

A few things to consider when setting up or running Informal Community Groups responding to Covid-19 (Corona Virus)

This guide is meant as a starting point to help volunteers, leaders and those we are helping stay safe. It is not a set of rules to follow, but is intended to stimulate thought. Each group will need to create their own ways of working to suit their area and their community. It has been put together to help you avoid unintended negative consequences while you do your best to help those in need.

Misunderstandings and raised tempers can be common in stressful situations. Although everyone's motives within your group are genuine, it is important that you take steps to protect the vulnerable and volunteers from the virus and also from malicious/false allegations, stress, overload and abuse.

Things you may need to consider

Who else

- Before doing anything, check if anyone else has already set something up in your area.

Your objectives

- Be clear about what you want to achieve. It might be to help housebound people with shopping, to set up a system to identify and reach out to those in need, and/or to support people facing financial hardship due to loss of income. Your objectives may change over time. Try to ensure that everyone involved understands what you're doing so your activities are coordinated and expectations are managed.

Risks

- Complete a risk assessment – looking at the risk to people being helped, volunteers, organisers.
- Draw up some simple advice to volunteers and those they are helping to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. For instance, not entering a home; keeping a safe distance, washing hands before handling shopping.
- What methods you will have in place for a volunteer to report someone potentially having the virus?
- What procedures will you follow to reduce the risk from scammers and false accusations? For instance, volunteers never taking a bank card to pay for shopping or to get cash; certain named volunteers dealing with cash; limiting the cost of any shopping; volunteers not entering people's homes; buddying volunteers.
- If the situation continues for an extended period, you may also wish to consider having different volunteers help the same person (this reduces the possibility of inappropriate relationships forming).

Wellness

- Ways to mitigate volunteers receiving calls at inappropriate times of the day and night?
- Ways to reduce the stress and demands on volunteers.
- Have a plan for volunteers coming down with the virus. How will you cover? How will you support the volunteer?

Expectations

In moments like this everyone wants to help, which means people may put themselves in uncomfortable situations. Make sure all your volunteers are aware of expectations, and that they are not required to do anything beyond the agreed task.

- Will volunteers shop for alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical drugs? If you have a policy of not buying alcohol you may wish to consider uncomfortable aspects such as that alcohol withdrawal can be life threatening for someone who is alcohol dependent.
- How will you deal with complaints if a volunteer has to substitute products or if items are missing?

Data

- With so much going on, it might be easy to forget that if you hold someone's data (phone number, address, etc) you have a duty to keep this safe. Simple precautions such as password protecting electronic documents and locking away printed documents will suffice.

Safeguarding

- What criteria will you have as to who can volunteer and how? Older volunteers may be able to help in ways that still allow them to help, even if self-isolating. Will you have a minimum age?
- Will a member of your group act as the safeguarding lead? How will people report concerns? Will you provide your volunteers with information and telephone numbers to report safeguarding concerns?
- What advice will you give volunteers if they are concerned that someone needs medical treatment?

To report a Safeguarding concern in Wirral;

	Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm	All other times	Email
Safeguarding Adults	0151 514 2222 (option 3)	0151 677 6557	wcnt.centraladviceanddutyteam@nhs.net
Safeguarding Children	0151 606 2008	0151 677 6557	IFD@wirral.gov.uk

Always call the police on 999 in an emergency

If you are not a professional involved with the child or family, you do not have to give your name and your conversation will be treated confidentially.

These guidelines were created on 20 March 2020 in line with current government advice. Should anything change they may no longer be relevant. Please visit www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response

Advice and Support for Community Groups

For more detailed information and guidance and for help putting procedures in place, contact Community Action Wirral. Staff there will be happy to help.

Phone: 0151 353 9700

Email: info@communityactionwirral.org.uk

Twitter: www.twitter.com/ActionOnWirral

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