

Wednesday 18 March 2020, 11:00am

BRISTOL'S CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESPONSE

GUIDANCE FOR VCSE ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Bristol has a remarkable voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, built and sustained over many decades to deliver services that support and enable individuals and communities. In the current national situation, Bristol's VCSE organisations are of crucial importance in the fight against COVID-19. That said, we want you to be safe and for your organisations and groups to be able to continue doing outstanding work in our communities.

Although working remotely, the Voscur Team is working to maintain services. The following information is provided to help your organisation respond quickly to the current situation. If you need help or advice, please contact us via info@voscur.org or by phone 0117 909 9949.

Stay safe, keep well.

Yours sincerely



Sandra Meadows

Chief Executive Officer

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Like many of you, the Voscur Team is now working remotely with the aim of maintaining as many services as possible. We have a contingency plan in place to reduce risks to our staff, volunteers and visitors and to mitigate the possible impacts on our work. We advise all VCSE organisations to do the same.

We know that VCSE organisations have different needs and serve different communities and that some struggle to recruit volunteers while others have waiting lists. In the current climate, we strongly encourage organisations to collaborate and communicate as much as possible to find the best way to serve their communities. If Voscur can help to enable and facilitate this in your local community, please get in touch.

We are also holding a virtual meeting on **Thursday 19 March** with a number of community groups to explore a potential co-ordinated approach to support.

Advice for organisations and employers:

- Government advice for employers is [here](#).
- ACAS advice is [here](#).

As employers and volunteer managers, we have a duty of care to everyone who works for us. We will also want to try to continue our work and support those who rely on us. The following highlights key areas for organisations and groups to consider in the current climate.

Working from home

The Government has asked that everyone works from home, wherever possible. Some organisations will already have policies and processes that permit and support this. Organisations planning to do this for the first time should be aware of the health and safety and cyber security implications and conduct risk assessments accordingly. A basic risk assessment template can be found on the Voscur website.

Face to Face meetings, events and travel

- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information.
- Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars and clubs.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology, such as phone, internet, and social media.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented international border closures and other restrictions. All countries may restrict travel without notice.
- The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) now advises against all non-essential travel. This advice takes effect immediately and applies initially for a period of 30 days.

Workplace hygiene – where remote working is not in place or possible

Current advice is to work from home, where possible, but if attending the workplace, follow guidance as below:

- Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly.
 - Why? Because contamination on surfaces touched by employees and customers is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads.
- Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers.
- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
- Display posters promoting hand-washing – ask your local public health authority for these or look on www.WHO.int
- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water.
 - Why? Because washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID-19.
- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace.
- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet, etc.
- Ensure that paper tissues are available at your workplaces.
 - Why? Because good respiratory hygiene prevents the spread of COVID-19.

Sickness and Isolation

We strongly recommend that you keep up to date with developments via:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- <https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>

Currently, if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for **7 days** from when your symptoms started.

Currently, if you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then **all** household members must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

Sick pay

In line with current guidance, if you or a member of your household develop symptoms of COVID-19, entitlement to sick pay remains, although this is now payable from day 1 (instead of day 4) for eligible employees. If someone has been told by NHS 111 to self-isolate when symptom free, organisations should know what their policy would be.

VCSE organisations may wish to apply temporary changes to sickness policy and practice to accommodate special circumstances under COVID-19.

Dependents leave

Similarly, people may be obliged to stay home to care for a sick dependent, or because a person or facility that usually cares for them is unavailable. They have the usual entitlement to dependents leave. Organisations should know what their policy would be if someone has to stay home for longer.

Business continuity

It is sensible to review and update your business continuity plans, risk assessments, check insurance and ensure emergency contacts are up to date.

Further information, including 'Advice & Guidance for Volunteering' and a new Coronavirus Support Fund is available: <https://www.voscur.org/content/coronavirus-briefing>