



SPARK  
SOMERSET



Inspiring communities  
to make a difference

# Volunteer Pack



Maybe you're managing a group of volunteers, or you're reading this as a volunteer working directly with the public. First of all, thank you. You are playing an important part in our county's response to COVID-19.

Spark Somerset has run the Volunteer Service in Somerset for many years, and we have lots of experience of supporting groups and volunteers. We hope you find our Volunteer Pack useful. For further information you can visit [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/covid-19).

Volunteers are a vital part of the UK's response to COVID-19. What you're doing is important, but it's also hard. Remember to look after yourself and other volunteers.

## What are volunteers allowed to do under the most recent Social Distancing Guidance?



Volunteers supporting vulnerable people in their communities must ensure they follow the [latest government guidance on social distancing](#), and minimise the time they spend out of their home. There is also Government Advice on [how to help safely](#).

Volunteering that requires going out of the house is now only permitted in certain circumstances. If you are well and under 70 years of age you can undertake essential activities including:

- Delivering food.
- Helping people with their medical needs, such as picking up prescriptions.
- Providing essential care or to help a vulnerable person or people, including through essential public and voluntary services, such as food banks, homeless services, and blood donation sessions.
- Dog walking.

There are also important volunteering roles that you can do from your own home if you are self-isolating. These include making telephone calls to other people who are self-isolating to make sure they are OK and have somebody to talk to. [Visit our website](#) to find out more about remote and virtual volunteering opportunities.

## Recruiting volunteers safely



We've launched Corona Helpers, a free online platform where COVID-19 support groups can recruit and manage volunteers, and individuals can pledge their support.

In some communities lots of volunteers will know each other. In others this might not be the case, so it may be necessary to do some background checks. If the volunteer is unknown to any of the organisers, you could ask for a referee to speak with over the phone and monitor any help they give by phoning the person they've helped. Some local groups are asking for photo ID and proof of residence. Any complaints about volunteers need to be investigated as a priority and no further tasks be given to the volunteer until the facts are established.

Spark Somerset is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service, and can advise on DBS requirements for volunteers and process applications on your behalf. Read our latest [guidance on DBS checks for more information](#).



## Volunteer

## Safety



**It is important that you keep yourself safe and well when you're volunteering. Although you may be very keen to help, please don't do anything to put yourself at risk.**

- Always pre-arrange visits with people – don't ever cold call.
- Always stay 2 metres away from the person you're helping. If someone you're helping doesn't follow this guidance, then be firm and clear in explaining the reasons for staying at a distance.
- Discuss with the group organiser or person you are supporting the best way to exchange money. The process should be open and transparent and easily able to be scrutinised if challenged. Try to avoid dealing with cash if at all possible. You can find more information on handling money [here](#).
- Do not enter their house – leave the shopping/medication at the door and step back.
- If you are providing a different kind of help, such as dog walking, agree the terms with the individual you are helping beforehand (there's more guidance on this later in the pack).
- If you're in doubt about the safety of a situation, don't do it. You can always tell the person that you will check with your group coordinator and get back to them.
- Ensure that you wash your hands thoroughly before and after your volunteering with soap and water.

If you feel at all unwell, please don't volunteer. There will be others who are able to offer support in your place.

### **Driving to an appointment or making a delivery**

- Avoid parking in a deserted place or where there is poor lighting.
- Secure the vehicle when you leave it and ensure that you do not leave belongings on show in the vehicle.
- Remember to charge and take your mobile phone with you.
- Ensure you have enough fuel in your car before your journey.
- Keep all valuables in your car out of sight during a visit.

Make sure you follow the latest guidance on PPE equipment, which is available on our website.

### **When visiting a vulnerable person, it's a good idea to ask them:**

- Are they able to keep themselves warm or cool enough?
- Have they got enough food?
- Do they have enough medicines to help them through the next few days?
- Do they have somebody to talk to?

## If you have concerns about someone you're supporting



- In an emergency always contact the emergency services by dialling 999.
- For concerns about COVID-19 infection, encourage anyone you are in contact with or supporting to use the online **NHS 111 Coronavirus Service** as their first port of call. People should only call 111 if they can't get online, their symptoms worsen, or they have been instructed to by the online service.
- You can help the most vulnerable people to stay safe at home. If you spot something that doesn't feel right, or are told something that worries you, then you should report it the Adult Social Care Team on 0300 123 2224.
- If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours, please phone the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0300 123 23 27.
- You can contact the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss what action should be taken with the appropriate team.
- If it is not an emergency but you still want to talk with the police, dial 101.

There are many organisations offering free and low-cost safeguarding training online. Take a look at our website for more information.

## Collecting medicines

Generally speaking, anyone can pick up medicines as a private arrangement for their family member, neighbour or a friend, provided they know the name and address of the patient.

It is a good idea to limit the number of volunteers from a support group whose role it is to collect medicines. These volunteers will need to have photo ID (driving licence or passport). As an extra safeguarding measure, some groups are only using volunteers with current DBS certificates.

If they are collecting for people who are exempt from prescription charges, the volunteer will be asked to sign and tick the appropriate boxes. It would be sensible for volunteers to carry their own pens for that purpose to reduce risk of infection. Please be aware that many pharmacies are extremely busy at the moment and waiting times can be long.

## Dog walking

If a volunteer is feeling unwell, they should not walk someone else's dog. They should only walk one dog at a time.

Volunteers must remember to social distance when collecting, walking and returning the dog to its owner. If the owner has an enclosed front garden, they could leave the dog there, or tie its lead to their front door handle so you can collect it safely.

Always disinfect the dog's lead before and after use, and use your own lead rather than borrowing the owner's, if possible.

There is the possibility that someone else who is asymptomatic with the virus could leave it on the dog when you are walking it if they stroke it, or if droplets from a cough or sneeze end up on its fur, collar or lead. Do not touch your face with your hands while dog walking and wash your hands before and after.

Remember, walking someone else's dog is a big responsibility, so only do it if you feel confident enough.

You can find further information on dog walking [on our website](#).



## Data Protection

Be clear, open and honest with people about what you are doing with their personal information. Tell them why you need it, what you'll do with it and who you're going to share it with. It's best to have this written down in a document called a Privacy Notice.

You must look after the personal data you collect. That means keeping it secure on a device – which can be your own – or in a locked cabinet, for example. Security measures needn't be so onerous that they prevent you carrying out your work.

The Information Commissioner's Office has written some clear, easy to understand guidance on data protection, which includes a data protection policy template that you can download and adapt for your group's purpose. Click [here](#).

## Volunteer Identification and Scams

Sadly, there are a growing number of incidents where people are pretending to volunteer in order to scam vulnerable people.

You may want to consider providing some form of ID for your volunteers. There is no fool proof method but some local groups are using ID badges, formal letters or providing Hi-Vis jackets to identify their volunteers.

You can find out more about COVID-19 associated scams [here](#).



## Looking after your volunteers

This situation is very unusual and it's important that volunteers feel valued and involved in your service. To help keep volunteers happy and engaged, we suggest you do the following:

- Contact volunteers regularly to see how they're getting on.
- Provide opportunities for them to voice concerns and offload. Handle any concerns or complaints quickly.
- Give regular feedback about what volunteers have achieved and the impact that they're having.
- Accept that volunteers come and go. Make sure that volunteers feel welcome to return if they want to in the future.
- Remember that one mode of communication won't work for everyone. You might need to use a combination of phone calls, emails and social media to engage all your volunteers.
- Mindline Somerset offers free mental health support to people of all ages and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 01823 276892.



It's important to remember to look after your own health, both mental and physical. We offer free telephone support for COVID-19 support group coordinators.

We understand that you may experience increased levels of stress and anxiety over the coming weeks, and this service will provide a listening ear, should you need it. Run by a qualified coach, it offers confidential, non-judgemental support to help you through this challenging time. Email [support@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:support@sparksomerset.org.uk) for more information.

This pack has been produced by Spark Somerset.

Spark Somerset is the local infrastructure charity, supporting the voluntary sector. Our aim is to inspire strong, healthy and sustainable communities through voluntary and community action. We provide information, advice, training and support to charities and community groups. We are also a registered DBS provider and run the Volunteer Service, inspiring people to make a difference in their communities.

Find out more at [www.sparksomerset.org.uk](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk).



**Thank you!**