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GUIDANCE FOR VOLUNTEERING

FOR GROUPS & ORGANISATIONS

GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering is a gift of time, expertise, knowledge and care and makes a real difference to those in need. Volunteers, however, are not free. Although they are not paid, your group or organisation does need to invest in time and resources to support them in their work. The following guidance will help your group or organisation support volunteers and take steps to ensure your activity or project is safe and successful.

The overwhelming priorities here are safety and safeguarding for all groups and organisations. Guidance that applies to registered charities and organisations ONLY is marked with an asterisk*

- **DO stay up to date with advice regarding safety and protection during the COVID-19 outbreak**
 - Stay safe and minimise your risks relating to Coronavirus – follow official advice:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
 - <https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>
- DO cease volunteering activity if/when you are asked to do so or when it is unsafe.
- DO register your volunteering activity with www.candobristol.co.uk and Voscur (info@voscur.org)
 - Tell us if you are stopping your activity
- DO assess the suitability and of individuals wanting to volunteer. Before they start working you should carry out a pre-activity assessment and risk assessment (guidance on risk assessment follows this section). A basic registration assessment should include;
 - Skills and experience
 - DBS status – essential for working with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults
 - Mental and physical health and any access requirements
 - Availability and flexibility
 - Valid license check if driving is required/offered
- DO check that your public liability insurance covers volunteers*
 - Age Limits: There's no upper age limit on volunteering. However, some organisations' insurance policies do not cover volunteers if they are under 16 or over a certain age (usually 80).
 - DO remember that children (under 18's) are classed as vulnerable so work in line with relevant legislation/guidance.
- DO make sure you have emergency contact details for each and every volunteer
- DO create a contact person and process for your volunteers, for activities and emergencies
- DO set out what your group or organisation will provide;
 - how you brief, train or instruct your volunteers
 - how you will treat volunteers
 - what you expect from volunteers
 - how you will support and safeguard volunteers during activities
 - how you will deal with emergencies
- DO keep records of all your volunteers and their activities – it is important that you know who is working with you at all times
- DO check in and co-ordinate with other groups and organisations in your area
- DO collaborate and make the most of opportunities to share resources, combine efforts or get help and support

- DO consider splitting into teams if you have a large number of people (50+) registered. This will make it easier to manage activities and minimise the spread of coronavirus
- DO consider a back-up plan for each volunteer deployment/activity
- DO have a procedure in place to deal with problems e.g.
 - Unreliable volunteers
 - Bullying or unfriendly behaviour
 - Volunteers overstepping boundaries or breaking rules (e.g. working alone when they shouldn't be or ringing the volunteer manager out of hours
A volunteer not being suitable for a role
- DO 'debrief' your volunteers
 - They will be gathering useful information and insights whilst they carry out activities which could be useful to you or another group or organisation
 - They may be distressed by what happens and may need support from your group or organisation
- DO have a clear and easy procedure for complaints by a volunteer or about a volunteer. Make sure all service users and volunteers know about it.

AND SOME DON'TS

- DON'T bypass DBS checks if your activity involves volunteers entering the homes of or being alone with vulnerable children, young people and/or adults. We **strongly** advise that **only** those with the correct DBS check (see Risk Assessment below) are permitted to do this. It is vitally important that you assess the risk to vulnerable children, young people and adults and take steps to safeguard them, and your volunteers
- DON'T assume that all volunteers know one another, make introductions and build your team
- DON'T assume that volunteers understand the impact of their work or what they are supposed to be working on. Make sure you communicate clearly with your volunteers by taking the first minutes of your volunteer activity to assign tasks and leaders/supervisors
- DON'T overwork or overload your volunteers, particularly those that always show up and put in a lot of effort. Speak to neighbouring groups and organisations to see if you can share resources and/or go to www.candobristol.co.uk to register an 'ask' for more help
- DON'T ask volunteers to handle money or perform financial transactions on behalf of people in the community. Some of the requests will be about shopping for supplies – if your group or organisation feels that this is a necessary part of your activity, please get advice and guidance from Voscur (info@voscur.org) about the safe handling of potentially vulnerable people's money
- DON'T leave people out of the communication loop. Set up a group-chat, e-mail chain, Facebook group or some other form of communication to stay in touch
- DON'T postpone volunteer activity at the last minute, unless this is unavoidable in the current circumstances
- DON'T ignore problems. Be prepared to deal with any issues that arise promptly and fairly.