

Safeguarding Factsheet: Community volunteers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

It is likely that people will want to help others who are already ill or at particular risk of getting coronavirus. This includes older people and those who have certain health conditions including dementia. In order to stop the spread of the virus, the government has introduced guidance which includes wearing face coverings, and how we have contact with others both indoors and outside through the rule of six, as well as how people provide care for others.

Some vulnerable adults, such as those with dementia or other medical needs, can be helped through community volunteers. This factsheet will address specific concerns that people involved in supporting their community may have, to ensure those in need stay as safe as possible.

I would like to set up a community group where volunteers can offer to provide meals or pick up prescriptions for those unable to leave their homes. Do I need to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the volunteers?

DBS is a way of checking that someone does not have a criminal record that would make them unsuitable to work with vulnerable people. No, there is no legal requirement for you to carry out DBS checks on volunteers. Some organisations (such as national charities) may already have this policy in place and DBS is working to process any checks as quickly as possible.

Considerations for local organisations that are planning to set up volunteer support for people in the local community:

- The most important thing you can do as a volunteer organiser is to make sure your group considers safeguarding practices. Adopting simple precautions like keeping records of money spent and providing shopping receipts helps you when supporting vulnerable people.
- If working in pairs, you must stay two metres apart at all times.
- You should go shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, as infrequently as possible. Leave supplies at the door, where possible, to avoid entering another household.

Further information on safeguarding practices and DBS checks can be found in the [frequently asked questions](#) on the government website.

I would like to volunteer to help those in my street who are unable to leave their homes by delivering shopping or walking their dogs. Do I need a DBS Check?

No, there is no legal requirement for you to have a DBS Check.

But volunteers will want to make sure what they are doing is clear and trusted by the community they are helping. Simple, practical precautions such as working safely in pairs, keeping records of money spent and providing shopping receipts will help to achieve this.

If they are not from the same household, volunteers must stay two metres apart at all times.

Please remember that gatherings of more than six people in public are banned, and these measures are being enforced by the police. But support groups of up to 15 people, including those providing support to people with long term illnesses such as dementia, are exempt and allowed to meet.

Is anyone barred from volunteering?

The only people who are legally prevented from volunteering with vulnerable adults are those who have been barred from doing so by DBS. If you have been barred from certain types of work, then you would be committing a crime by trying to do that work.

Community Groups should ask their volunteers if they have been barred. If they have been barred, then you should not allow them to work closely with children or vulnerable adults. For further information see this [DBS guidance](#).

This information is based on government advice
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

The Government coronavirus guidance was updated on 22 September
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-what-has-changed-22-september>