

VOLUNTEERING SAFELY GUIDE.

A one stop shop for help and advice about volunteering, keeping safe and supporting vulnerable people at this time of public health crisis

STAY AT HOME. PROTECT THE NHS. SAVE LIVES

Welcome and thank you for stepping up and helping Lancashire's massive relief effort to support our most vulnerable residents.

This guide has been created by the Our Lancashire and Lancashire County Council Community Projects teams to assist groups and organisations volunteering across Lancashire in response to the Covid-19 national emergency.

It is a combination of government guidelines, rules and best practice advice to keep you and others safe. The guidance has been reviewed by Lancashire County Councils consultants in Public Health to ensure that the advice is correct.

If you have any questions, then please contact one of our team [Our Lancashire Team](#)

OUR LANCASHIRE

Our Lancashire launched in November 2019 with an aim of supporting community groups, strengthening communities and helping the socially isolated and most vulnerable.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis we are continuing this work by supporting the local neighbourhood hubs and helping them connect with groups and organisations, to ensure that by working together we support those that most need it, in the most effective way.

We are encouraging any group or organisation supporting their community, whether it is shopping or deliveries, providing meals or online activities or some other amazing way to keep people connected, to register and create a group on the Our Lancashire website visit www.ourlancashire.org.uk It is free, quick and simple to do.

Listing your information is simple, click "Join Our Lancashire" in the top right corner, input your details and you will be sent a verification email.

Once you have verified your email, you need to visit the website and log in, from your dashboard you can then "Create A Group" for example "The Corona Helpers".

This is where you will tell people about who you are and what your offer is. If for example, it is fresh bread deliveries or you can send out bedding plants, be sure to make that clear in your text (so people do not think they have to visit your location) and how people can order from you.

We will check each listing to make sure it is suitable, relevant and clear and will publish it once we have verified it.

HOW TO HELP SAFELY

For the latest information from the Government on how to help safely, please visit the gov.uk website [here](#).

WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT?

You can only leave your house to provide support to people who are in isolation if you fulfil ALL of the conditions below:

- You are well and have no symptoms like a cough or high temperature and nobody in your household does
- You are under 70
- You are not pregnant
- You do not have any long-term health conditions that make you vulnerable to coronavirus.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is crucial in the response to coronavirus.

However, volunteering that requires going out of the house is now only permitted in certain circumstances. If you are well and are not at risk from coronavirus, you can undertake essential activities including:

- Delivering food
- Helping people with their medical needs, such as picking up prescriptions
- Providing essential care or to help a vulnerable person or person(s), including through essential public and voluntary services, such as food banks, homeless services, and blood donation sessions

To register as a telephone befriender or community support volunteer please visit the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership website (please note this offer is currently full but people needing support can still be matched with a volunteer).

[Lancashire Volunteer Partnership](#)

If you are volunteering for an organisation, it is good practice to get some form of ID or proof from your volunteering organisation but not essential. If you are stopped by Lancashire Police, they will ask you who you are volunteering for but will not currently insist on written proof but they may follow that up if they have reasons to be suspicious.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

For the latest information from the Government on how to social distance yourself safely, please visit the gov.uk website [here](#)

What is social distancing?

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

As an individual, they are to:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information.
- Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

As a volunteer group leader or volunteer of a group, you must:

- Adhere to the individual social distancing measures
- Ensure you and other volunteers maintain a safe distance of 2 metres from each other when undertaking activities such as providing community support, preparing food, travelling in a vehicle
- If using or travelling in a vehicle, it should be cleaned regularly (as a minimum between each 'shift') with normal household cleaning products and with an emphasis on frequently touched surfaces i.e. steering wheel, door handles, gear stick, other controls.
- Wash your hands. Clean your hands frequently by washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or, if soap and water is unavailable, by using hand sanitiser. This is one of the most effective ways of reducing the spread of infection
- Try to make contactless deliveries. If the person being helped with a "drop off" of essentials can be contacted in advance and you have their number, an agreed safe place and time slot, then there may be no need to even knock/ring the bell. Leave the item(s) in the agreed place, move to a safe distance and phone them to inform them it is there.
- As the organisation coordinating and managing volunteers you will be responsible for any policy, procedural and risk assessment arrangements for your volunteers and to your volunteers. it will be helpful but not essential if you can issue ID or proof of voluntary role your volunteers that they can show to clients or Police.
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FREE VOLUNTEER DBS CHECKS FOR GROUPS

If based on risk assessment, your volunteers need DBS checking, if you register your group on the Our Lancashire website www.ourlancashire.org.uk you can qualify for up to 15 volunteers to receive free DBS checks through Burnley CVS.

To register, please contact the CVS either by phone 01282 433740 or info@bprcvs.co.uk (Terms and conditions apply).

DATA PROTECTION & GDPR

During your volunteering, you may come across personal and sensitive information about individuals as part of the support you will offer. It is important that all information stays safe and confidential in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). We want you to treat other people's personal information in the same way you would want yours to be treated.

If you do acquire information about an individual you may be supporting (for example, names, addresses and possible medical information), we ask that you maintain confidentiality and do not discuss or disclose any data or information with anyone who does not need to know.

PAYING FOR GOODS OR SERVICES

In normal circumstance, we discourage volunteers from handling cash due to risks. However, due to Covid-19, in some circumstances there may be the need for volunteers to handle financial transactions on behalf of those that are self-isolating to pay for food, household items and medicines (prescription and non-prescription).

In order to protect both the volunteer and the individual in self-isolation, contactless payments i.e. those that do not use cash are the preferred option. However, you should not share personal information such as bank or card details. Receipts for all items purchased should be provided by the volunteer, with the goods for the person in self-isolation.

Many retailers are now offering those in self-isolation the option to purchase using their debit/credit card, an online volunteer card/voucher that can be emailed to the volunteer, and then used to purchase the required items. This reduces contact, and the need for handling cash or handing over personal financial information.

In some areas, organised groups have pre-purchased gift cards that can be used by volunteers and then returned to the group, and secure payments are then made to the group organiser by those in self-isolation. Other charities/groups are using their account to purchase items and then accepting payments using portable contactless machines when delivering the items.

SEVEN MINUTE BRIEFING FOR VOLUNTEERING

Click here to access the [7 minute COVID-19 briefing for Volunteers](#).

PUBLICITY

Many groups are very active on social media and look to promote the support they are offering in the community. While photos of delivering food parcels or shopping to people in self-isolation help promote the group, it can pose a risk to those that are elderly or vulnerable. They may also not be comfortable with their image being shared online or even understand what the photo will be used for.

Avoid taking photos that could identify vulnerable people or their addresses and ensure you have consent of those pictured before publishing photos.

SAFEGUARDING

Please see the advice on our safeguarding page on how to report concerns [Safeguarding](#).

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB

You can make contact with your local neighbourhood hub [here](#).

Please be aware they are busy supporting vulnerable people and will answer your enquiry as soon as they can.

FUNDING TO SUPPORT GROUPS

A new fund developed to support groups and volunteering at this time can be accessed [here](#).

CONTACT OUR LANCASHIRE

For groups wishing to support their local neighbourhood hub, or if you wish to register your group on the Our Lancashire website, please contact your local Our Lancashire/LCC staff member listed [Our Lancashire Team](#).

INFORMATION TO SUPPORT PHYSICAL & MENTAL WELLBEING

Volunteering to help others is a fantastic way to support your community; however, it is crucial that volunteers look after their own personal physical and mental health and wellbeing. Some people can become overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis, concerns over physical contact, reduced social contact and the volume of requests for help. It is ok to ask for help for you if feel you need it.

Please note, some of the information linked to within this supporting information was written before Coronavirus guidelines were introduced. Current Government instructions must be followed.

This information can be used to support you whilst you are acting as a volunteer and it can also be used for helpful signposting.

1. Urgent help with suicidal feelings

If someone has seriously harmed themselves, or think they are going to:

- Call 999 or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency department.
- For urgent medical advice you can call the NHS 111 (England)

If someone has had thoughts about suicide and needs to talk to someone, here is some help:

- Ask for an urgent GP appointment
- Contact a Samaritan. Telephone 116 123 for free anytime day or night.
- There is very helpful information from I need urgent help from www.mind.org.uk
- Here is a link to find organisations that can help in the person's local area – Getting Help

Training video for suicide prevention

Here is some free on-line training from the Zero Suicide Alliance to help you identify when someone is presenting with suicidal thoughts/behaviours and provide support and signpost appropriately.

- Talk2me Save a Life (An introduction to suicide prevention. In just 10 minutes, you could learn life-saving skills.)
- Talk2me Save a Life (A more in depth suicide prevention training session which aims to give you the life-saving skills and confidence to help someone who may be considering suicide.

2. Wellbeing, Mental Health Helpline and Texting Service

Confidential support for people requiring emotional support in relation to their own mental health or that of someone they know

Now open 24 hours a day, every day. Freephone 0800 9154640, or text Hello to 07860 022 846. You can also use the site to send a message.

3. Big White Wall

The Big White Wall is a free, digital support and recovery service for people who are stressed, anxious, low or not coping. At the heart of Big White Wall is its community of members who support and help each other and share what's troubling them in a safe and anonymous environment. It is supported by trained professionals, who are online 24/7. You can sign up to the site yourself – you don't need to go via your GP.

4. Every Mind Matters from Lancashire County Council

A good place to start if you are looking for resources and information to help support mental health wellbeing. To find out more about how to look after mental health and create an action plan visit Every Mind Matters NHS.

5. Coronavirus and your wellbeing from Mind.org.uk

Includes practical advice for staying at home and taking care of your mental health – support for work – benefits and housing – NHS guidance about Coronavirus and what to do if you, or someone you live with has symptoms of Coronavirus.

6. Keeping active at home

Here are some ideas to try:

- Be a Walkie-Talkie – Instead of sitting for phone calls, stand up and walk around as you take them.
- Don't sit in the same position for too long – Frequent short breaks are better for your back than fewer long ones. It gives the muscles a chance to relax while others take the strain.
- Indoor activities Have a look on line to see what you can do [Sport England](#) have some great ideas. Here are some other ideas [NHS Gym-free workouts](#), [COVID-19 coronavirus: how to exercise at home](#).
- Download the [Active 10 App](#) (NHS). See how you can add more regular bursts of brisk walking to your daily routine with activity tracking, encouragement and achievable milestones.

7. Developing your personal resilience

This current situation with Covid-19 is challenging for our mental health and wellbeing like never before and has changed our worlds and the emotional impact is becoming very real. [Practical toolkit to help you build resilience](#) is a useful guide which offers free resources to support mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. Bereavement

Bereaved people may have to deal with increased trauma, and may be cut off from some of their usual support network. Those who are already struggling with bereavement, or whose relatives or friends die through other causes will also be affected. [Coronavirus: dealing with bereavement and grief](#) by Cruse Bereavement Care, is a helpful resource.

9. Money worries

For concerns about reduced income as a result of the Coronavirus this information may be helpful:

Benefits:

- [Low Incomes Tax Reform Group \(LITRG\)](#)
- [Money Advice Service: Coronavirus – what it means for you.](#)
- [Coronavirus – check what benefits you can get with information from Citizens Advice.](#)

Other information:

- [Citizens Advice: Coronavirus – what it means for you](#)
- [Stepchange : Coronavirus and your finances](#)
- [GamCare](#) – for Information, advice and support for anyone affected by problem gambling. Tel: 0808 8020133
- [Lancashire Victim Services](#) – Support for victims of abuse, including financial abuse. Tel: 0300 3230085

10. Living alone and your wellbeing

It can be tough living through this crisis alone. However, there are lots of things you can do to get through. Remember, you are not alone and this situation won't last for ever – it's a chapter in your book, not the whole story! Do an activity from each of the 4 areas below:

- Connect with others – Find new ways to connect with others. There are so many options using social media. With WhatsApp/Zoom/ Skype etc you can see people you are talking with. Online

groups such as choirs and bookclubs are springing up all over social media such as on Facebook.

- Emotional wellbeing – For a feel good feeling help someone else out such as by making a friendly phone call to a neighbour. Connect with nature by going outside or opening a window. You could also try a mindfulness meditation to find a feeling of calm. Headspace is a mindfulness App you may find helpful. You could try the Active Coping Calendar. Remember the Samaritans (telephone 116 123) are there every day, all day to talk. The NHS Every Mind Matters website has lots of resources and advice to help you look after your mental wellbeing.
- Distraction – What could you do to distract yourself? Why not make a list of great films to watch, rediscover books, use a free App or YouTube to learn something new and take up a new hobby such as drawing or learning to sing – let your imagination fly! To reduce boredom, do something different each day or a routine activity in a new way.
- Physical – There are lots of inventive ideas with ways to exercise and have fun during lockdown. Joe Wick's PE sessions are proving very popular. There are many on-line classes to join or you could simply go out for a walk each day, following government guidelines of course.