

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Crime, justice and law (<https://www.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-law>)
3. Criminal record disclosure (<https://www.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-law/criminal-record-disclosure>)

Guidance

Safeguarding Factsheet: Community volunteers during COVID-19 outbreak

This factsheet is designed to address specific concerns that people involved in supporting their community may have at this time.

Published 25 March 2020

From:

Disclosure and Barring Service (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>)

Documents

Safeguarding and DBS Factsheet: FAQs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak/safeguarding-and-dbs-factsheet-faqs>)

HTML

Details

A national effort is required to tackle the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and we understand that people want to help others who are already ill or at particular risk. We wholeheartedly welcome such efforts and want to assist volunteers and the people receiving support in ensuring that help is provided safely.

It is absolutely vital that the spread of this virus is stopped, which is why the Government has limited when people can leave their homes (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>). People are allowed to shop alone or with members of their household for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible. People can also leave their homes for any medical need, providing care or to help a vulnerable person. Everyone must follow these measures in full.

Where people require support the first option should always be to rely on friends, family, or neighbours who already know one another. If this is not possible, there are some very simple steps that can be taken to make arrangements with community volunteers as safe as possible. Particular care must be taken where children or vulnerable adults, such as those with dementia or other medical needs, are helped.

This factsheet (and accompanying FAQ document) is designed to address specific concerns that people involved in supporting their community may have at this time.

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?

No, there is no legal requirement for you to carry out DBS checks on volunteers. Some established organisations (such as national charities) may already have this policy in place and DBS is working to process any checks as quickly as possible.

For local organisations being spontaneously set up to support people in the local community there are sensible and pragmatic steps that can be taken.

The most important thing you can do as a volunteer organiser is to ensure your group considers safeguarding practices. Adopting simple precautions like keeping records of money spent and providing shopping receipts supports you in helping your neighbourhoods whilst protecting vulnerable residents.

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 our accompanying FAQ document.

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.

However, volunteers will want to ensure that their activities are transparent 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 two people in public are currently banned, with these measures being enforced by the police.

Is anyone barred from volunteering?

The only people who are legally prevented from volunteering with children and 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 an offence 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 DBS guidance on barring.

Published 25 March 2020

Explore the topic

- Criminal record disclosure (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/crime-policing/criminal-record-disclosure>)