

Data Protection and COVID-19

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has made it clear that 'data protection rules will not stop you from helping those in need' but that still 'means [taking proper care](#) of things like people's names and addresses as well as more sensitive details about their health or religion.'

Data protection legislation relates to all those about whom you keep personal data: your organisation, members, workers, volunteers and people who use your services.

Your organisation should already have a data protection policy ([here's a template](#)) which sets out how you deal with personal information, and this should be applied to the collection of all new data resulting from your response to COVID-19. There should also be someone in your organisation who is responsible for data protection.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) sets out seven key principles which should form the basis of your approach to handling personal data:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency (tell people what you'll do with their data).
- Purpose limitation (only use people's data for the things they've agreed to).
- Data minimisation (don't keep data you don't need/use).
- Accuracy (make sure data is correct and up to date as far as possible).
- Storage limitation (don't keep data after you're finished using it).
- Integrity and confidentiality (take reasonable measures to keep your data secure).
- Accountability (keep records to show you've complied with the principles).

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has provided guidance for charities on [how to comply with GDPR](#). Specifically in relation to the current COVID-19 response, your organisation should consider:

- Building data protection into any new services and fundraising activities.
- Including a confidentiality statement in volunteer agreements.
- Your lawful basis for collection of new data e.g. consent, contract.
- Special protection for children and young people and those not able to consent.
- Your policy about any sharing of data with third parties.
- Procedures for detecting and dealing with any data breaches.
- Updating privacy notices about data handling and individuals' rights to data.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has produced helpful resources:

- A [blog for community groups](#) setting out what they need to know about data protection and Covid-19.
- A [template privacy notice](#) so groups can explain how they use and manage data.

The ICO emphasise that the safety and security of the public is its main concern in the current health emergency and recognises that additional direct communications, data collection and sharing may be required in the interest of public health.

An ICO helpline is also available for information and advice on data protection: 0303 123 1113.

Voscur is here to support VCSE organisations. For support, advice and guidance, please contact us: info@voscur.org 0117 909 9949