



4.0 Volunteers

Volunteering and Easing Out of Lockdown

Overview

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This guide aims to help organisations to think ahead as lockdown restrictions are gradually eased, to consider how volunteering might resume and what would be needed for this to happen.

Introduction

There are four sections:

- **Thinking about resuming volunteering** – Some aspects that you will need to consider.
- **Frequently Asked Questions** - A basic response to the most common questions.
- **Where to find out more?** - A digest of web sources which should be consulted for detailed information and the latest guidance on specific areas.
- **Useful resources** – Some examples of templates and tools that may be helpful.



Current regulations and official guidance is frequently changing in response to the progress of the pandemic in Wales. Please be sure to consult the latest guidance before you resume volunteering.

[Welsh Government - Coronavirus Information](#)



External Link

Your local volunteer centre is available for advice and support if you need it.

[Find Your Local Volunteer Centre](#)

Thinking About Resuming Volunteering

Whether or not (and how) to resume volunteering involves considering, in the light of national guidance:

- The volunteers
- The locations in which volunteering take place
- The activities undertaken

Volunteers

The number and range of individuals who are willing and available to volunteer may have altered. Some are likely to be in vulnerable categories by virtue of their age or health condition and may have been advised to take additional precautions. Some may simply choose, for whatever reason, not to return to volunteering, or may be unsure about resuming some aspects of what they did previously.

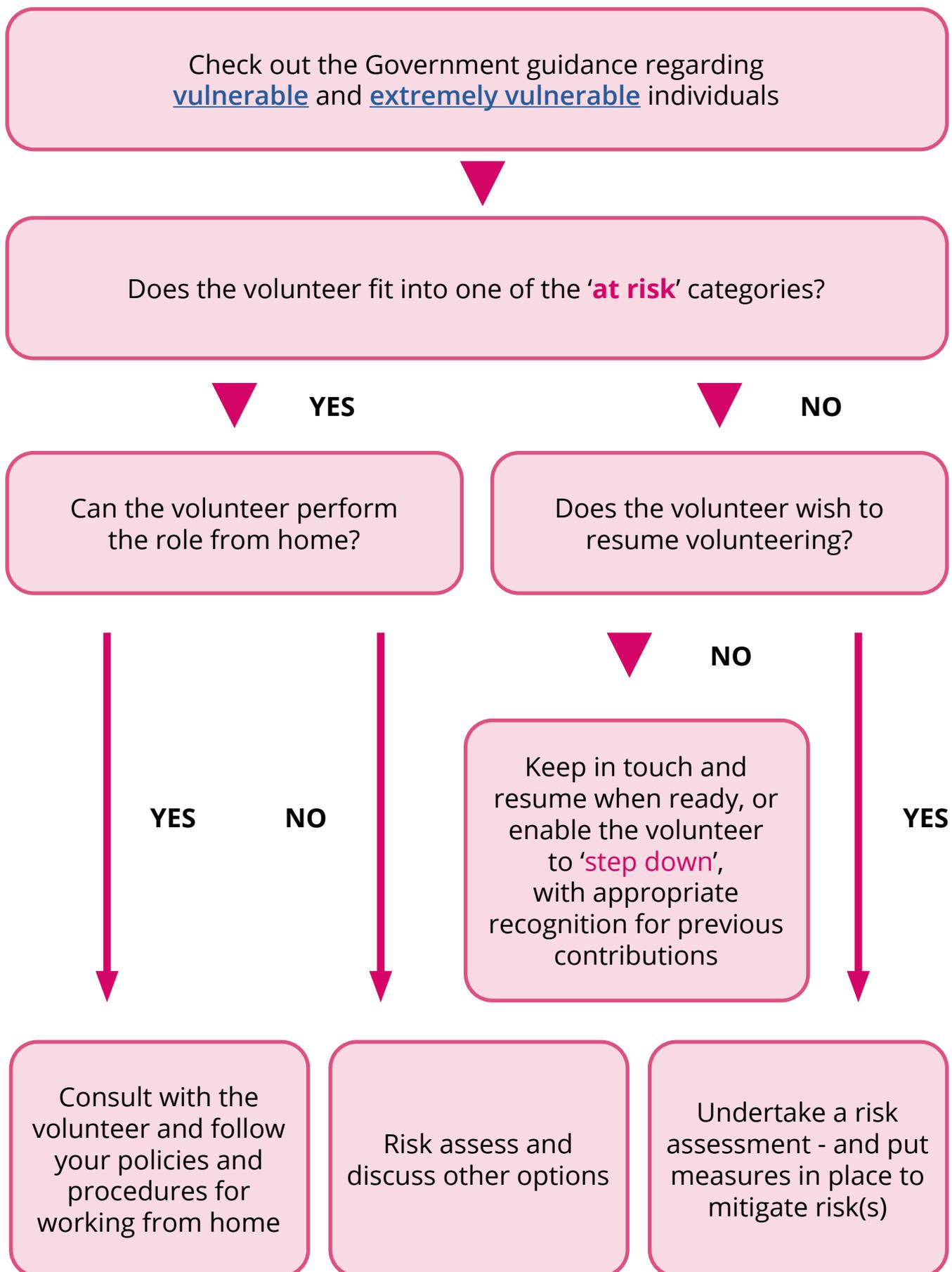
On the other hand, new volunteers may have approached your organisation during recent months. There may also be people who have signed up to volunteer locally during COVID-19, who are willing to continue to volunteer, perhaps with a different organisation.

Some 'new' volunteers will have come forward during lockdown but as they return to work they may be no longer available, or at least not to the same extent.

[Your local volunteer centre](#) is likely to know of individuals who want to volunteer but who have not yet been placed with a volunteering opportunity.

[Figure 1](#), summarises an approach to assessing and involving volunteers after a COVID-19 related pause.

Figure 1: Assessing Volunteers Before Resuming Volunteering



Location

If volunteering already takes place from home, this can continue. Otherwise there will be considerations such as social distancing and infection control measures to put in place.

Activities out of doors may allow for social distancing more easily, but access to toilet facilities, equipment, refreshments and parking /drop off arrangements may need consideration.

Detailed guidance is available on the reopening of;

- [Community centres](#)
- [Charity shops](#)
- [Community gardens and city farms](#)
- [Places of worship](#)



External Link

Government guidance for employers on returning to work and on safe working practices will be relevant to volunteers in workplace environments.

[Business Wales - Guidance for Employers on Returning to Work](#)
[Welsh Government - Safe working Practices](#)
[Welsh Government - Social Distancing Guidance](#)

Volunteering Activities

Minimising direct social contact is likely to be important for many months to come. Where activities can continue to be conducted online or by phone this helps to minimise risk. Where this is not possible, **social distancing** should be maintained where possible. This may mean modifying or redesigning patterns of service delivery.

If social distancing cannot be maintained, then consider the use of **protective equipment** such as **face coverings** and ensure that any individuals with a higher degree of risk from exposure to COVID-19 are in roles which can be undertaken with proper **social distancing**.

Assessing and Managing Risk

An assessment of risk should encompass all of the above and will enable you to identify what measures or adaptations need to be put in place and what, perhaps, is simply not feasible for the foreseeable future. Where appropriate it should be carried out in consultation with workers, volunteers and trade unions. You will also need to assess risks in relation to the people that your organisation is supporting, **i.e. your beneficiaries or clients**.

Some measures to control COVID-19 related risks include:

- Physical distancing, and measures to reduce risk where this is not possible
- Managing the use of space **e.g. one-way systems, erecting screens or limiting numbers**
- Hygiene procedures including cleaning, hand washing, use of hand sanitiser
- Wearing personal protective equipment or face coverings
- Adapting activity and supporting volunteers to volunteer from home
- Changing the nature of activities undertaken to reduce the degree of face to face interaction with members of the public
- Re allocating volunteers to roles based on their own level of vulnerability to COVID-19
- Reviewing insurance cover, especially if activities have been modified
- Reviewing training (**e.g. on cleaning and workplace procedures**) and supervision arrangements for volunteers
- Record keeping to enable contacts to be traced, should someone fall ill with COVID-19 symptoms



Information

You will find examples of check-lists and risk assessments for different areas of activity under '**where to find out more**', and can use these as a guide for producing your own.

[Where to Find Out More](#)

If, having assessed the risks, you conclude that you are unable to resume volunteering (**or maybe unable to resume some of the activities**) it is OK to say so. You may just need more time to think through how you want to re-organise volunteering. Either way, communicate your decision clearly with volunteers and other stakeholders and the reasons for it.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can we ask volunteers about their health?

You have an obligation to take reasonable steps to keep volunteers, staff and beneficiaries safe. In this regard it is reasonable (and necessary) to ask volunteers some relevant questions which will enable you to assess risk and make appropriate decisions about how to manage it.

You need to know whether they fall into one of the recognised 'vulnerable groups', (for whom adherence to social distancing measures should be particularly stringent) and whether they, or a member of their household, fall within one of the extremely vulnerable groups (for whom the latest government advice should be followed). You do not need to know the nature of their condition or medical details!



External Link

Government guidance on vulnerable groups can be found on the Welsh Government website.

[Welsh Government - Vulnerable Groups](#)
[Welsh Government - Extremely Vulnerable Groups](#)

Volunteers under 70 years, (who are not in extremely vulnerable categories), could use a simple self assessment [All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool](#) to produce a risk score which is followed up by discussion between the volunteer and organisation about mitigating steps to be taken.

The tool is geared at those working in health and care but other sectors are adapting Step 2 of the tool to suit their own workplace settings. All volunteers over the age of 70 fall within the category of 'vulnerable groups'.



Important Information

It is better to ask people what you need to know, rather than to make assumptions. Ask everyone – not just some people. An example questionnaire for this purpose can be found here.

[Guys and St. Thomas NHFT - Example Questionnaire](#)

Information about health is classed sensitive, or [special category data under GDPR](#), so consult your data protection policy and take care in the way such information is stored and used.

Q: Can we prevent 'high risk' volunteers from returning to volunteering?

Individuals who are the most extremely vulnerable should adhere to government guidance. Those who live with such people also need to take extra precaution. This doesn't prevent either from undertaking volunteering activity if it can be done from home. If this is not possible, however, there may be no alternative for them but to put volunteering 'on hold'.

Those who are vulnerable on the grounds of age, or health conditions, but who are not amongst the 'extremely vulnerable' may choose to volunteer. They should be offered the safest possible roles which adhere to government advice, e.g. enabling them to stay at a safe social distance from others.



External Link

Government guidance on vulnerable groups can be found on the Welsh Government website.

[Welsh Government - Vulnerable Groups](#)
[Welsh Government - Extremely Vulnerable Groups](#)

Take care to make your judgements based upon risk not assumptions and to ensure that individuals with protected characteristics are not treated with discrimination. You can continue, for example, to make reasonable adjustments to enable volunteers with mental health challenges or a physical disability to participate fully.



Information

If you identify someone who wishes to volunteer but is unable to undertake a suitable role with your organisation, refer them to your local volunteer centre who may be able to suggest alternative opportunities.

[Find Your Local Volunteer Centre](#)

Q: Do volunteers need PPE?

Outside of clinical settings and unless personal care is being undertaken, the precautionary use of PPE ([Personal Protective Equipment](#)) is not required. The use of PPE required for roles unrelated to COVID-19 however, such as food preparation, should continue.

[Face coverings](#) (which are not the same as PPE) are not mandatory but if volunteers choose to wear them, they should be supported in doing so. It may be advisable in circumstances where it is difficult to maintain a 2m distance.



Important Information

Welsh government advises the use of three-layered face coverings, which can be made from cotton or other close knit material, such as an old T shirt or pillow case. [Welsh Government - How to make a 3 layer face covering](#)

Face coverings, however, are **not a substitute** for social distancing and regular hand washing.



Information

If your risk assessment does suggest that PPE is required, this should be provided free of charge to volunteers. You may be eligible to receive a supply from your local authority. Make sure that it meets the required quality standard.

There is a **legal requirement** that employees (or volunteers) are provided with compliant protective equipment.

Q: How can we support volunteers' wellbeing at this time?

The experience of this pandemic is stressful for many people and will continue to be so in many ways, with continuing anxieties relating not only to health but also employment, finance and loneliness.

Checking in with volunteers remains important, whether or not they are actively volunteering. Social 'meet ups' help people to stay connected and mutually supported.

Remind volunteers from time to time about the importance of diet, sleep, exercise, routine and keeping in touch with loved ones, all of which have significant impact on our wellbeing.

Simple [resources such as these](#), can help people maintain mental wellbeing in stressful times.



Information

Mind have some useful information and tips on their website.

[Mind - Coronavirus and Your Mental Health](#)

Q: Can we recruit new volunteers?

You can recruit new volunteers if you have suitable roles and processes in place. Review your recruitment process, adapting it as necessary to make use of digital potential or, if necessary, face to face meetings with social distancing measures in place. Tailor recruitment to your current need and your capacity to manage, support and oversee volunteers.



Information

Develop a role description for each and make use of Volunteering Wales and social media to publicise the opportunities

[Volunteering Wales website](#)

Q: What if a volunteer becomes unwell whilst volunteering

Use the [NHS Coronavirus symptom checker](#) and follow the advice given. Make sure that you have a record of all who have come into close contact with the volunteer; this information may be required by the Test, Trace and Protect team.

Q: What are the implications of the test, trace and protect (TTP) scheme?

[Contact tracing](#) may result in some identified individuals having to self-isolate i.e. **maintaining distance from other family members and not leaving the house except for exercise and essential work**. People may be asked to self-isolate multiple times.

When planning to reintroduce volunteer services you will need to factor in the possibility that staff or volunteers may be required to [self isolate](#). During this time they may continue to be involved by working or volunteering from home.

On any occasion when people meet up it is advisable to keep a record of everyone attending, including contact details, so that if someone becomes ill, the TTP team can make contact with everyone the person has been in contact with.



For more information on risk assessments for volunteers based at home see Information Sheet:
4.8.1 Risk Assessment - Volunteers Based at Home

Q: If a volunteer contracts Coronavirus, could we be held responsible?

It is worth checking out with your insurance company what your existing insurance covers. It is likely that illness of this kind is excluded and you may want to let volunteers know that this is the case.

It is difficult to say whether an organisation could be held legally responsible for a volunteer contracting the Coronavirus. It would, at the least, need to be proven that the illness was contracted in the course of volunteering and that the organisation failed to take reasonable steps to prevent it. **For example, if Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is deemed to be necessary and you supply substandard items, there is a potential liability.**

If you follow government guidance, undertake risk assessments, take reasonable steps and document your decisions, the risk of being held liable is low.

Q: How might volunteering change in the longer term?

We do not know how long the precautions required against COVID-19 will be recommended, nor indeed whether there will be a future worsening of the pandemic and tightening of restrictions. There will be a need for many organisations to be responsive to changing times, such as the demands of future coronavirus 'spikes' and lockdowns.

Some of the changes that are necessary at this time could become embedded as new ways of working in the longer term. This is an opportunity to take stock! Digital options, **for example, may allow for more prompt and individually tailored services, but are not accessible to everyone.**

As you build up volunteering once again, you could take the opportunity to consult with others about how and why you involve volunteers and what else may be possible. The WCVA/Wales TUC [Charter for Volunteering and Workplace Relationships](#) sets out guiding principles to ensure harmonious relationships between paid workers and volunteers. The [Investing in Volunteers](#) standard is a UK wide benchmark for good practice in volunteer management.

You may want to think afresh about [developing a volunteer strategy](#), [creating a volunteering policy](#) or [how to ensure volunteer satisfaction](#).

Where to Find Out More

Charity Shops

The Charity Retail Association

The Charity Retail Association has produced comprehensive guidance on reopening charity shops. A traffic light system is used to denote actions which are mandatory, strongly recommended or optional.

Appendices one and two include a summary of risk areas and suitable control measures and a template for conducting a risk assessment. These and other parts of the document will be useful to other contexts also. Be mindful however that the links are to guidance for England, which may be different from Wales.

[Download: Charity Shop Reopening Pack](#)

Community Transport

The Community Transport Association

The Community Transport Association website includes regularly updated guidance for community transport. It includes links to Welsh Government guidance for public transport operators. A range of new guidance, tool kits and resources is expected on this website over the coming weeks and months.

[Information: Coronavirus/COVID-19: Guidance for Community Transport](#)
[Information: Restarting Public Transport: Guidance for Operators](#)

Community Centres

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

WCVA guidance relating to re-opening of community centres following COVID-19

[Download: Guidance for Re-Opening Community Centres](#)

Befriending **Befriending Network**

Downloadable resources from the Befriending Network including telephone befriending guidance which includes suggestions to help you switch from face to face visits to telephone befriending, risk assessment template and a decision making toolkit to guide decision making and risk assessment processes

[Download: Telephone Befriending Guidance](#)

[Download: Risk Assessment Template](#)

[Download: Decision Making Toolkit](#)

Community Gardens and City Farms **Farm Garden**

An A – Z checklist of themes to consider for reopening and also a COVID-19 risk assessment checklist

[Download: Checklist for Re-Opening](#)

[Download: COVID-19 Risk Assessment Checklist](#)

Child Care **Welsh Government**

General guidance from Welsh Government on protective measures in childcare settings

[Information: Protective Measures in Childcare Settings](#)

Government Guidance

Coronavirus - General

Coronavirus Regulations - FAQ

Welsh Government

[Information: Coronavirus Regulations: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Coronavirus Support Service

Welsh Government

[Information: Find Help If You're Struggling Because of Coronavirus](#)

Taking All Reasonable Measures to Minimise the Risk of Exposure to Coronavirus in Workplaces and Premises Open to the Public

Welsh Government

[Information: Measures to Minimise the Risk of Exposure to Coronavirus](#)

Travelling Safely (Coronavirus): Guidance for the Public

Welsh Government

[Information: Travelling Safely \(Coronavirus\)](#)

Self-Isolation: Stay at Home Guidance for Households With Possible Coronavirus

Welsh Government

[Information: Self Isolation](#)

Test, Trace and Protect Strategy

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government Test, Trace and Protect strategy outlines the roles and responsibilities of different bodies and explains how the scheme works.

[Information: Test, Trace and Protect Strategy](#)

Coronavirus Information

Public Health Wales

Public Health Wales latest information, including how to apply for a Coronavirus test

[Information: COVID-19 Latest Information](#)

Coronavirus Symptom Checker

NHS 111

[Information: NHS Coronavirus symptom checker](#)

Workplace Guidance

Workplace Guidance

Business Wales - Welsh Government

Guidance for employers on returning to work, with links relevant to different sectors

[Information: Workplace Guidance](#)

Keep Safe at Work

Welsh Government

Keep Wales safe at work, is general guidance for workplaces. There will be further in depth guidance for some specific sectors.

[Information: Keep Safe at Work](#)

COVID-19: Cleaning of Non-Healthcare Settings Outside the Home

UK Government

Guidance on cleaning in non healthcare settings

[Information: COVID-19 Cleaning of Non-Healthcare Settings](#)

Risk Assessment Tool

Welsh Government

An interactive workforce risk assessment tool, developed by Welsh Government to help people working in the NHS and Social Care, to see if they are at higher risk of developing more serious symptoms if they come into contact with COVID-19 virus. This tool helps managers to exercise their duty of care in assigning volunteers or staff to particular roles or locations according to their level of risk.

[Information: COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool](#)

Risk Assessment Template

Health and Safety Executive

A general risk assessment template, guidance and examples can be found on the HSE website.

[Information: Risk Assessment Template](#)

Useful Resources

Trustees

Checklist of Actions for Trustees

Glamorgan Voluntary Services(GVS)

GVS has compiled a checklist of actions for trustees to consider, including questions of governance, finance and safety

<https://www.gvs.wales/media/6324/covid-19-checklist-for-trustees.pdf>

Volunteering - General

Podcast: Preparing to Volunteer After Lockdown

Volunteering Wales and Helpforce Cymru

A podcast from Volunteering Wales and Helpforce Cymru on volunteering during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://soundcloud.com/wcvacymru/gwirfoddoli-arol-cau-lawr-volunteering-after-lockdown>

COVID-19 Guidance and Resources

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

A range of COVID-19 guidance and resources are on the WCVA website, including moving services online, managing unsuitable applicants, a briefing paper on DBS Checks and COVID-19 and DBS update.

<https://wcva.cymru/covid-19-guidance-and-resources/>

Safeguarding Community Volunteers During COVID-19

PAVS

PAVS has produced a poster to communicate some do's and don'ts for safeguarding community volunteers during COVID-19, based on a traffic light system of colour coding.

<http://46.32.240.43/pavscovid19.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Traffic-Lights-Safe-Guarding-Community-Volunteers-scaled.jpg>

Volunteering - Risk Assessment

Information Sheet - Risk Assessment

Third Sector Support Wales

TSSW information sheet Risk Assessment - Volunteers Working from Home.

<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/resources/risk-assessment-volunteers-based-at-home/>

Volunteering Risk Assessment Templates

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

A sample risk assessment for working from home.

<https://wcva.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Sample-risk-assessment-for-staff-or-volunteers-working-from-home.pdf>

Volunteering Risk Assessment Templates

Helpforce

Examples of templates for assessing risk related to volunteering activities and to returning volunteers, from various NHS Trusts in England.

https://learningzone.helpforce.community/vim_doc/risk-assessment-during-and-after-covid-19/

Health and Wellbeing

Distraction Pack to Help You Improve Your Health and

Wellbeing

Helpforce

The volunteering team at Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust have developed resources to help volunteers and staff look after their mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

<https://learningzone.helpforce.community/2020/05/13/distraction-pack-to-help-you-improve-your-health-and-wellbeing>

Health and Wellbeing

Coronavirus and Your Mental Health

Mind

Mind have published information and resources to help maintain mental wellbeing.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/>

Your Mental Health

Mental Health Foundation

The Mental Health Foundation have published information and resources to help maintain mental wellbeing.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health>

Sample Recovery and Restoration Plans

Recovery Planning Post COVID-19

Helpforce

Example documents to show how the volunteering team at Sussex Community NHS Trust has been planning to resume volunteer services safely.

https://learningzone.helpforce.community/vim_doc/recovery-planning-post-covid-19/?doing_wp_cron=1594134894.8095231056213378906250

Third Sector Support Wales

Local Volunteer Centres

Third Sector Support Wales

Contact details for your local volunteer centre.

<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.