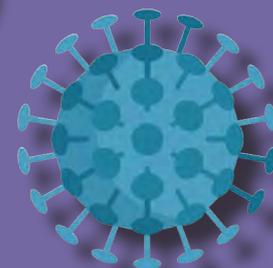


COVID-19

Community Response



A Guide for Voluntary and Community Groups

We have seen an amazing community response in Warrington with many community groups and individuals wanting to volunteer their time to help others who may need support due to illness or self-isolation.

The response has been so positive that we would urge anyone wanting to set up a new group, to check what else is already out there before going ahead. It may well be that there is already a group, or several groups, in your area who you could get involved with directly. By checking first, you can help avoid things being duplicated.

We can, collectively, make the biggest difference by working together. Contact Warrington Voluntary Action on 01925 246880 or email info@warringtonva.org.uk for information on groups already operating in your area.

Are you part of an existing group?

If you are in an existing community group and you haven't already done so, please register with Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) to be added to the list of charities or community groups currently providing support to residents. Email info@warringtonva.org.uk or **call 01925 246880**.

WVA is also co-ordinating a list of individuals who want to volunteer.

To sign up, please complete their online form warringtonva.org.uk/covid-19-community-volunteer-sign or call 01925 246880, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

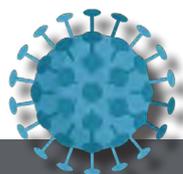
Volunteer safety

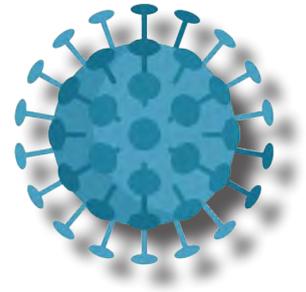
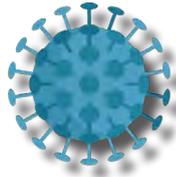
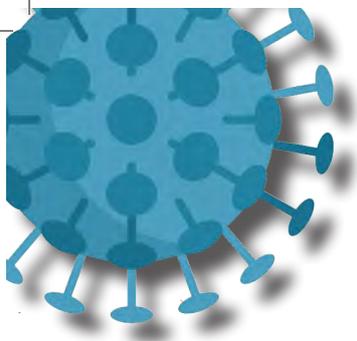
We want to ensure that those who volunteer their time to help those in need are kept safe and well themselves.

The most important thing you can do to keep volunteers safe is make sure you are following the government's recommended social distancing and hand washing guidance, available at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19.

You shouldn't volunteer if you are in a groups which the government says should be self-isolating. This includes anyone aged over 70, or with a complex health condition, including those:

- Who have received an organ transplant and remain on immunosuppression medication
- With cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- With cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia at any stage of treatment
- With severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- With severe kidney disease requiring dialysis





Smokers are also more likely to be at increased risk of developing serious respiratory disease if they contract COVID-19. We therefore suggest you seriously consider not volunteering and certainly should not smoke whilst volunteering in order to protect others.

Volunteers who are collecting shopping or other items for isolating individuals should, where possible, leave items on the doorstep to be collected by the isolating person, rather than entering the home. This protects both you - the volunteer - and the person they are helping.

If you have no choice but to enter someone's home, you should:

- Stay more than two metres away from each other – ideally in a separate room
- Not touch any surfaces
- Spend as little time in the home as possible
- Wash your hands or wipe with hand sanitiser as soon as you leave the premises

Remember, volunteers should always tell another person where they are and where they are going next. Regularly check in with volunteers to make sure they are okay.

A leaflet outlining some basic “do’s and don’ts” for volunteers is available on the council’s community webpage at warrington.gov.uk/coronavirus-community-support-and-volunteering.

There is also a range of useful information on working with volunteers during COVID19 available on WVA’s webpage warringtonva.org.uk/support-community-groups-during-covid-19. This includes a downloadable volunteer handbook, a volunteer risk assessment and links to online training.

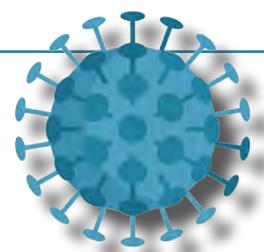
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

There has been a lot of coverage in the media regarding availability and correct use of PPE. Current government guidelines highlight that social distancing and regular handwashing for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water remain the most effective things people can do to protect themselves, and others.

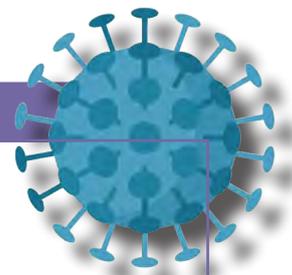
Public Health England guidelines state that PPE should only be used when providing direct care (within 2 metres) of someone who either has a possible or a confirmed case of COVID-19 or when providing direct care to someone in the government’s “shielded” group.

Local volunteers should not be providing this level of direct, close contact care and therefore additional PPE is not required.

You should maintain social distancing and wash your hands regularly, especially after handing over items/dog leads/ exchanging money etc. Where possible, wash items with disinfectant before handing them over.



Safeguarding vulnerable people



All vulnerable adults have the right to be safe, healthy and free from abuse.

Adult safeguarding is:

- Protecting adults from abuse or neglect
- The need to protect certain people who may be in vulnerable circumstances

If you or any of your volunteers have concerns that someone is either suffering from abuse or neglect, or is extremely vulnerable, isolated and potentially in need of additional support, it is important that these concerns are raised with the council so that suitable help can be put in place.

Remember, the council and other statutory partners have a duty of care to vulnerable people but that care can only be put in place if we are aware there is a need for it. Concerns should be raised by calling 01925 443322.

You do not need the permission of the person you are referring if you believe they are in need of safeguarding support.

The government has provided information on safeguarding and DBS checks during the coronavirus outbreak on the following link. The easiest way to find this information is by searching for "government DBS guidance during coronavirus" on Google.

There is also useful information available in the handbook on WVA's website warringtonva.org.uk/support-community-groups-during-covid-19

Most community-based volunteers will not be in direct contact with people during this time, and therefore will not require a DBS check. However, it is important to check government guidance to be sure. If you aren't sure, please contact WVA for advice.

Scams

We are aware that a small number of unscrupulous individuals may be taking advantage of the current situation to try and scam vulnerable people. We therefore ask that if volunteers in your organisation have contact with isolated or vulnerable people, they remain alert to the possibility of scams. If you have concerns, please report these to Trading Standards on 0808 223 1133.

Emergency food parcels and food handling

The government has arranged for people who have been identified as being on the shielded list to receive food parcels containing staple foods directly from food suppliers.

There are also a number of organisations providing food parcels to local people.

- The council has set up a new Safe and Well service, which provides support and reassurance for those people who are unable to leave their home and have no family, friends, or appropriate support network. Safe and Well will provide essential items, such as food and prescriptions. Information on how to access the services is available at warrington.gov.uk/coronavirus.

- Warrington Food Bank continues to operate and provide vital food top ups to those who are most in need: warrington.foodbank.org.uk/get-help
- There are other well-established local community groups who work with the food bank to ensure those in greatest need are able to access food.



All of these local services have processes in place that support people with immediate supplies, but also ensure they are linked into other services that can help vulnerable people over a longer period of time.

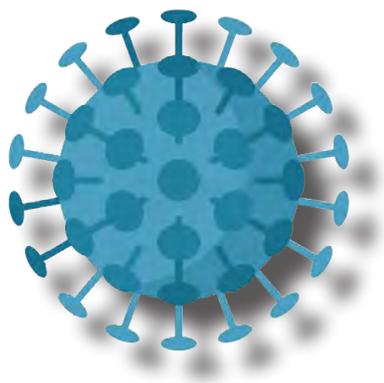
It is important people are given the right advice and support to become independent over a longer period of time and do not become dependent on food parcels. Information about local services can be found at mylifewarrington.co.uk

If you already have provisions up and running there are some basics things you should and shouldn't do:

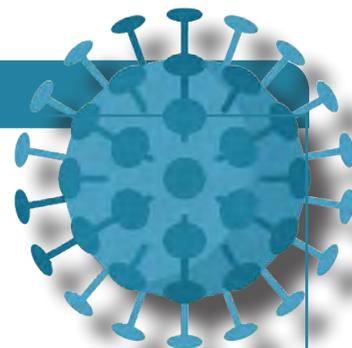
- Make sure your work area is regularly cleaned. This should include the clothing worn by volunteers
- Regularly wash hands following the government guidelines
- Avoid cross-contamination of foods. This is best achieved by only using food that is kept in packaging. We recommend you do not provide a food parcel to anyone with a life threatening food allergy.
- Check 'use by' dates on food – if an item is past its use by date, dispose of it.
- There is currently no government guidance which states that food needs to be quarantined before it is distributed. Indeed whilst this may be possible for non-perishable food such as tins/rice/pasta, it is not practical for perishable items such as salad, fresh fruit and veg, meat and milk. Therefore we are not advising groups who are distributing food to quarantine it first.
- Try and provide a healthy balance of food items in any parcel you provide.
- Do not allow volunteers who are showing any symptoms of Covid-19 or other illnesses such as sickness or diarrhoea to help.

The Food Standards Agency have recently published guidance on 'Food Safety for Community Cooking and Food Banks' food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-safety-for-community-cooking-and-food-banks

There is some useful guidance on food handling for small businesses at food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business



Arranging payments to cover costs



Volunteers should not allow those they are helping to share details of their debit card or PIN with them, for purchasing shopping or other items. Ideally, if collecting shopping for someone, volunteers should buy the shopping sticking to a pre-agreed amount, obtain a receipt which can be shared with the person they are helping, who can then make an online bank transfer.

Supermarkets, banks and post offices are also coming up with new ways to allow trusted family and friends to do shopping or access cash for isolating people. For example, some supermarkets have e-cards or gift cards that can be bought online. For example cards.asda.com/volunteer Check with the isolating person what options they might have – for anyone with internet access there are lots of ways of ordering and paying for goods online. Most people can also contact their bank via telephone to transfer funds. Some local shops will also do an over-the-phone payment option (though the larger supermarkets do not do this).

Paying with cash should be a last resort, but if unavoidable, both parties should then immediately follow handwashing/sanitising guidelines.

However, for those few people who cannot use these options, and are struggling to access cash or other ways to pay for goods and services, please advise them to call the council's coronavirus helpline on 01925 442441 or 01925 442443.

Data protection: your legal obligations

As your group starts to support vulnerable people, it is likely that you will need to handle personal information about the people you are supporting, the volunteers you are working with and, sometimes, share it with others.

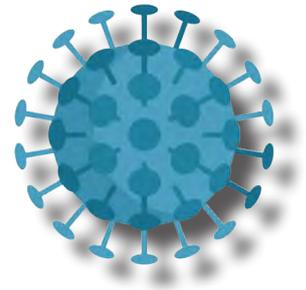
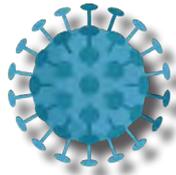
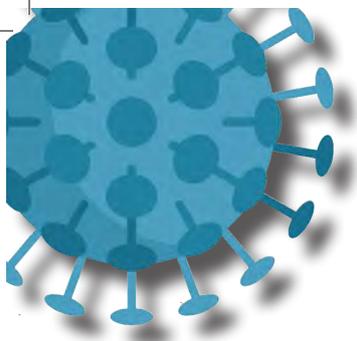
Data protection law is a set of standards that aim to ensure personal information is handled responsibly. It is important that you only collect the data and personal information you need to carry out your role. Think about the impact on a vulnerable person if their information is lost or stolen then take steps to prevent that happening, such as locking it away when not in use, communicating securely, using strong passwords and keeping security software up to date.

You should take steps to ensure people are not openly sharing their information on social media platforms such as Facebook. This leaves them vulnerable to scams.

However, there may be occasions when not sharing information could do more harm than good. This could be if there are concerns around safeguarding or if there is a need to notify the local council about vulnerable, isolated residents. Under these circumstances, you should share information. Remember, organisations such as local councils, GPs and other statutory bodies have a duty to help and protect people. But they can only do this if they know someone needs help.

The link below to an article from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) gives a quick and easy overview of the key things to consider:

ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/blog-community-groups-and-covid-19/



Your health and wellbeing

Take care of your own health and mental wellbeing and pace yourself. This is a new situation but it may continue for some time so take time for yourself, so that you can continue supporting those who need it over the coming months. Information is available at our local website [Happy OK Sad](#).

A new “Be Kind to Your Mind” campaign has also launched across Cheshire and Merseyside including Warrington and aims to support people by providing a suite of mental and physical wellbeing resources, available on the kindtoyourmind.org website.

Some key advice is to ensure:

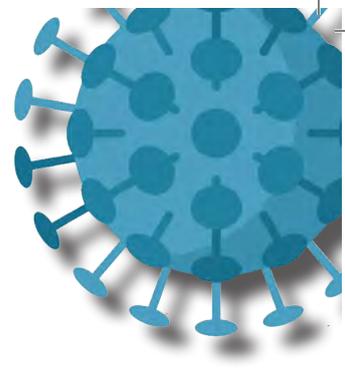
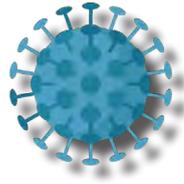
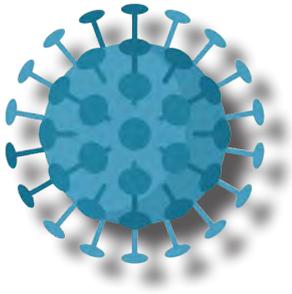
- You stay connected with friends and family, either by phone, via online social media and video calling or even by old fashioned letter!
- You get some physical activity every day. Being active is a great stress buster so going for a (socially distanced) walk in the fresh air, doing activities in your garden or within the home such as yoga, a guided online workout or even freestyling your own dance routine in the kitchen will all help you and your volunteers to maintain wellbeing and stay resilient
- Keep your mind active – by reading, doing puzzles, learning a new skill, playing cards or a board game, doing some crafting, playing a musical instrument or anything else that engages your interest! This will also help maintain good mental wellbeing

Funding

It is important that no-one should be spending their own personal money on supporting vulnerable people, unless they are doing this in the clear knowledge that it is a donation they can afford to give, or there is an agreement that this will be paid back by the person they are supporting.

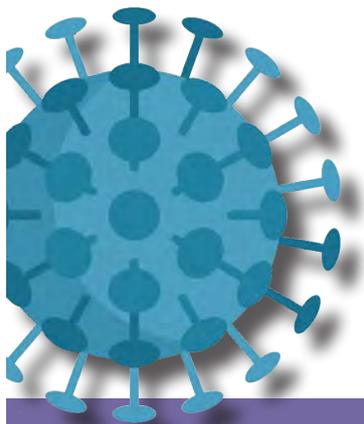
Many groups will not require additional funding, as much of the support needed may be simply checking on neighbours, co-ordinating locally around collection of shopping/prescriptions etc. However, for those groups who are doing work that will generate some costs, support is available through organisations such as the National Lottery and Cheshire Community Foundation. You can also speak to WVA for advice and support on 01925 246880 or email info@warringtonva.org.uk

Groups should be aware that the council has not received any additional funding for this element of the COVID-19 effort, so won't be able to fund any additional groups who are not already commissioned.

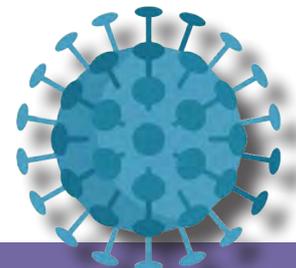


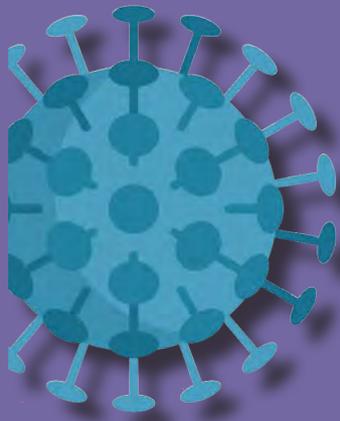
Further information

- warrington.gov.uk/coronavirus
- warringtonva.org.uk/support/current-funding
- warrington.gov.uk/coronavirus-community-support-and-volunteering
- warringtonva.org.uk/support-community-groups-during-covid-19



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