

Community Action: Bedfordshire News update

18 March 2020

Included in this update:

- How we can support you
- Coronavirus and volunteering: points to consider
- What your organisation can do
- If you think you are unwell
- Reducing risk of exposure
- NCVO guidance (*updated 17 March 2020*)
- What to expect next
- Keeping up to date with changes and useful links

How can we support you?

Firstly and most importantly, we hope you are all keeping well and looking after yourselves at this uncertain time.

We are currently in conversations with local authorities and infrastructure organisations to support volunteering efforts for COVID-19. We appreciate that this is a very fast moving and unprecedented situation and want to offer support to the VCSE sector in Central Bedfordshire and Luton where we can.

We have already started receiving enquiries from people wanting to volunteer in the community. We are working on producing an information sheet with details of all organisations who are looking for volunteers to support specifically with Coronavirus efforts. We envisage that these will be food banks, homeless, good neighbour schemes and other organisations supporting those who are self isolating.

We will publish the information sheet on our website and share as widely as we can via social media. Our role will be to signpost those who need support or who are interested in volunteering to support with the Coronavirus efforts to a number of existing groups or new groups that have set up. We hope to be able to offer people a wide range of options so as to not overwhelm any one group.

Please let us know:

1. **The status of your existing volunteering opportunities**
e.g. have you stopped/paused volunteer activity
2. **Do you have new, evolving opportunities for volunteers to support members of the community due to COVID-19?**
e.g. if you have asked all "at risk" volunteers to cease volunteering, do you have a gap and a need for people to help out?

3. **If yes to question 2, please send us details for how we can signpost volunteering enquiries**
e.g. email and/or contact number with a few brief points on what you require e.g. drivers, telephone befrienders, DBS checked redeployed volunteers

Please contact us by text, email or phone using the details below (*we are now working from home*)

Kay Henderson – Volunteer Centre Manager: 07584 687657 (Mon-Thurs)

Karen Hall – Volunteering Adviser: 07825 665038 (Tues-Thurs)

volunteer@cabeds.org.uk

Coronavirus and volunteering: practical steps

As the situation is moving so quickly, we understand that many organisations may have already taken some of these steps.

- Review your risk assessments for existing volunteer roles in light of COVID-19
- Decide whether roles will be paused or adapted, based on risks identified and current government advice
- Keep up to date on changing Government advice
- Communicate with your volunteers, share up to date government advice and your organisation's plan
- If you are pausing volunteering, talk about by and show volunteers you value them and that their health and safety is a priority. Try to keep in touch with them wherever possible and practical.
- Involve volunteers in planning discussions around volunteering where possible
- Consider if and how volunteers could volunteer from home to support the organisation or service users (e.g. telephone befriending clients, helping with social media)
- Consider whether volunteers could be redeployed in other roles to support service users or the community
- Send information about other groups to volunteers wanting to help (*we can support with this*)
- If volunteers are redeployed to other organisations, consider whether you could offer some form of reference to help streamline the process
- Give advice on what volunteers should do if they become unwell whilst volunteering
- Create a short, informative list of guidelines for any new volunteers supporting with Coronavirus to safeguard the volunteers and those they are supporting
- Postpone large-scale volunteer events over the next few months

Whilst a potential influx of new volunteers and people in the community helping one another is fantastic, we also need to be mindful of our duty of care towards protecting those who are vulnerable. There have already been reports of scams and people taking advantage of the situation. We advise trying to create a balance between adapting existing procedures and keeping in mind the best practice and safeguarding guidelines.

[Click here to view some useful information from Volunteer Scotland](#)

Updated Coronavirus Guidance for Volunteer-Involving Organisations, Staff and Volunteers

(See attached an information sheet you can edit for your organisation and communicate to volunteers)

The Government have ramped up the measures we can all take to help limit the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst staff, volunteers and service users.

Preventing the spread of the Coronavirus infection

Public Health England advises that everyone should take the following social distancing measures to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus. These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
- Work from home, where possible. Please refer to employer guidance for more information;
- Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller confined public spaces such as bars and clubs;
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact essential services.

Those who are at increased risk of severe illness from Coronavirus, namely those:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions);
- under 70 with an underlying health condition (i.e. anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds);
- who are pregnant;

have been strongly advised to follow the above measures as much as they can, and to significantly limit their face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible. It is recommended that they self-isolate themselves for 12 weeks (mid-March to mid-June 2020).

These measures are in addition to the same advice given for the avoidance of general colds and flu, and is good advice to follow at all times:

- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in a bin straight away and wash your hands. See Catch it, Bin it, Kill it
- washing your hands more often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food. See hand washing guidance and if you don't fancy singing *Happy Birthday* while washing your hands look for inspiration for other songs on this tweet-thread of alternative options
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces regularly (e.g. work surfaces, keyboards, phones and laptops) and avoid hotdesking if possible.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

If you think you are unwell

The most common symptoms of Coronavirus are the recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature

If you or a member of your household have symptoms of the Coronavirus infection, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 14 days (7 days if you live alone) from when your symptoms started, other than for exercise and at a safe distance (of two meters) to others.

Follow Public Health England's advice on self isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or you are no better after seven days you should use the NHS 111 online tool to find out what to do next. You can keep up to date with the Government's advice on Coronavirus, which may change from day to day. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Reducing risk of exposure

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, such as older people and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. While you may not fall into one of these groups, your colleagues and those they are close to could be severely affected if exposed to the virus. Please be vigilant and isolate yourself if there is a risk you have been exposed to the virus.

Helping People Deal with Self-Isolation

Where people are self-isolating, especially older people (aged 70 and over) and those with a serious health condition who have been asked to self-isolate for 12 weeks, people may need help to get in supplies or to stay in touch with others. Volunteers can do a great job supporting service users who have to self-isolate.

Online shopping or family, friends and immediate neighbours (known to the household) may be best placed to help out getting food, medicines etc. Avoid people you don't know and do not give people your bank details or cards.

Helping people to connect to social media platforms like [Nextdoor](#) UK can also help people get assistance from neighbours or provide someone to chat with. You can download the Nextdoor App and find out more [here](#).

NCVO: Your organisation and Coronavirus

The NCVO guidance for organisations on Coronavirus was last updated on 17 March 2020, [click here to view](#):

- updates on sick leave and reducing social contact in line with the government's current recommendations
- updates on holding events, board meetings and AGMs
- additions to contingency planning and how insurance will be impacted
- a new section on what to expect from funders

This information is intended to help you decide what steps you and your organisation may need to take in light of the spread of the covid-19 virus.

To sign up for NCVO regular updates and newsletters [please sign up here](#).

What to expect next?

Government guidelines are changing hourly and further restrictions are likely.

If you have the capability, staff and volunteers may be able to work from home. There are some interesting tips on working from home for charity workers [here](#).

While information is continuing to change, it is important to keep your staff and volunteers informed. Keep an eye on our social media posts and website but bear in mind **advice is changing every day**.

Follow us [@CABedfordshire](#) on Twitter and Facebook or visit our website www.cabeds.org.uk

Additional information

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](#)
- [Volunteer Scotland](#)

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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www.cabeds.org.uk | 01525 850559 | volunteer@cabeds.org.uk

