**How to safely help vulnerable people near you - community groups**

At this time many people want to help vulnerable individuals within their communities, those with existing health issues and self-isolating.

Rather than setting up a new community group, you could get involved with one of the many local existing charities and community groups who already work with vulnerable people. Warwickshire County Council is keeping a database of those groups <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/information-coronavirus/coronavirus-volunteering/1> You also might want to find groups or set up a group within your local parish council, community centre or church.

People have also set up community aid groups. Please note that the over-arching group is [COVID-19 Mutual Aid](https://covidmutualaid.org/). You can find local groups on the website. The local groups are independent, but COVID-19 Mutual Aid is offering, through a website, [advice and resources](https://covidmutualaid.org/resources/) so that these local groups can run safely.

If you still want to set up a group, it will be easier to do that within an existing organisation as they will be able to help you with procedures and responsibilities.

**If you are already running a local community group – here are some issues to consider**

Keep up to date with information from the government

* [Gov.UK: COVID-19 latest information and advice](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [NHS Coronavirus advice](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

How to avoid spreading the virus

You can spread the virus even if you don’t have symptoms, so it’s very important to follow government guidelines here [government guidelines on social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults):

* Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
* Wash your hands as soon as you get home
* You can spread the virus even if you don’t have symptoms

**Handling payment**

If you are buying items for other people, it is important to set up a simple system for the handling of cash to record receipts and payments. If you have to handle cash, wear gloves and make sure you wash your hands thoroughly. If possible, bank transfers and pictures of receipts might be a safer alternative to handling cash. Consider contactless methods such as cheque or online payment e.g. using Paypal Record what the money is being used for and how it was used – receipts, and even shopping lists or journeys.

**Volunteer expenses**

It is okay to cover the travel expenses of volunteers – do keep a record of amounts paid. Volunteers would not be expected to charge a fee and it is advisable for volunteers to politely decline gifts and tips from vulnerable people they are helping.

For your information and for anyone you support, there are now scams related to COVID-19. More information can be found on the [Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)](https://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/coronavirus-covid-19) website.

**Safeguarding and security**

If you are concerned about a child or a young person please call **01926 414144 (out of hours 01926 886922.)**. If you are concerned about the safety of an adult call **01926 412080.**

Information on Warwickshire’s local safeguarding arrangements can be found [here](https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/).

For information on safeguarding, visit: [https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHQG8CJROhU&feature=youtu.be).

**Personal Information**

DO NOT pass on personal data from volunteers and those requesting help to anyone, especially other organisations. This is for legal reasons and also to protect vulnerable people who might not be safe if you share these details. DO avoid sharing photos/information via social media that would identify who you are supporting.

Remember that if you have someone’s personal details given to you, you must keep them safe, only use them for the purpose you agreed with them, and that it remains the person’s own data shared with you in trust. If you want to share information with a volunteer, ask the person needing help whether it is okay to share before you do so. Tell people how they can ask for their information to be deleted and ensure that when the need for having someone’s details is over that you destroy it.

For finance safeguarding and handling information, it would be best to have a second unrelated person to check what’s been done on a regular basis. For more information on managing personal data please see [guidance from the Information Commissioners Office](https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2617548/ico-data-security-guide-to-the-basics.pdf).

**Volunteers**

If you are asking volunteers to do things you must be conscious of their safety and wellbeing. Check whether they are happy doing what you are asking of them and check in with them to make sure they are not doing too much or not taking on too much emotionally. Ask them to check in when they have completed tasks. Do you need to have anything in place so that volunteers can express concerns or share?

Usually, organisations vet, train and supervise their volunteers. Ask volunteers for ID and find ways to reassure vulnerable people that volunteers are genuine and consider giving vulnerable people a number to call if they do have any concerns about a volunteer. You might want to develop ID cards for volunteers. Collect personal details for volunteers and their emergency contact details and keep them confidential.

You might want to consider who can volunteer and how. Volunteers may still be able to help while self-isolating, for example, telephone support, organising food collections or coordinating other volunteers. Will you have a minimum age?

There are some useful tips to staying safe whilst volunteering in this [free guide](https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/api/documents/WCCC-966-2068).

There is more in - depth advice available on all of these issues. Please ask us for further information or visit [www.wcava.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.wcava.org.uk/volunteering).

**Formalising your group**

If your group is moving to becoming more formal and /or you require funding, it’s best for you to become constituted. Warwickshire CAVA can help you with this. Please contact Michelle Black on michelle.black@wcava.org.uk or phone **07458 017969.**

To keep updated on the latest news relating to COVID-19 please subscribe to our free e-newsletter: [www.wcava.org.uk/receive-newsletters](https://www.wcava.org.uk/receive-newsletters).