Toolkit for groups helping out during the Covid-19 response (last updated 7.4.2020)

Introduction

If you are thinking about starting or have already set up a group to support your local community during the Covid-19 crisis, this toolkit is designed to help you set up your own processes. We've kept these as simple as possible and we are here to help you in any way we can.

- If you have any questions about anything in this toolkit or about setting up your own processes please contact us at hello@vcsutton.org.uk.

- If you need more volunteers, we have a huge database of Sutton residents who have signed up to help and we can refer suitable volunteers to you. To make a request for volunteers, please contact us via this form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe4SUTLGWuoscH3jKidRUki-15DdBeip_dXY8o0oDVrzSQNgg/viewform

Getting started checklist

- **Add your group's details to the Sutton register:** this is so we can help people who need support find you if they live in local area. Register here
- **Check government advice regularly:** check the NHS website and the UK Government website to make sure that you and your group are following and passing on the latest advice and information.
- **Talk to your volunteers:** make a WhatsApp group or a Facebook group to talk to your group of volunteers.
- **Draw up a basic privacy policy (which you could add to the bottom of your group's emails, or add to any Google Form you create for volunteer registration):** an example could be:

   NAME OF GROUP is a grassroots community group volunteering support for neighbours during the COVID-19 outbreak. Please do not enter or upload information on behalf of others. Please do not upload any sensitive information. Any information we gather will be used for the legitimate purposes of the group - to connect volunteers working in the same area, and to match volunteers to members of the community seeking support. We will not store data from community members seeking support. Any information gathered will be deleted when the group disbands. To remove your data or ask any questions please email GROUP'S EMAIL ADDRESS.

- **Register your volunteers:** Here is a GDPR-compliant example of a [Volunteer Sign-up Form](#) using "Google forms" set up in Sydenham South London which you can adapt. Details should include:

  - Name
  - Email
  - Phone number
  - Address including full postcode (good idea to keep postcode in its own box)
  - D.O.B. (under 18s will need parental consent to volunteer; over 70s should be staying at home)
  - Next of kin (name and contact details)
  - Driving licence number (if role includes driving)
  - Their availability for weekdays/weekends/evenings
  - Any specialist or unusual skills which could be useful
  - A confidentiality agreement, particularly relating to sensitive and personal information of people they will be supporting
  - If they hold a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service), ask to see a copy of the DBS (either a scan or a photo)

- **Help vulnerable people find you:** remember those most at risk might not have access to smartphones or feel comfortable using Facebook. You could also have a phone number or email address just for the group (like [Gmail](#)) and agree who will monitor it on a rota (but it is important to strictly limit who has access to this email address in box due to data protection). You could post leaflets locally letting people know about the support you're offering. **We have designed a leaflet template which you can download from our website.**

Managing your help

It's a good idea to have a think about how you will match help offered with people who need help, and how you will keep track of it all. Everyone will have their own preferred way of working but here are some tips that have worked for other groups:

We recommend keeping the management of requests as simple as possible. Ideally having a direct number or email that people can get in touch with rather than setting up web forms etc.

If you have set up a Google Forms registration for your volunteers, then each box (e.g. "name@ "postcode") can feed through to an Excel spreadsheet column. You could label this tab "VOLUNTEERS".

You could then set up a separate tab on the same Excel spreadsheet e.g. "RECIPIENTS" for people who request help. The "ACTION" below could be "Matched with local volunteer BB" or "Helped them to contact Age UK Sutton".

Here is a simple example of how a "RECIPIENTS" tab could look:

DATE	Who took the call	Name of the caller	Phone number/email	Address	Post Code	QUERY	ACTION	Date action completed	Do they need a follow up call? If so, who will do this and when
30/03/2020	AA	Fred Bloggs	0208 234 5678	30 The Drive	SM9 1GG	Remission for cancer. Needs help with shopping	Matched with a vol who lives on her road	3/31/2020	

It's a good idea to keep track of any "matching" you have done on both tabs, and geographical proximity is the most obvious way to do this. You can search through your "VOLUNTEERS" tab by postcode to find the right people. You could add a "MATCHED TO" column on your "VOLUNTEERS" tab and use a numbering system e.g. **Matched to no. 18** where no. 18 corresponds to the 18th person on your "RECIPIENTS" tab.

Always make sure that you have contacted the person who requested help to let them know that you have matched them with a volunteer, who they are and how they will contact them. Similarly make sure your volunteer knows who they are helping and how to contact them, and knows what help they have asked for. Schedule in a follow-up call with both the "VOLUNTEER" and the "RECIPIENT" to check how things are going.

Keeping everybody safe

Keeping everybody safe means several things at this time, relating to Covid-19 as well as general issues around volunteering, such as safeguarding and data protection.

As a general rule of thumb, think through the risks of any plan you make, use your common sense, trust your gut and be kind.

If you tell someone to go somewhere you're responsible for checking to make sure they got back ok and it all went well. Don't send people out to take shopping to someone without making sure it goes well.

Make sure you don't over promise on what support you can offer and find out if there is more appropriate support they could access. There will be existing community projects and support services in Sutton that will be working hard in response to the crisis and who may be a more appropriate provide of help such as Age UK Sutton or Sutton Carers' Centre. You can find all this information on the Sutton Council "How to ask for help" page. It is a good idea for you and your volunteers to be familiar with this page.

Safety checklist

- First and foremost, for all your group members and for the people your group is supporting, it is vital that you follow the NHS and Government advice above.
- There is also specific advice for volunteers and we have prepared resources about shopping and delivering food safely, and telephone contact. All our resources are publicly available on our website.

- You need to think about data protection and how your group is managing and storing sensitive information. Having a simple privacy policy (see above) is a good idea. Essentially, you need to make sure that only the right people see personal information. It's really important that people's personal details and requests are kept safe and confidential, both for legal reasons around data management and also to safeguard the most vulnerable. People who are suffering domestic abuse, those with vulnerable migrant status or in other precarious situations might feel unable to reach out if you're capturing data in a non secure way. Where possible, avoid unnecessary spreadsheets/storing of data and do support on a direct and 121 basis. If you do make forms and spreadsheets, make sure that they're protected by a password and that only a small number of trusted people in your group have access to them.
- There is also the issue of safeguarding both children and adults. All your members should have these contact details to hand:

If you have an immediate concern about the safety of an adult or child you MUST report it to Sutton Council:

For a child, you can call the Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) on 020 8770 6001 / 6072 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday or call the out of hours or weekend duty team on 020 8770 5000

For an adult, you can Sutton Council to report abuse of adults or concerns about abuse, 24 hours a day. Your call is confidential. Tel: 020 8770 6770

As an organisation or community group organising volunteering it is important to take appropriate steps to keep everyone safe. We would encourage all new community groups, unused to working with volunteers to use only those volunteers with enhanced DBS checks to work directly with vulnerable people and children. DBS checks are free for volunteers.

The government have recently introduced some temporary changes to ID checking guidelines as a result of the coronavirus outbreak - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines

Other resources to help:

Key Volunteer Safety Tips – a visual guide
Safety tips for shopping and delivering food
Guidance for people volunteering as telephone befrienders

We will be adding resources and information regularly to our website at https://vcsutton.org.uk/volunteer/covid-19-resources-for-volunte/ and also posting on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Find us on Facebook "Volunteer Centre Sutton"
Follow us on Twitter "@vcsutton1"

Look at the Sutton Council "How to ask for help" page.