

REINTRODUCING VOLUNTEERS?

SOME GOOD PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE GROUPS BRINGING VOLUNTEERS BACK TO THEIR ROLES IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

The following are some things to think about and resources to help you as you consider reintroducing volunteers to their roles in light of COVID-19. Please note this is just a first step and guidelines are changing regularly. You must at all times follow the guidelines that are being issued by the NI Executive so as everyone continues to try to stop the spread of the virus. It is still paramount that you only reintroduce activities when it is safe to do so and when you have all the measures in place to help you do that. The safety of everyone involved in your organisation is the most important factor when making decisions about getting your activities up and running again – and that includes your volunteers!

- Within your overall organisational risk register you should identify the risks associated with the volunteer roles that you have in your organisation and plan measures to prevent spread of the virus thinking about all the potential volunteer environments, the people you are working with or the way volunteers need to travel to get to their volunteering. See [Risk Assessment Template](#) (*Word download*).
- Talk to your insurance company to let them know the steps you are taking and any changes you are making to your activities.
- Be prepared to have to redesign your roles – think outside the box. See [Role Description Template](#) (*Word download*). Update your role descriptions so as volunteers are very aware of the new boundaries and expectations. You may of course still want to continue with some of the virtual roles that you developed during Lockdown so think creatively about what meets your needs.
- Source and put in place measures needed such as PPE, screens, hand sanitisers, signs, posters to help volunteers feel safe as well as think through how you are going to communicate with volunteers about the risks and the safety measures.
- You have hopefully been in touch with your volunteers throughout Lockdown but now you need to communicate with individual volunteers to see if they are interested in coming back, are they well enough and any ideas and concerns they might have. Surveys can be useful here. Volunteers should never feel pressured into coming back – only if they are happy to do so!
- You should have conversations with volunteers about whether or not they are in an at-risk group or living with someone who is. For example, over 70s can return to volunteering but the public health advice is still that they should take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household (given that there is a higher risk of coronavirus having a more serious impact as you get older). See <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/volunteering-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>. If you are shielding or consider yourself to be high risk you should continue to follow the [government's advice](#) which is to stay at home as much as possible and keep visits outside to a minimum.

- Given there will be changes to how your organization will carry out activities it is strongly advised that you provide volunteers with an induction to the role again and training where needed (you can deliver online, through written briefings or socially distanced class room). This will allow you to emphasise the key messages that you want to put across specific to your role, but it is likely to include:
 - ✓ Information from the risk assessment of the roles.
 - ✓ Up to date health and safety advice and guidelines.
 - ✓ Hand washing and hygiene measures required.
 - ✓ PPE and other equipment available.
 - ✓ Social distancing and minimizing contact where possible.
 - ✓ Guidelines around the role and scenarios with the client groups (if relevant).
 - ✓ Stopping volunteering if they feel unwell.
 - ✓ Self-care and wellbeing.
 - ✓ Key changes to policy and practice e.g. safeguarding policy, code of behaviour.
- Volunteers may be feeling anxious or they may find themselves in difficult situations with clients where they may need specific advice. Volunteer Managers should be prepared to provide additional support and be available to talk things through more than usual.
- Keep volunteers informed of all changes in Government guidelines and make them aware of webinars, briefings or training that might help.
- Be aware that some volunteers will not want to come back yet for various reasons. That is ok! Think about other roles that they could do for you virtually so as they still feel connected and useful.
- Be aware that some volunteers will not want to come back at all – think about how you can get their feedback and how you can recognize their efforts.
- If you have gaps in your volunteer base talk to Volunteer Now about the BeCollective platform (see below) where there are people who have already expressed interest in volunteering waiting to help!
- Rethink your recruitment and support procedures – you have maybe done things differently during the last few months – give some thought to how it worked and consider continuing with some of it if it enables you to flexible, inclusive and innovative e.g. online applications and interviews.

Update September 2020: It is understood that where there are local restrictions, volunteering in the area or going to another area, including going into a person's house as part of an agreed volunteer role, is permitted.

SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

General Government Guidelines around COVID

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-northern-ireland>
- <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/campaign/coronavirus-updates-support-your-business>

Volunteer Now Free COVID-19 Resources

- <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/helpachother/>

Volunteer Now Free Volunteer Management Software – BE COLLECTIVE

- <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteer-management/>

Volunteering in Charity Shops Post COVID

- <https://www.charityretail.org.uk/we-have-published-our-reopening-pack/>

Volunteering Outdoors

- http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/hub_news/vsg-covid-19-recovery-planning-guidance/
- https://mcusercontent.com/58669d6895e71c03602eb4f52/files/3405c35d-1c52-4d44-8ecf-47c1f83b3d10/National_perspectives_in_approach_from_across_UK_and_Ireland.pdf

Fundraising

- <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/more-from-us/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-public-fundraising-guidance>

Volunteer Driving

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/safer-travel-guidance-public-transport-users-walkers-cyclists-drivers>
- <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/safer-transport-guidance-public-transport-operators-during-coronavirus>

Guidance for Community Transport

- <https://ctauk.org/covid19-guidance/>

Youth Volunteering

Education Authority Youth Service - Youth Restart Publication

- <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/09/Youth-Restart-2nd-Edition.pdf>

Education Authority Website

- <https://www.eani.org.uk/youth-services-support>

Youth Online Website

- <https://www.youthonline.org.uk/restart/>

Disclaimer

Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure information in this publication is accurate. However, it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith without accepting liability. If relevant, we therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking any action on the matters covered herein.

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