

COVID-19

A PRACTICAL GUIDE ON HOW TO KEEP SAFE WHEN VOLUNTEERING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



VOLUNTEER

GUIDE CONTAINS INFORMATION ON:

- TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING -**
- COLLECTING PRESCRIPTIONS -**
- DELIVERING ITEMS -**
- COOKING MEALS -**
- USEFUL LINKS -**



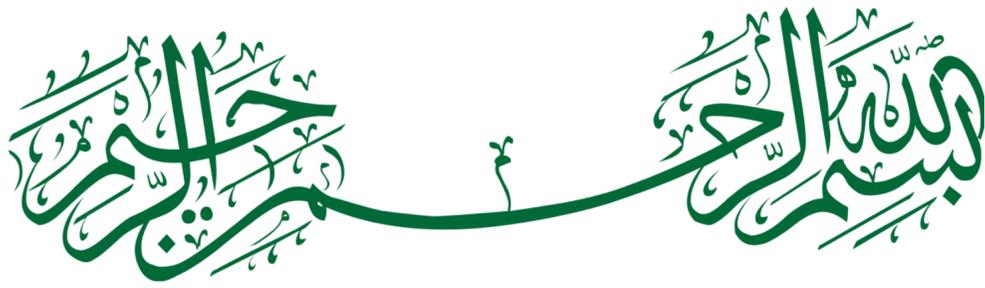
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VOLUNTEER

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A MESSAGE

2021 continues to be an incredibly challenging time for millions of people globally. Although a lot has been learned over the last 12 months, the Covid-19 pandemic is still with us.

Where there is struggle, there is also ease and, in times of crisis, we see, time and time again, the incredible ways that people come together to support one another and protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our faith is one of charity and duty to one another and Allah (SWT). When difficulties strike, we respond with the guiding principles of our Islam, and we push on with the strength that our faith in Allah (SWT) provides us with.

As Muslims, we understand that we will be tested, that this dunya is only temporary, and there is so much more beyond the material realities of this life. We also know the weight of our actions, and how we will be held accountable for the way in which we conduct ourselves and how we treat others in their time of need.

Allah (SWT) informs us in the Qur'an that:

***'Verily, we shall put you to test with some fear, and hunger, and with some loss of wealth, lives, and offspring. And (O Muhammad) convey good tidings to those who are patient, who say, when inflicted by hardship, "Verily we are of God and verily to Him shall we return;" upon them is the blessings of Allah and His mercy.'* (2:155)**

May we find patience in this time of great tests. May we come together to protect the most vulnerable. May we cherish the blessings that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon us. May this be a time of reflection on the fragility of this dunya.

Ameen.

OVERVIEW

This document aims to provide some practical advice on how Muslim organisations can ensure the safety of their volunteers who are supporting the most vulnerable of our society during this pandemic. We are consistently reviewing the situation on the ground and will produce new guidelines as and when the situation changes.

Though full knowledge of the specifics of the virus variants are still limited, it is known to be spread through infected respiratory droplets being transferred from an infected person to a non-infected person - both directly through close contact or through contact with an infected surface area.

At the time of writing the UK has had 4.38 million cases of COVID-19 and 127,000 reported deaths (April 2021) since the pandemic began. The UK has experienced three national lockdowns, the third of which is easing during Spring/Summer 2021 due to large-scale vaccine roll-out.

In times of crisis and emergency, it is important we all come together to protect and support each other.

It is vital to acknowledge that to have any chance of looking after your volunteers effectively, the aim of your work must solely be to prevent as many infections happening as possible.

Despite the introduction of the Covid-19 vaccine and lateral flow testing becoming available, you must assume that anyone could be infected with the virus and could be spreading it asymptotically.

This guide will provide practical advice on how to keep everyone safe.

Key Guidelines (Part 1)

There are some key guidelines for all activities:

- Washing hands effectively with soap or hand sanitiser is efficient in removing the virus, reducing the chances of it being passed on.
- If the voluntary work is not delivering food or aid to those in need and can be done online and from home, then it is important to take that opportunity and advise and help volunteers who can work online and distantly to do so.
- If volunteers have elderly or immunocompromised members at home, they should be advised to prioritise the health of their family members and not risk carrying the virus home.
- It is important to frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces are regularly touched, such as computers and door handles.
- Face masks should be worn at all times by beneficiaries, staff and volunteers (unless exempt).

Key Guidelines (Part 2)

- Social distancing of 2 metres and limited numbers at any one time should be practiced.
- Charities should make sure that the emergency contacts of volunteers are up to date and ask volunteers to advise of their vaccination status if comfortable disclosing this.
- If someone becomes unwell, especially with a continuous cough or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow government guidelines.
- In accordance with GDPR guidelines, sensitive data of individuals, including volunteers, must not be shared with other parties without their prior consent.
- Volunteers should be encouraged to report symptoms to organisations, so other staff and volunteers can be informed that they have come in contact with someone who has symptoms. This is why it is vital to keep a record of all-volunteer involvement.
- Even if a volunteer has a condition that is not related as a direct risk for COVID-19, you should still consider if it is worth putting them at risk due to the strain on the NHS services and the ease by which they made access medical help.

Advice when delivering items

When you are delivering items to an individual who is self-isolating, you must ensure volunteers don't pick up or pass on the virus.

Individuals delivering items must not enter the recipients' home.

When delivering, travel in a way which reduces the risk of exposure to the virus. Try to avoid taking public transport as they are likely to be hotspots for the virus.

When you arrive at the recipient's house, place the items immediately outside the door and step back. Ensure you are wearing a face mask and maintain a distance of 2 metres.

Call/text the person, making sure they pick it up and take it into their home.

Items like cash should not be taken from a house with people self-isolating.

Advice when collecting prescriptions

The information needed for collecting prescriptions is quite sensitive so must be handled with great care. You must check if the person normally pays for their prescription and if so, arrange to pay for items ahead of time. This would ideally be done through cash transfer to avoid cash handling.

You must consider how the medicine is to be stored. If the prescription contains items that can only be left out at room temperature for a limited time period, you must factor this into your delivery. If you are collecting items which are designated control drugs like morphine, oxycodone or buprenorphine, you will need to present ID when collecting a prescription.

Be prepared, the pharmacy may call the person to confirm they know someone is collecting the prescription on their behalf.

Dropping off prescriptions is the same for dropping off any other item.

Advice when cooking meals

The cooking process should be supervised by an individual with a food hygiene certificate. Prior to cooking, the food preparation area must be clean and meet basic food hygiene standards. Ensure there are as few people as possible in the kitchen to reduce crowding and the risk of spreading any infection.

Standard cooking risks of course still apply such as using cloths/gloves when handling hot items such as pans, cooking trays and dishes etc. Also, ensure the hot food is being cooked at a temperature the recipe recommends. Further, correct cooking times and procedures should be followed to ensure any bacteria is killed. Food should be cooked until it reaches 70°C and remain at that temperature for 2 minutes. Other time and temperature combinations include 45 minutes at 60°C, 10 minutes at 65°C, 2 minutes at 70°C, 30 seconds at 75°C and 6 seconds at 80°C.

Once the food has been prepared, the container holding the food should be labelled with the following information:

- The date it was prepared as well as when the food should be consumed by.
- How the food should be stored and how it is to be frozen/defrosted/cooked/reheated as appropriate.
- A list of the ingredients

Advice when online/telephone befriending

Despite being relatively safer, staying at home and befriending at-risk individuals does pose risks.

There is a risk of stress/distress for the volunteers as they speak to individuals who may be going through serious issues in their life. Organisations must ensure they have sufficient emotional support from experienced/qualified individuals. It would also be important to allow the volunteers to have the opportunity to debrief with family or friends. They should be encouraged to seek support when they need it.

There are also risks of physical harm to the volunteer if they are sat down for long phone sessions. They should be encouraged to regularly take breaks to avoid strain.

Useful links:

Volunteering Matters:

<https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/volunteer-safely/>

Food safety advice:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/food-safety>

Volunteering during coronavirus (Covid-19)

[Volunteering during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/volunteering-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

Poster on hand washing that can be used in the workplace:

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5016>

COVID-19 Mutual Aid website:

<https://covidmutualaid.org/>