

COVID-19 Reshet Safeguarding Guidance for Organisations

It is a challenging time for all and as we strive as a community to adapt to the current situation, both in the private and public sphere, we must do our best to protect and support our vulnerable members. Understandably many people want to help others in this crisis and organisations may find themselves receiving offers of help from new volunteers. **At this time, it is more important than ever that organisations continue to practice the same safeguarding due diligence as normal. Safeguarding standards must not drop.**

There are a number of legislative changes arising from the Coronavirus Bill 2019-21. From COVID funding supporting employees, through to OFSTED school inspections temporarily being suspended. However, it is important to note that there are **no current legislative changes to safeguarding, therefore organisations and charities must abide by the same safeguarding procedures they normally would.**

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Community spirit

It is a wonderful to have so many individuals decide to volunteer to help others. Grassroots initiatives have sprung up and neighbours are connecting in ways which have not been seen before. This document is designed to guide organisations as they welcome more volunteers and continue to safeguard effectively, ensuring that we are minimising risk in our endeavours to help at this time.

Safeguarding remains essential, even during the current crisis, since unfortunately there are some volunteers who will pose a risk to vulnerable individuals. During the crisis we must continue to ensure safeguard is a priority, and recognise that **untrained volunteers will pose a risk to themselves and others**. Safeguarding is an umbrella which goes beyond our policies and procedures: it is about every member of our organisation, professional and volunteer, acting appropriately, as well ensuring all activities are conducted safely. Organisations bringing in new volunteers, or developing new initiatives to support those in need, must ensure they continue to take the correct steps to deliver clear safeguarding training and guidance about what is expected of all volunteers. **All volunteers must be appropriately trained in safeguarding if they are to have a front facing role of any kind, or if they might have access to organisational information.**

There may be a range of tasks that volunteers can complete in an organisation and organisations may consider compiling a list of what help the organisation needs at this time in order to create a 'traffic light system' which will guide the organisation in placing volunteers in useful roles, ensuring those volunteers receive appropriate training, so that all volunteers are well prepared to keep themselves and others safe.

Strong governance must remain

Organisations must deliver safeguarding in accordance with key documents, including the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and the Care Act (2014).

Trustees remain responsible for all activities and have a duty to remain vigilant. If the organisation is changing how it operates, or who the organisation engages with, these changes must be documented so that the organisation is transparent in its actions, ensuring that all professional staff and volunteers have appropriate guidance and clear expectations. Any major safeguarding incidents must be reported to the Charity Commission by trustees.

Insurance

Organisations must check with their own insurers that any new roles or operational activities (such as driving or food preparation for example) are insured in accordance with agreed insurance policies.

What must organisations and volunteers do?

1. Safer recruiting of volunteers

If organisations need additional volunteers at this time it may be best to initially reach out to past volunteers, who have successfully engaged with organisation previously and have an up to date DBS (within the last three years). That way, organisations can confidently bring those volunteers up to speed with **updated training** and utilise them quickly.

DBS checks

- Trustees or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should take a view regarding DBS checks that are in date but which relate to other organisations. Please note that DBS checks are not transferable from one organisation to another at this time.
- Organisations may want to be proactive in encouraging potential volunteers to register for DBS checks for roles that might require DBS checks.
- If volunteers **do not** have a current DBS or enhanced DBS check, they can still volunteer but **not in a front facing capacity with those who are vulnerable** or with any access to confidential information/records.

Interviewing new volunteers

All new volunteers must be interviewed to assess their suitability for the role.

Organisations should conduct checks with new volunteers in order to:

- See if the volunteers have a DBS check or enhanced DBS check, issued in the last 3 years.
- Collect personal details and emergency contacts for volunteers, storing that information appropriately.
- Identify any underlying medical issues that volunteers may have. (This would include asking volunteers to confidentially disclose if they have any medical conditions. That information should be shared with an appropriate member of staff.) The organisation will then need to carefully consider if the volunteer can be utilised at this time.
- Take up references. If the organisation is planning to send volunteers into roles where they may have access to vulnerable people (even with social distancing) it is essential to take up both a professional reference and a personal reference.

Safer recruitment may feel onerous and time consuming at this very difficult time, however it is essential in ensuring the volunteers each organisation takes on do not pose a threat to those the organisation is seeking to support.

2. Process implementation and training

Safeguarding standards have not been lowered during the crisis and must be adhered to in every new initiative and activity which involves professionals and experienced or new volunteers:

- The safety of volunteers, and those the organisation serves is crucial. At times of crisis, vulnerable groups and families are under even more pressure, therefore we must do all we can to ensure we remain vigilant.
- Organisations must have clear safeguarding processes and ideally two named Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). If one of your DSLs is affected by COVID 19, organisations must consider whether there is someone else in the organisation who has the training to temporarily take the post and/or whether you need to temporarily recruit a new, fully trained Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Organisations must deliver training and hold a record that each volunteer who is being deployed through the organisation has been trained. If you need further support in finding appropriate online training, contact Reshet.
- All volunteers must be clear who the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the organisation is, have been fully trained and have understood the safeguarding processes in the organisation. All volunteers must be clear on who to contact if they are confronted by any serious issues during the course of their volunteering.
- All volunteers must have access to the organisations policies so they are clear on how to protect themselves, as well as the people in need of support.

3. Specific to Covid-19

Organisations sending volunteers to meet or deliver goods to those who are in isolation and/or are vulnerable, must keep clear records of who is where and for how long, and what support has happened:

- Volunteers must ensure that they only contact people that they are delivering to/befriending within the framework of the organisation. If volunteers phone, visit or write to anyone they have met through the organisation, this must be done with the full knowledge and approval of the organisation.
- Volunteering sessions/dates/times must be clarified by the organisation and the individuals receiving support to ensure clear boundaries for all involved.
- Organisations should have clear systems of tracking volunteers during their volunteering sessions, to ensure their safety.
- Organisations should ensure volunteers follow governmental and NHS guidance at all times. Please ensure your organisation regularly checks NHS and governmental guidance, which is changing daily.
- It is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure all volunteers are able to manage the tasks allocate: **Running errands for people is very helpful but volunteers must stay outside of people's homes at all times.**
- Organisations should check in with your volunteers regularly, ensuring they are not taking on too much and that they are physically and emotionally well. As the situation evolves, people's feelings and how they are affected may change. Provision should be made to support volunteers who may encounter distressing situations.
- Organisations should also consider the mental health and wellbeing of volunteers, in the event that there is a bereavement of someone they support through the organisation.
- Organisations will also need to support their own professional staff and must therefore be mindful of the number of volunteers and staff they are able to manage appropriately.

4. Keeping Volunteers Safe

In order to ensure the safety of volunteers, organisations should:

- Undertake a risk assessment of each volunteering role and write clear guidance of risk management.
- Consider that under 18s are not legally adults and therefore must not undertake any role which may put them at risk of abuse or harm (including any possible risk to their physical and mental health) in accordance with Keeping Children Safe 2014.
- Consider creating a specific risk register for any volunteers who are under 18. Under 18s have much to offer and their volunteering must be managed appropriately.
- Ensure that if volunteers are phoning or communicating from their own phone number on behalf of the organisation, they do not share their personal phone numbers. Personal phone numbers/email addresses must not be exchanged through volunteering interactions, since this might lead to volunteers being contacted directly and becoming over-burdened.
- Give boundary guidance to volunteers. Volunteers should only contact the people they are supporting under the auspices of the organisation. This is to protect the volunteer and the vulnerable person.
- Train volunteers on working within the organisational systems, if volunteers are requested to purchase items for individuals. **Volunteers must not accept money from those they are supporting – payment should instead go through the organisation.**
- Remind volunteers to follow government guidelines and NHS guidance at all times (links at the end of this document).

5. Keeping Volunteers Safe Online

Organisations utilising digital technologies and online spaces such as Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc, particularly youth organisation, befriending and support organisations, have a duty to ensure staff and volunteers are acting in accordance with legal requirements and guidance.

- Consent: parents/carers must give their consent for under 18s to join an online activity. It is strongly recommended that each activity begins with confirmation that parents/carers are aware their child/ren are taking part in an online activity with leaders and /or from an organisation.
- In accordance with CEOP, organisations should ensure children are appropriately protected during online activities. See https://reshetnet.com/busy_bbayit/online-safety/ for more information.

Prior to any organisation delivering live online activities or support, the organisation must deliver guidance on appropriate boundaries for the activity. The organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead must train all volunteers taking part in that activity in accordance with the organisational policies.

Training should ensure staff and volunteers understand that:

- The boundaries between personal information and support are clearly defined.
- All online/call activities are to be delivered through the organisation and led by a minimum of 2 individuals, in the same way as face to face activities would be led when working with a group of young people.
- One to one calls or activities are not to be led by lone volunteers or anyone under 18.
- Under 18s may join group conversations/online activities in a leadership capacity but must not lead alone.
- Any one-to-one tuition or support being delivered to a child/young person who is under 18 must only take place if a parent/carer is in the room with the child throughout the tuition/support.

- Contact is only to be made via the organisation only and not through personal networks. All personal email addresses, phone numbers and any other personal information of all volunteers/madrachim/educators must not be shared with participants and must remain hidden during or following the activity. When using Zoom, skype or any other digital communications technology, volunteers use an organisation account, rather than their own personal email accounts.

All new volunteers, as well as experienced volunteers, must follow the safeguarding guidelines which are already in place within the organisation. All volunteers must receive appropriate safeguarding training before they begin their volunteering.

This document has been prepared to offer guidance only. Organisations (and charitable trustees) remain responsible for delivering their own due diligence.

Additional links

Further governmental guidance can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-chari-sector>

NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

If you would like to discuss any of the material in this document, please email Shelley Marsh shelley@reshetnet.com