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. 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!

July 2022 Update:
Please note that volunteering can be carried out within government's Covid-19 restrictions, assuming all safety measures are in place. We are still asking volunteer involving organisations to consider the regulations and guidance very carefully to see how they could apply to their own volunteer roles.

We should continue to make safer choices and follow public health advice. Working from home guidance is in place. With this being said, the guidelines continue to state that you can leave home to provide voluntary or charitable services.

- Within your overall organisational risk register, you should identify the risks associated with the volunteer roles that you have in your organisation. Risk assessing will support decision making and help manage risk. This process will help 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.

- 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- have a look at our volunteer role description. 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 stay safe. 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 before returning, you need to communicate with individual volunteers to see if they are interested in coming back; check if they are well enough and seek any ideas and concerns that 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 engage with volunteers to ensure they feel confident to take part, providing them with all the relevant information they need about social distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, risk assessments, etc.

- You should also have conversations with volunteers about whether or not they are in an at-risk group or living with someone who is. For example, volunteers who are vulnerable, including people over 70, can now return to volunteering. However, the public health advice is that they should take particular care, by minimising contact with others outside their household (given that there is a higher risk of coronavirus having a more serious impact as you get older).

- Given there will be changes to how your organisation 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 a socially distanced classroom). 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.
    – Relevant information that applies from existing guidelines
    – PPE and other equipment available.
    – Social distancing and minimising 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 recognise their efforts.

- If you have gaps in your volunteer base talk to Volunteer Now about the Be Collective 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 be flexible, inclusive and innovative e.g. online applications and interviews.

SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

General Government Guidelines around COVID

- https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/volunteering-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic

- https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19

- https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus

- https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/campaign/coronavirus-updates-support-your-business

Volunteer Now Free COVID-19 Resources
- https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/helpeachother/

Volunteer Now Free Volunteer Management Software – BE COLLECTIVE
- https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities/#/volunteering?locationVirtual=true&q=&radius=10mi&sortBy=relevance

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-1c52-4d44-8ecf47c1f83b3d10/National_perspectives_in_approach_from_across_UK_and_Ireland.pdf

Fundraising
- https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/more-from-us/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-publicfundraising-guidance

Volunteer Driving
- https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/safer-travel-guidance-public-transport-users-walkerscyclists-drivers

- https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/safer-transport-guidance-public-transportoperators-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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