COVID 19 Response - Volunteer Support

# CVS Cheshire East is here to support you if you are organising some sort of community response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some things that you should think about.

Find organisations in your area

# Cheshire East Council, AGE UK Cheshire East and CVS Cheshire East have been working together to map existing organisations that are facilitating volunteer support to the public

# The best way to engage is to link up with one of the organisations that are already established e.g. your local Town or Parish Council, or a community organisation

# Cheshire East Council has set up a scheme called People Helping People <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/coronavirus/cheshire-east-people-helping-people.aspx>

# For members of the public at most risk, the NHS Responders scheme will be offering practical support

Setting up a community response

# If there is nothing already established in your area, then we encourage you to start small

# Offer support to people that you know, your neighbours and friends

# Open up your group to people that you know, to widen the reach and work together

# Consider the potential risk of opening up your group to unknown volunteers and offering services on a scale that you cannot meet

# If you want to formalise your group, then you need to have at least 3 people to act as trustees, and develop a constitution. CVS can help you with this

Communications

# Advertise an email address or phone number that people can contact you on (consider buying a pay as go mobile for this purpose)

# Advertise your support via Facebook and other social media, but also consider leaflets to reach those that are not IT savvy

# Volunteers may become infected themselves or have to look after family members so they need to let you know asap

# Ensure that all volunteers’ family have a number to contact you on in case of an emergency

# Ensure that volunteers have some evidence of the task they have been asked to carry out e.g. a Whatsapp or text message, an email, a note on headed paper as this can be shown to the police if asked why the volunteer is out in public.

# Ask volunteers to confirm via text message when they have picked up medication, and when they have delivered it.

Tasks that volunteers could do

# Share information about local shops and services that will deliver to the door

# Pick up and deliver shopping or medication.

# Pick up post for the post box

# Ring people and have a chat over the phone or on an internet video call

# Walk people’s dogs

# Gardening

Data Protection

# Only collect the information that you need to collect

# Tell people how you are keeping their data (CVS can provide a template privacy notice)

# Keep data secure in a password protected spreadsheet. Keep the number of people with access to the password to a minimum. Ensure that volunteers don’t ask devices to ‘remember password’. Change the password regularly and when anyone with access to the password leaves your group

# Avoid keeping paper documents

# Ask volunteers to sign up to a confidentiality and data protection policy (CVS can provide templates)

# Never publish personal information on public forums such as social media. These forums can be a vital way to connect people at this difficult time but keep any personal information controlled, use private forums such as Whatsapp groups and even then, only if necessary.

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Finances

* It is not appropriate for volunteers to accept credit/debit cards from people asking for help in order to buy resources on their behalf as this is a safeguarding risk.
* Avoid money changing hands if at all possible. Encourage people to prepay for goods over the phone, and a trusted volunteer can simply deliver them to their homes. This is often possible with local independent shops.
* To reduce the risk of fraud, we recommend that wherever possible you do your shopping and come back with a receipt before asking for money from people in self-isolation. We also recommend that volunteers not make purchases larger than £30 for any one person or family in self-isolation.
* You should keep a central record of any payments made. There should also be a central record of any concerns raised in respect of payments, and make people aware of how they can raise a concern.
* Where possible payments should be made by bank transfer or paypal to minimise the risk of passing on the virus, but if that’s not possible then you can disinfect any cash you receive using soapy water.
* CVS is looking into options for processing payments securely

Safeguarding

# Ask each volunteer to complete an application form and ask to view ID

# Take up at least 1 reference for volunteers by email or phone

# DBS check volunteers where appropriate (CVS can help cover the cost of this)

# Ensure volunteers have read your volunteer handbook (including information about safeguarding policy, confidentiality, health and safety and other key policies) and have an understanding of what to do if they have a concern (CVS can provide a template)

# Consider having ID badges for volunteers to have so that people know who they are

# Keep a record of your volunteers, with alternative contact details for their next of kin in case of an emergency

# Ask volunteers to ‘pair up’ (preferably who don’t know each other), but maintain social distancing.

# Volunteers must not enter someone’s home. Any deliveries must be placed on the door step, and any befriending must be through phone or video.

# DBS checks should be carried out in line with government guidelines <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak> which is essentially only if supporting someone you know to be a vulnerable adult

Infection Control

# Ensure that volunteers keep a suitable distance – do not enter people’s homes.

# If delivering leaflets, wash hands before and after. Do not lick fingers to separate, keep leaflets in a plastic wallet

# If delivering supplies, leave them on the doorstep, ring the bell and step 2 metres away. Wash hands before and after

# Consider providing Personal Protective Equipment such as disposable gloves

# If volunteers have symptoms or feel unwell they should stop volunteering immediately

Insurance

# Ensure that you have public liability insurance in place to cover your volunteers

# Ask all volunteers that are using a vehicle for their volunteering tasks to confirm that they have current vehicle insurance