

Covid-19 bulletin no.3 - 02-04-2020

Dear Friends and Residents

I write with a further update on our local and national effort to stop the spread of Coronavirus.

- New guidance for volunteers produced by the Kent Resilience Forum
- Launch of the Maidstone Borough Council Community Support Hub
- Launch of the Kent County Council 'Kent Together' helpline
- DWP suspension of benefit re-assessments

GUIDANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Supporting others in your community during COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteering

Supporting people who are self-isolating, family-isolating or social-distancing.

This guidance has been developed by the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) – a group of public sector agencies, including Kent County Council, Medway Council, district and borough councils, emergency services and the NHS, set up to plan for and coordinate how we respond to emergencies. It aims to complement national Government COVID-19 guidance and support the community response to COVID-19 locally where further information is required.

This guidance will be reviewed regularly and has been put together by Kent County Council on behalf of KRF.

We are seeing many voluntary and community organisations, businesses and individuals volunteering or offering support to friends, families and neighbours during the COVID-19 outbreak. We are enormously grateful for these efforts, but we want to ensure people can assist whilst keeping themselves and communities safe. We hope that the following information will help volunteers, and those coordinating volunteers, feel informed whilst carrying out this great work.

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](#). However, 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.

IMPORTANT ADVICE

- It is important that volunteers familiarise themselves with and do all they can to follow the national guidance on 'social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults', which can be found on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.
- It is also important that volunteers follow the advice on protecting yourself and others at all times. Spread only kindness, not COVID-19.
- They must also consider if they are able to volunteer at this time. DO NOT volunteer if:
 - you have symptoms of COVID-19 (a fever or new continuous cough)
 - you should be self-isolating or part of a family who should be isolating
 - You are in a group being 'strongly advised' to socially (physically) distance themselves from others, or you have been told to shield because you are extremely vulnerable.
- Many of the roles volunteers will carry out in their local communities do not raise safeguarding issues and do not need a DBS check. However, the DBS guidance should be followed and the government has released some additional FAQ's and guidance in relation to Covid 19 [Safeguarding and DBS- Covid 19 guidance](#)

The following examples may be a helpful guide:

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.

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

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

If people want to volunteer in their local area, then there are ways this can be done to ensure help can be coordinated to those most in need. Contact:

- Local district councils (all of whom have specific pages on their website for volunteering in relation to Covid)
- The NHS volunteer responder's scheme (<https://www.goodsamapp.org/nhs>), which has been set up to support those who have been asked to isolate for 12 weeks
- Local Volunteer Centres

PICKING UP PRESCRIPTIONS

It is advised that where volunteers are being used to pick up prescriptions

for those who have been asked to isolate themselves for 12 weeks, this is referred through to the NHS volunteer responders scheme (England.Volunteering@NHS.net). Appropriate measures are being put in place to enable volunteers to be able to do this. Local authorities can post volunteer opportunities or requests for volunteers through the NHS responders scheme. Alternatively, if you are helping out a friend, family member or neighbour, make sure you go to the right pharmacy, know the name and address of the person you are collecting for, be able to pay for the prescription if the patient is aged between 16-60 or know which exemption applies if they do not pay.

HELPING OTHERS WITH SHOPPING – things to consider

- If you are coordinating volunteers to carry out shopping, ensure you have robust mechanisms in place to track payments for goods. Wherever possible use online or telephone payment mechanisms so the person can pay directly themselves.
- You must also be mindful of any allergy needs when purchasing food items, follow good food hygiene e.g. do not allow frozen food to thaw (unless using immediately) and for food that should be refrigerated make sure it is back in the fridge within two hours of picking from the shelf.
- You must also follow guidance on keeping safe- keep a two-metre distance from the person you are helping. You should where possible not enter someone's house but deliver shopping to a safe space and ensure the person knows it is there. Where this is not possible (e.g. where a person is physically not able to carry their own shopping into the house/lift bags onto the worktop), wash your hands, or use hand sanitiser before and after entering the house.
- Consider wearing disposable gloves and change them between deliveries if it is difficult to wash your hands regularly. Alternatively, if sanitiser, hand washing facilities and gloves are not available, carry liquid hand soap, bottled water (preferably warm), paper towels and a bag for disposal, so you can wash your hands remotely.
- If you are part of an organised group delivering shopping and you are not known to the person you are delivering shopping to, consider use of a 'safe word' agreed with the person in advance, that you can use to provide reassurance if required. Double check you are leaving food at the correct house.

KEEPING SAFE

- Unfortunately, whilst Covid-19 has brought out the best in the vast majority of people there are also unfortunately some people who are seeking to exploit the situation for personal gain. Please follow online safety advice from the National Cyber Security Centre (<https://bit.ly/2UmnHpO>) and pay particular attention to emails with links claiming to have important updates.
- Please follow Kent Trading Standards (<https://twitter.com/kentprotect>) for details of current scams that you should be aware of
- Please do not encourage vulnerable people to display requests for help via notes or cards in their windows/doors. Criminals can take advantage of this.
- Abuse can take many forms including; physical, emotional, financial and self-neglect. If you are worried about something you have seen including injuries without explanation or

malnutrition go to www.kent.gov.uk/adultprotection for information on spotting the signs of abuse and how to report it.

IN CONCLUSION

Thank you again for everything everyone is doing to support our local and national effort to stop the spread of Coronavirus, be that by following the Government advice and staying at home, keeping our country going by working in key industries, such as our NHS, or volunteering to help those who need it.

As always, If anyone has any specific needs, concerns or questions then please feel free to get in touch with me anytime at helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk. My team and I are here for you.

Very best wishes