Advice and Support for Community Groups

For more detailed information and guidance contact the staff at Derbyshire Dales CVS on 01629 812154 or enquiries@ddcv.org.uk and they will be happy to help.

Further detailed advice

- [Leafleting protocol](#)
- [Delivery protocol](#)
- [Derbyshire County Council Covid-19 volunteering guidance](#)
- [Prescription collections](#)
- [Safeguarding and DBS for mutual aid volunteers](#)

We are grateful to Hunts Forum, Cambridge CVS and Queercare for reference to their information in this document.