

Ealing Together COVID 19

Best Practice Guidance for Community Groups

7 April 2020

This guide is intended to help new groups who are forming to help the community do so in a way that protects themselves and others

EALING COUNCIL

Ealing Together COVID 19 Best Practice Guidance for Community Groups

Ealing Together is a collaboration between local community and voluntary groups, Ealing Council and other public sector partner and concerned residents that want to help respond to the challenge of coronavirus. There is a role for everyone in our response to this pandemic.

This guide is intended to help new groups who are forming to help the community do so in a way that protects themselves and others. Ealing CVS have produced a companion guide for individuals thinking of volunteering or helping out a neighbour which is available from the [Ealing CVS website](#).

The most common activity that groups in our community are telling us they want advice on is helping residents who may not have access to sufficient food or essential supplies. This is what this guide focuses on although it touches on other areas such as collecting prescriptions and ongoing social contact with people who are avoiding face to face contact over at least the next 12 weeks.

The situation is fast moving and we will update the guidance as there are significant changes. the meantime if you have questions please get in touch with the council at communities@ealing.gov.uk as we want to help you support your community at this time.

We've set out this guide under the following subsections:

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How to help

There are loads of ways groups can help – the three main ones are:

- 1) Fundraising for an existing organisation – you can find a list of local organisations, like Ealing Foodbank, and how to donate to them on www.ealingtogether.org please share widely.
- 2) Set up a mini foodbank – we have seen groups doing this in community centres or via residents' associations
- 3) Deliver or collect food and essential supplies on behalf of residents who cannot get out and about because of their health

As general rule it's much easier for small and informal groups to operate effectively at a very local level – covering an estate or a few streets and that is who this guide is aimed at. We know however that some groups will have the capacity to grow and may even want to formalise themselves to the point where they can take referrals from the council and other partners. If that's the case, please contact us at communities@ealing.gov.uk.

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Social distancing and health precautions

Volunteering to support the response is an important activity. Please remember however, that gatherings of more than two people in public are currently banned, with these measures being enforced by the police.

Whatever your group is doing it's essential that you maintain social distancing to protect yourself and others and slow the spread of coronavirus.

Everyone involved should maintain a distance of 2 metres or 3 steps from others at all times. Further guidance is available¹.

If you are distributing food from a location it is best to do this from within a building where you can control the flow of people. You should ensure everyone washes their hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should wash hands before and after (or uses hand sanitiser) and consider:

- The layout of your building and the spacing of tables
- Ensuring distance between volunteers and those helping
- The number of people allowed inside the building
- The waiting arrangements outside the building
- Arrangements to manage the number of people attending on any day eg ticketing timed referral
- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products.

If you are delivering to, or collecting from, someone's home you should avoid using public transport and:

1. Wash your hands before leaving to drop off the items (you can use alcohol hand sanitiser whilst out and about)
2. Use single use packaging
3. If you have the person's phone number call them to open the door as you approach. If you do not have their phone number knock on the door using your elbow or another part of your body.
4. Ask the recipient to back away from the door at least two meters and put your bag on the floor immediately inside the doorway. Do not step through the door. If someone cannot take delivery of a parcel you can refer them via www.ealingtogether.org or 020 8825 7170

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

5. Back away two meters and let them get the items by picking up the bag. Feel free to shout greetings but keep distance at 2 metres and do not touch the individual. Check they have received the delivery before leaving.
6. Inform the person that they should treat all items in the bag as being infected with Covid-19 and they should
 - remove outer (single use) packaging and put straight in bin
 - wash surfaces where package has been placed
 - wash hands before and after delivery
 - thoroughly wash all fruit and vegetables before cooking
 - check the food carefully to ensure that it is suitable for them and their household and does not contain any allergies you may not be aware of
 - wash their hands after handling them
7. Wash your hands as soon as possible upon leaving (or hand sanitiser)

PPE

As long as volunteers are able to take the precautions outlined above and do not enter people's homes or come into contact with people who have symptoms of COVID-19, they should not need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and facemasks.

PPE is only required for people who are:

- Providing direct contact (<2 metres) to people with symptoms of COVID-19
- Cleaning an area where a person with symptoms has recently been
- Attending a household of, or providing direct care to, any individuals who meet the criteria of an 'extremely vulnerable' person and are therefore 'shielding'
- Entering a closed area with a group of people with symptoms of COVID-19.

We would strongly encourage you to ensure that volunteers doing this activity have a basic DBS check (see below)

Food safety

Generally, groups are looking to provide 'ambient' goods such as tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and cereal that require no special storage. If your group is looking to provide fresh products or hot food, there are additional requirements that are summarised by the Chartered Institute Of Environmental Health². If you are [operating a kitchen](#) you will need to comply with the standard legal and best practice requirements.

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Other tasks

The two main areas we know groups are considering besides food support are ongoing social contact for self-isolating groups and prescription collection. Both of these activities are more sensitive and should be conducted by DBS checked volunteers within a scheme overseen by an established organisation unless there is an existing strong relationship already between individuals eg close neighbours. You can contact local organisations directly or express an interest in volunteering for these areas via www.ealingtogether.org where you can be matched to an opportunity as one becomes available.

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Who should volunteer?

To protect yourselves and prevent spread of infection you can only provide support to vulnerable people if you fulfil all of the conditions below:

² <https://www.cieh.org/media/4070/covid-19-food-delivery-and-takeaway-guidance.pdf>

- you are well and have no symptoms like a cough or high temperature and nobody in your household does
- you are under 70
- you are not pregnant
- you do not have any long-term health conditions that make you vulnerable to coronavirus

If the answer is yes to everything above, you may leave your house to provide care or to help a vulnerable person, following the advice set out under [social distancing and health precautions](#).

Please ask volunteers to think about their own situation and what they are realistically able to do before they offer their help. As a group you should think about how you would continue to offer support if you or your volunteers could no longer offer support to someone, or you have to self-isolate yourselves. You can see more guidance on how to help your volunteers stay safe and [maintain their wellbeing on Ealing Together](#)

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Equalities

You will be supporting a range of individuals in diverse communities and we ask that you respect every individual's beliefs and that nobody is treated less favourably or excluded in anyway. We are all different and all have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. It may be useful to consider how you might ensure all volunteers know what is expected of them and that they are following good practice. Although this is unlikely to occur, volunteers can be reminded to report any case of hate crime or harassment to the council's safer communities team on (020) 8825 5994 by email to safercommunities@ealing.gov.uk , or the police.

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Safeguarding and DBS checks for your work

Sadly there may be those who seek to exploit the vulnerable at this time.

There is a 3-minute video produced by Waltham Forest council which you can see on YouTube <https://youtu.be/HHQG8CJROhU>

This guide aims to cover some of the key things that those organising voluntary group will want to consider:

DBS checks

Certain categories of activity are regulated and require a DBS check – these include caring for children and physical contact roles with the elderly or other vulnerable adults. If your group carries out these activities, you must get your volunteers DBS checked. These checks are free for volunteers.

In other circumstances where there will be unsupervised resident contact eg delivering food to a home we would advise that, whilst there is not a legal requirement, it is a best practice safeguarding step to apply for a basic DBS check. This will be required if the council were to make referrals to your organisation. There may be a fee for this, and the council may be able to assist with this.

In larger settings eg a foodbank style operation you should think about the design to avoid unsupervised contact between volunteers and residents and to ensure social distancing.

It is important to note that many volunteer activities, such as assembling food parcels, working in a kitchen or loading delivery vehicles, do not raise safeguarding issues and therefore will not require DBS checks.

There is a very helpful and user-friendly guide online³ to where DBS checks may be required which includes guidance on common sense approaches to considering whether to accept DBS checks issued to another organisation.

Membership

Whether you use DBS checks or not you can control your membership and volunteers. Whilst the vast majority of people will be genuinely wanting to help you should be aware that a few may try and exploit the situation. Remember, you can block membership to your Facebook, Whats App groups and email lists and you would politely decline offers of help if you have concerns; no one has an automatic right to be a member of your group or to participate in your activity.

Money

Generally its best to safeguard all involved - but particularly to protect the vulnerable from scams - to avoid money changing hands except between people who already know each other well.

If you do handle money you should ensure your group follow simple, practical precautions such as avoiding one on one contact, keeping records of all money received and spent and providing shopping receipts to safeguard all involved. Consideration should also be given to the handling of money – for example agreeing in advance the amount that will be spent so that the person you are helping can prepare this in advance and handing this over in an envelope. Please don't offer to take the credit or debit card of someone shopping unless you are a close friend as this opens up opportunities for scammers.

If you are going to take money electronically it's a good idea to set up a separate group bank account that more than one person has access to and tell all members of your group how it will be handled.

Information sharing and GDPR

Treat other people's personal information in the same way you would want your information to be treated. If you do come across information about someone you may be supporting (for example, names, addresses and possible medical information), then please keep this to yourself, and do not discuss or disclose this with anyone else, unless you need to report a safeguarding concern.

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) apply. GDPR shouldn't be a barrier but there are some keypoints to consider:

- Know what personal data is
- Only collect, store or use personal data if your group needs to do so for a clear, specific purpose. For new mutual aid groups and smaller organisations like residents' associations often data for a few streets may be enough
- Only collect, store and use the minimum amount of data you need for your purpose. Don't keep extra data if you don't know why you need them, and don't keep data that are no longer needed for your purpose. For example collect name, address, contact details and dietary requirements only if you are providing food.
- Make sure people know how to contact you if they want you to remove their data from your records.
- Tell people what data you have about them if they ask you to and remove them if requested.
- Store data securely – use passwords for any spreadsheets or lists and limit access to only those who need to have it, such as the volunteer, or volunteer team, who will be supporting a specific individual. Whilst What's App or Facebook groups are great for updating members they are not the right way to share personal information
- Be clear whether data belongs to your group or to you personally. Just because you have access to contact details held by the group, doesn't mean they are your personal contacts.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19->

More information is available from the Information Commissioner⁴ and a specific guide for community groups is available in the Resource Centre guide⁵

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Cases that you cannot deal with

If you encounter a case that your organisation is not equipped to deal with please refer then to www.ealingtogether.org or 020 8825 7170.

For medical queries please ask residents to contact NHS 111 or 111.nhs.uk. Information about changes to NHS services to help deal with the coronavirus pandemic is available [here](#).

In a medical emergency call 999.

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Wider safeguarding concerns

Volunteers may see things they are worried about in the community. We do not expect you to try and solve problems and it may not be safe to do so. You can highlight concerns:

Children

- If you believe a child is in immediate danger you should call the police on 999
- If you are worried about a child or young person's wellbeing or safety, please contact Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) at the council on 020 8825 8000 (24 hours).

If a family is looking for general help and support, Ealing's Family Information Service (FIS) website has information about the range of services and support available:

<https://www.ealingfamiliesdirectory.org.uk/kb5/ealing/directory/home.page>

Further information about safeguarding children generally can be found on the Ealing Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESCP) website: www.ealingscp.org.uk

Vulnerable Adults

- If you are worried about the wellbeing of a vulnerable adult, please contact the council on 020 8825 8000. If someone is in immediate danger call 999

Domestic Abuse

If you are concerned that someone is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police - the police will continue to respond to emergency calls.

Ealing Council and partner agencies are continuing to offer support to victims of domestic abuse through numerous services. See Family Information Service website for more information:

outbreak/safeguarding-and-dbs-factsheet-faqs

⁴ <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/03/community-groups-and-covid-19/>

⁵ <https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/data-protection-for-community-groups/>

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Continuing to help those who are being shielded

Please note, people may choose not to let you know if they fit within this group, that is their right, but if you have reason to believe someone you are helping in the community may be one of those listed in the 'shielded group' then please don't feel it's all down to you; if you need help, let us know by referring them via the Ealing Together website.

People falling into this 'shielded group' or extremely vulnerable group would have received a letter from the NHS at the end of March to provide further advice, but typically they include those who are:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.

2. People with specific cancers:

- people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
- people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
- people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs

3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.

4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).

5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.

6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

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It would also be invaluable if you can let us know if you are helping someone from the shielded group by calling 020 8825 7170. This will enable us to cross check with other data being sent from central government to ensure no one gets forgotten because we think someone else has got them covered.

Thank you for everything you are doing; by working together we can ensure that the resources are reaching those who need them most at the time when they need it.

If you have any comments about this guide, and have other suggestions for content please let us know by email communities@ealing.gov.uk with Ealing COVID19 Best Practice Guidance for Community Groups in the subject line.

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If you are interested in finding out more about best practice for starting up a new group there is more on the Ealing CVS FAQs:

<https://www.ealingcvs.org.uk/group-development/frequently-asked-questions/>

You may also be thinking for the longer term of formalising how your group will work. This will include how it makes decisions, communicates them to its members and monitors if they are being complied with, as well as plans to deal with any conflict. This is often referred to as ‘governance’. There are many different governance models so you will need to collectively consider which one suits your aims and objectives best. The Resource Centre (a charity serving voluntary and community groups in the Brighton and Hove area) has a simple explanation of different types of not-for-profit organisation, and what to consider when choosing a legal structure: <https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/legal-structures-for-community-and-voluntary-groups/>