

Community Action: Bedfordshire COVID-19 Volunteer Management Newsletter

29 April 2020

Firstly, we would like to start this newsletter by sending our best wishes to everyone during these challenging times.

Included in this newsletter:

- Contact us with details of your volunteer opportunities
- COVID-19 Community Support
- Volunteers' Week 2020 update
- Involving volunteers remotely
- Keeping in touch with existing volunteers
- Volunteer Management guidance during COVID-19 (*including supporting volunteers*)
- Share your good news!

You are receiving this newsletter because either you have recently given us or partners information about how your organisation/group is supporting the community in response to COVID-19 or were already working in partnership with us at Community Action Bedfordshire.

Community Action Bedfordshire is the Accredited Volunteer Centre for Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

www.cabeds.org.uk | volunteer@cabeds.org.uk | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [@CABedfordshire](#)

Contact us with details of your current volunteer opportunities!

If you are looking for volunteers in Central Bedfordshire or Luton, please contact Kay ASAP on volunteer@cabeds.org.uk.

Community Action Bedfordshire are working in partnership with Local Authorities and other partner organisations to provide strategic support and a coordinated approach to the COVID-19 response in Bedfordshire.

We know that on a national scale, there has been a huge number of people signing up to volunteer and support their communities with the current situation. We are also conscious that the number of people wanting to volunteer is disproportionate and higher than the number of "formal" volunteer opportunities currently available for people to help, nationally and on a local level.

Across Bedfordshire there have been hundreds of people registering their interest to volunteer and support individuals and organisations in their communities during this uncertain time. We are working closely with **Central Bedfordshire and Luton Council who have each had 400+ offers of help from volunteers who have a huge variety of professional and corporate skills and experience.** It is extremely encouraging and heart-

warming to see such a fantastic community response, and whilst many are already actively engaging and helping in their communities, **many more are still eagerly waiting to find out how they can help.**

At Community Action Bedfordshire we are taking part in weekly webinars with NCVO and Volunteer Centres across the country and with NHS England and Helpforce, NHS Trusts and RVS. We hope that via these platforms we can share experiences from a local level and keep local organisations informed about national conversations around volunteering.

We are reaching out to the Voluntary and Community sector with the ask to **keep us informed about any volunteering opportunities you have (COVID-19 roles or longer term)** so we can promote these more widely, or via a targeted approach to those who have the required skills and experience. We are conscious of not wanting to overwhelm any organisation with high numbers of volunteer enquires as we appreciate that current capacity is likely to be stretched and will manage this sensitively to meet the needs of each organisation.

Based on a recent survey completed by over 100 **potential volunteers keen to support the COVID-19 response** (in *Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable and Houghton Regis*), we can share the percentage of people with the following skills and experience:

- 77% Administration
- 69% Education and/or supporting young people
- 52% Customer service
- 39% Management (including project management, managing staff/volunteers)
- 35% Driving (including HGV, van driving, minibus)
- 31% Supporting vulnerable adults and/or Counselling
- 14% Health and care sector
- 14% IT and Technology
- 8% Governance and fundraising (including bid writing)

We encourage volunteer-involving organisations to engage with these highly skilled individuals in the current situation, with the hope that many may then continue volunteering in some capacity moving forward. On a national and local level, we are **keen to keep the spirit of volunteering alive post-COVID-19** and hope to **continue this enthusiasm to volunteer.** We have already spoken to individuals who are interested in volunteering in the longer term, as well as volunteering to support with the COVID-19 response.

[Please contact us with your volunteer requirements at volunteer@cabeds.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@cabeds.org.uk)

Kay Henderson – Volunteer Centre Manager

Karen Hall – Volunteering Adviser



COVID-19 community support

Below are links to community organisations across Bedfordshire that are accepting requests for support due to Coronavirus. This information is available on our [Community Action Bedfordshire website](#) and the [CVS Bedfordshire](#) website and may also be useful for signposting your clients to other support available.

This information has been produced in partnership with CVS Bedfordshire and partners. The published lists include details for organisations who have informed us that they are accepting referrals for support. Any organisations who have sent us details about the extremely valuable support they are continuing to provide to their existing clients only, is being shared with the three local authorities.

For any enquiries about the list and/or if you are providing support to the community and are not on the list but would like to be added please contact us on volunteer@cabeds.org.uk or Jane at [CVS Bedfordshire](#).

Where an organisation is listed as offering “mutual aid” it refers to help with shopping, collecting medication, phone calls and online support.

- [Central Bedfordshire COVID-19 support list](#)
- [Luton COVID-19 support list](#)

Volunteers’ Week 2020 update

Volunteers’ Week is an annual celebration of the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. This year because of the difficult COVID-19 situation, NCVO have taken the difficult decision not to go ahead with all the activities they would normally do for Volunteers’ Week and instead to focus on supporting volunteers to take on coronavirus-related volunteering roles and helping communities to cope with the many consequences of coronavirus.



If your organisation decides you would like to mark Volunteers’ Week this year in your own unique way then NCVO’s [resources](#) and [ideas](#) to recognise volunteers are still available and accessible from previous years, and here are some good tips from NCVO:

- **Think how your messaging will be received.** We’re all facing difficult times right now which changes how people may react to a celebration campaign. **‘Time to Say Thanks’** is likely to go down better than **‘Time to Celebrate’** – so stick to using the logos without the ‘celebration’ tagline and avoid party-related images.

- **Physical distancing is still important.** Many organisations have events during Volunteers' Week however this would be breaking current social distancing rules and could put people at risk. Where possible, stick to online events and take care when handing items out to volunteers.
- **Keep telling volunteering stories.** People are stepping up to help in ways we have not seen before in the UK. Telling their stories is great way to recognise and thank them for all the great things they are doing.

Central Bedfordshire Council - Cheering Volunteering 2020 update

In light of the ongoing situation relating to coronavirus (COVID-19), Central Bedfordshire Council have taken the decision to postpone the upcoming Cheering Volunteering Awards and Event 2020 due to take place on 4th June. They would like to thank everyone who has supported the event, partners - Community Action Bedfordshire and Community Voluntary Service (CVS), sponsors and those who have submitted nominations. The awards will be rescheduled once we Central Bedfordshire Council are in the position to do so and all nominations received will be carried over to the new date.

[View more details here](#)



Involving volunteers remotely

We would love to share your ideas and inspirations around how you have adapted your volunteer roles to enable continuity of your services and to provide support remotely.



We were recently in touch with Michael Broadley from Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS). Working from home, BuDS have **significantly increased their volunteer numbers and continue to offer work experience through their Reach4Work project to jobseekers who, often have a personal experience of disability.** BuDS currently have funding available to support some jobseekers in Bedfordshire. If you know of anyone who might benefit and/or would like to find out more about this project

please **email: michaelb@buds.org.uk** or visit **www.reach4work.org.uk**.

BuDS have written a few posts which other charities may find useful. Including tips for using digital task boards and inducting new volunteers remotely.

[BuDS – How we induct new volunteers](#)

[BuDS – Growing during lockdown](#)

Could your organisation benefit from tech support from a volunteer?

Get in touch and we may be able to help match a suitable volunteer with specialist skills who can support your organisation. Contact us on volunteer@cabeds.org.uk.

Keeping in touch with existing volunteers

We would love to hear about how you are keeping in touch with your existing volunteers, many of whom may not be actively able to volunteer right now. Please share so we can share all your creative ideas more widely.



Some suggestions include:

- Thanking them for their continued support and keeping in touch (e.g. through emails, phone calls, newsletter, social media, posting cards)
- Arranging online events or meetings – this could be organised by the volunteers themselves (e.g. virtual coffee mornings, social catch-ups, quizzes)
- Asking volunteers to write a short testimony about their role and what it means to them to volunteer for your organisation (these could then be used in your current/future publicity)
- Providing information or links to resources in relation to keeping well and well-being during COVID-19
- Providing information on relevant online training for volunteers (e.g. [CBC Adult Learning Courses](#), [NOAH Academy online courses in Bedfordshire and Luton](#))
- Putting volunteers in touch with each other to provide peer support and friendship which could enable volunteers who don't ordinarily get to meet each other to connect (e.g. Volunteer WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, pen pal letter writing)

Thank you to Jade, Founder of Spectrum Community Arts, for sharing this statement:

“Due to the pandemic, we can't currently run our usual weekly performing arts clubs, for people with disabilities and additional needs, so our volunteers aren't involved in service delivery at the moment. However, we have been keeping in touch! I'm so proud of the family feel within our Spectrum team and it's of utmost importance that I maintain it during these times! I use a WhatsApp group to communicate with our volunteers, sending out a video each day with a BSL sign for them to learn. Once a week another of my volunteers shares a signed song for us to learn! This has been a fabulous way of staying in touch, whilst simultaneously developing their skills for when we can go back to our face-to-face sessions! Alongside this, I asked everyone to send me a videoed response to the song 'Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow' I'm hoping to turn this into one big video to share on our social media platforms soon! I've also started doing a fortnightly team quiz night over zoom for a bit of fun too! We've had some lovely feedback from our volunteers saying that they're really enjoying the daily videos and the mini missions to boost morale and give them something else to focus on!”

Contact us on volunteer@cabeds.org.uk to let us know how you are keeping in touch with your volunteers and tag us in your Facebook or Twitter posts @CABedfordshire.

Volunteer Management guidance during COVID-19

We appreciate that many new groups and existing organisations have been facing challenges when it comes to managing volunteers for their new or existing support services during COVID-19. The task of keeping volunteers, beneficiaries and employees safe whilst delivering services and adhering to good practice guidance and legislation in a fast-changing environment is not to be underestimated.

We are pleased to see the amazing work of so many groups and organisations in this difficult situation and the level of partnership working and information sharing has been unprecedented and continues to be so valuable and positive.

We are keen to help organisations avoid “reinventing the wheel” and in the spirit of supporting one another and working together to share ideas and resources, please send us any Volunteer Management resources you have created and are happy to share. With your permission, we hope to add these to our website.

We have access to a pool of resources shared by Volunteer Centres nationally, so if you need any support with adapting or developing volunteer resources, please get in touch.

Contact us about:

- Adapting volunteer recruitment processes to create a “fast-track” route
- Writing COVID-19 volunteer role descriptions
- COVID-19 Volunteer Handbooks, Guidance and Agreements
- Any resources you have found useful that we can share more widely

To share your responses and/or if you require any further support with Volunteer Management, mail us at: volunteer@cabeds.org.uk

National sources of information

NCVO have produced a wealth of information and guidance for organisations, click on the links below:

- [Protecting your staff, volunteers and beneficiaries](#)
- [Contingency planning and financial implications](#)
- [Involving Volunteers](#)
- [Information for volunteers on staying safe whilst volunteering](#)
- [Further information and resources](#)

NCVO also have 2 upcoming free webinars open to everyone to join:

[Involving volunteers during the pandemic: What you need to know – 5 May](#)

This webinar will provide you with some top tips on involving and supporting volunteers during the coronavirus crisis and give an overview of the practical guidance and support available.

[How to involve and safeguard your volunteers during coronavirus – 14 May](#)

What do you need to do if you are involving volunteers in your response to coronavirus? This webinar will

bring you up to date on common volunteering roles, key safeguarding principles, and wellbeing tips for your volunteers.

NHS Volunteer Responders

RVS in partnership with the NHS have developed comprehensive guidance packs for the following volunteer roles, which are now available on the NHS Volunteer Responders website and include useful information on **Do's and Don'ts** for each role. Click on the roles below to view the volunteer starter packs:

- [Check in and Chat Volunteer](#)
- [Community Response Volunteer](#)
- [Patient Transport Volunteer](#)
- [NHS Transport Volunteer](#)

As of this week, those who are eligible can now self-refer for help from the NHS Volunteer Responders scheme so this might be something useful to share with your client groups. Click [here](#) for more information.

CVS Bedfordshire are providing resources, advice and guidance for newly formed COVID-19 community response groups. [Click here](#) for more info.

Mental Health & Wellbeing Guidance

Whilst many of us are reaching out and supporting others during these times of uncertainty, including family members, neighbours, beneficiaries, employees, volunteers, it is vital to remember to look after ourselves. Keeping safe includes maintaining our own mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing. It is completely normal to feel worried or anxious during this difficult time and to reach out for support.

[Click here to view Government and NHS advice on mental health.](#)

Our Frontline

Our Frontline is providing for round-the-clock one-to-one support, by call or text, plus resources, tips and ideas to look after your mental health. Our Frontline is a partnership between **Shout, Samaritans, Mind, Hospice UK and The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge**. [Find out more here](#), join Our frontline on social channels and [see some of the latest updates and real-life stories from Our Frontline](#).

BLEVEC Volunteer Peer Support Service

Volunteer Peer Support Service BLEVEC (Bedfordshire Local Emergency Volunteers) has set up a peer support service for volunteers from voluntary sector organisations directly involved in supporting the coronavirus emergency. If volunteers are worried or anxious, and just want to chat about things and how they are feeling, or want to offload a bit, then they can contact a group of BLEVEC volunteers who have good listening skills and are able to provide emotional support. The volunteers will also be able to signpost to other support options including trauma assessment. Contact: robert.labe37@ntlworld.com

We are in the process of updating our website with additional resources that can be shared with volunteers, staff and beneficiaries around mental wellbeing – watch this space!

Share Your Good News Stories!

Every day we are hearing more and more stories of truly wonderful acts of kindness and goodwill gestures across our communities from individuals, groups or organisations. We are in regular contact with Local Authorities who are keen to hear about all the fantastic work going on at a local level, we hope to share everything you are doing more widely so inspire others and share good news.



Tell us who your heroes are and share your stories with us so we can share with others - let's spread the positivity!

Contact us on volunteer@cabeds.org.uk or share stories with us on Facebook or Twitter @CABedfordshire

Additional information

#NeverMoreNeeded is the new national campaign to raise the public profile of the invaluable work charities do and why the public must continue to support it. If you are promoting your work on social media, then please consider using the campaign hashtag #NeverMoreNeeded.

To keep up to date with the latest developments, see NCVO's list of useful websites below:

Key up-to-date information from the government

- [GOV.UK latest information and advice](#)
- [NHS Overview of coronavirus advice](#)

Sector-specific guidance

- [UK: Guidance for social or community care and residential settings on COVID-19](#)
- [UK: COVID-19 guidance for educational settings](#)
- [NHS England: Coronavirus information for clinicians](#)

Risk management

- [Charity Commission Guidance on charities and risk management](#)
- [Zurich: Organisational resilience guidance on pandemic planning](#)
- [Charities Facilities Management Group: Business continuity for charities](#)

Travel advice

- [UK: COVID-19 travel advice](#)

Local Authorities

- [Central Bedfordshire Council](#)
- [Luton Council](#)
- [Bedford Borough Council](#)

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